

## Total Physical Response Method as a Stress-Free Learning Method in English Language Teaching

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### Abstract

*This study investigates how teaching young students English using Total Physical Response can be a stress-free method. It highlights that learning English can be stressful for some students, particularly young students like kindergarteners who have different comprehension levels than adults. Therefore, the teaching process must be engaging and the environment appropriate for young minds. TPR, which requires coordination of speaking and movement, has been identified as a highly effective strategy for teaching young children. This approach has been widely used in kindergartens and elementary schools, making learning enjoyable and aiding in retaining English words and expressions. Studies have shown TPR to be effective for young students and students in junior high, senior high, and adulthood. TPR has also been found suitable for dyslexic and visually impaired students, offering benefits such as stress reduction, improved comprehension, and memory enhancement. However, TPR has limitations, including the necessity for teachers to adhere to the curriculum, potentially causing stress and limiting student creativity, as activities focus on mimicking the teacher rather than generating original sentences.*

**Keywords:** Stress-Free Learning Method, Teaching English, Total Physical Response

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This library research analyzes the usage of the Total Physical Response method as a stress-free method in ELT. As we know, the process of learning English might be stressful for certain students. Kindergarten students are young students, in their ability to understand and comprehend things is different from that adult. The teaching process also has to be done interestingly, so, that the students feel more engaged, then they tend to be more active in the classroom. The teaching environment also has to be taken into account since the young student has a much simpler mind. Understanding young students might be a hassle for some adults, not to mention teaching them a different language. The most popular approach for teaching kindergarteners is called Total Physical Response. Kindergarten students have generally been taught using this approach worldwide.

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a language teaching approach that integrates speech with physical actions, aiming to facilitate language learning through motor activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2010). Total Physical Response is Developmentally appropriate instruction (Asher, 2009). As mentioned before, Kindergarten students have unique cognitive, physical, and social-emotional needs. TPR aims to teach language by combining speech with physical activity, using motor actions as a method of language acquisition (Er, 2013b). This approach caters to children's need for physical activity, experiential learning, and acquiring language in meaningful,

<https://doi.org/10.25217/jed.v3i01.4832> 278

stress-free contexts (Savić, 2014). In TPR, learners listen and follow the teacher's instructions, monitoring and evaluating their progress. They are encouraged to speak when they feel ready, having internalized a sufficient foundation of the language (Richards & Rodgers, 2010). Implementing TPR in the second language classroom helps students understand the language sooner and use it with greater confidence (Beth, 2010). TPR activities are excellent for developing receptive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary is the vocabulary items that the students recognize. However, cannot necessarily produce without help (Nunan, 2010). Jose observed that young students are at an optimal age for language acquisition (Jose et al., 2015). The ease of learning a foreign language decreases with age. Young children, in particular, are closely connected to their surroundings and show a strong interest in physical activities. Ummchahyaningrum (2018) notes that the TPR method can enhance children's listening skills through activities such as imperative drills, action songs, and the use of flashcards. The benefits of using Total Physical Response in English teaching and learning activities include: (1) being fun, thus engaging many children in the learning process, (2) helping students remember English words and expressions, (3) being applicable in both large and small classes, (4) being suitable for both young students and adult learners, and (5) being ideal for active students in class (Rokhayati, 2017).

This environment encourages involvement and language skill retention. TPR takes advantage of the connections that exist between language and movement to help children connect phrases and words to the associated body movements. Studying how TPR affects language acquisition and understanding in kindergarten students might provide insight into the effectiveness of this strategy and its effects on vocabulary growth, listening comprehension, and language ability as a whole. TPR is a multisensory learning strategy that enhances children's engagement, memorization, and understanding of new language concepts. It improves classroom management and behavior, offering organized, engaging learning opportunities. TPR is flexible and can meet various learning styles, including learning preferences and linguistic origins. Research on TPR in kindergarten ESL training can guide curriculum development, instructional practices, and teacher training programs, providing evidence-based methods for teaching young language learners. Mariyam and Musfiroh (2019) highlighted that researching the analysis of Total Physical Response for teaching ESL to kindergarten students enhances our understanding of effective pedagogical approaches in early language education. This contributes to improving teaching practices, student outcomes, and the overall quality of ESL instruction for young learners. These are various research about TPR for ESL based on the sample:

### Early Childhood

Er (2013) who researched early childhood foreign language teaching environments, using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method is considered the most suitable approach. Unlike traditional text-based methods, TPR engages young

learners through activities such as songs, games, and stories that involve physical actions. This approach captivates the attention of active young learners, making language learning both effective and enjoyable. The Total Physical Response Method (TPR) is well suited for young students, according to Er's research on it in early childhood foreign language teaching settings. TPR consists of a variety of learning preferences, including kinesthetic, visual, and auditory learners. TPR includes songs, games, and stories. It promotes emotional filtering and lessens stress because it is engaging, fun, and text-free. TPR combines language-related left-brain activities with right-brain coordination to enhance comprehension and memorability. The advantages of TPR in regular classroom activities are highlighted by Er's research, which motivates kids to follow directions, form associations between objects and words, and mimic words.

Duan (2021) researched the application of the Total Physical Response Method (TPR) in teaching English to preschool children. The study involved six preschoolers over four months, encompassing pre-interviews, pre-tests, TPR teaching sessions (including activities like "Display and Imitation," "Instructions and Practice," and "Action" and "Situational Communication"), post-tests, and post-interviews. The findings indicate that this method can effectively facilitate joyful English learning in a stress-free environment, accelerate language comprehension, and enhance long-term memory retention. However, Duan also noted challenges such as difficulty in teaching abstract concepts and potential classroom disruptions. Enhancing teaching effectiveness requires educators with strong professional skills and comprehensive abilities in language expression and physical coordination, ensuring the optimal adaptation of methods like TPR to preschoolers' learning needs.

### **Young student**

Xie (2021) Examined the effectiveness of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in teaching English to young students. The study involved observing classes taught by two different teachers and conducting interviews with the teachers, students, and parents to explore how TPR is used in practice and to identify challenges associated with its implementation. The research took place at a private primary school in Guizhou province, China, focusing on Grade 5 students in separate classes taught by each teacher. In Ms. Lei's class, a 38-year-old teacher with 13 years of teaching experience and an MA in TESOL, the teaching process involved seven steps. Initially, she used a song for warm-up, where students imitated actions and sang along.

Following this, she presented pictures on the blackboard, demonstrating actions and expressions without speaking initially, and later prompting students to speak while performing actions. She then organized students into five groups for drills, followed by role-plays and guessing games. Activities like singing songs with physical movements were integrated throughout, emphasizing Total Physical Response (TPR) methods such as songs, games, and role-plays. In contrast, Mr. Li's class began with a lengthy greeting and warm-up that lasted about 10 minutes. He

introduced new vocabulary by writing on the board, repeatedly teaching and explaining meanings in Chinese. Pronunciation was emphasized, with mechanical drills in English for 5 minutes. A brief 5-minute introduction to grammar in Chinese followed, concluding with 10 minutes dedicated to dialogue practice. TPR activities were limited to just 5 minutes due to time constraints, prompting a summary and assigning post-class tasks. This study discusses the effectiveness of Teaching Pupil Response in teaching English to young students, focusing on enthusiasm, interest, motivation, and confidence. It highlights the benefits of TPR in students' listening and imperative sentences, aligning with primary English curriculum requirements. However, there are challenges related to traditional teaching methods, students' varying levels of English proficiency, and inadequate training and supervision. The study illustrates that while curricula and course materials incorporate features of Total Physical Response (TPR), challenges arise from exam-focused educational systems. Drawbacks of TPR include its limited suitability for teaching grammar and its potential challenges for introverted students. The same study also conducted by Diana and her team. (Diana et al., 2022). In her study, Diana determined the elementary students as her sample.

### **Junior High Students**

Unlike other researchers who commonly did research on TPR on young students, Ibrohim (Ibrohim et al., 2019) did research on TPR to be applied to Junior high students. The goal of the research is to find out how the students perceive the Total Physical Response (TPR) technique for teaching English vocabulary and to pinpoint the advantages that the students gained from it. Using qualitative descriptive research, this study method. Students from SMPN 2 Plered Purwakarta in the eighth grade served as the study's respondents. The information was gathered through surveys and interviews. The study's findings indicated that teaching English vocabulary to pupils using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method would benefit their vocabulary development as they learn the language. Based on the interview and questionnaire, they demonstrated some progress in the process of acquiring new language using that method. Additionally, data from the questionnaire and interview revealed a few advantages of the TPR method: Students' speaking skills and vocabulary should be developed, their involvement in class should be increased, and there should be pleasure in the classroom.

The same research were done by Ilmi and Anwar (Dzurotul Ilmi & Anwar, 2022). The aim of this study is to explore students' perspectives on using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method for teaching English vocabulary. The research employed a qualitative descriptive methodology. Data for the study came from two sources: a questionnaire and an interview with eighth graders at Ban Nonsawan School, a secondary school in Loei, Thailand. 30 students in all took part in the study. The results indicate that employing the Total Physical Response method helps students learn English vocabulary more effectively and encourages greater effort in learning. The Total Physical Response method (TPR) is effective for enhancing English vocabulary proficiency among secondary school students. It is particularly

suitable for eighth-grade students in Thai secondary schools due to its expressive use of gestures. Implementing TPR in virtual settings reduces stress and enhances students' motivation to engage with English vocabulary, leading to heightened enthusiasm and engagement.

### **Students with Dyslexic**

Aside from the cases of 'normal students', there is also research that conducted TPR for Dyslexic. Mohan (Mohan et al., 2022) as we know, Dyslexic individuals commonly struggle with recognizing specific sounds and relating letters to their corresponding sounds, which can cause them to miss chunks of information and find it difficult to maintain focus. Learning a second language requires mastery of both written letters and their associated sounds, presenting a challenging and often ambiguous process for dyslexic students. In this study, the teacher employed various TPR methods to teach dyslexic students, including action songs, mind maps, storytelling, fun card games, role-playing, and slide presentations. The TPR method proved highly effective among dyslexic children, serving as a suitable teaching strategy across all groups. It improved listening skills, significantly reduced stress levels, enhanced comprehension abilities, and boosted memory retention. TPR also played a crucial role in integrating dyslexic students into mainstream educational settings.

With appropriate interventions, surface dyslexia can be addressed effectively. Dyslexic students should be provided ample time for learning, and encouragement, support, and accurate information should be consistently offered from their early education onwards to dispel any sense of incompetence and to foster confidence in their ability to learn. Teachers can encourage them by praising even their smallest achievements and motivating them to excel academically using innovative techniques like TPR.

### **The visually impaired students.**

The research did by Savić (Savić, 2014) was aimed to explore how visually impaired students learn English using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, potentially contributing to the development of an English learning model tailored for visually impaired students, ensuring their right to better education and enhanced learning experiences with TPR. The study was conducted at Yaketunis Yogyakarta, involving fifteen visually impaired students. Data sources included the students themselves, recorded actions (video-taped), interviews (audio-taped), and field notes. The findings revealed that visually impaired students had a novel and effective learning experience in English, characterized by active participation, a stress-free environment, and enjoyment. TPR effectively addressed their limitations in visualization, relying on auditory cues to gather information. Students practiced responding to instructions, pronouncing words, and repeating them multiple times, utilizing their sense of hearing to enhance their psychomotor skills. For instance, commands like "sit down!" and "stand up!" were used. These learning activities



significantly supported the students in developing vocabulary, expressions, and language commands.

This method targets children with visual impairment that prevents them from hearing information spoken to them. Additionally, they used it to detect a shape and media size in palpability. Additionally, the method was successful in helping visually challenged pupils in learning English. It would be more beneficial to learn by executing the action than just by memorization. It would be simpler for the kids to understand English if they spoke or listened as they were instructed. The visually handicapped children required an English learning strategy that suited their needs. The teacher should paint a realistic picture of the things being learned as students increase their English language skills. Total Physical Responses was used by the students to actively implement what they had learnt. The students practiced giving responses of some instructions, pronounced some words and repeated the words many times. They practiced how to give instructions and respond by maximizing their sense of hearing to activate their psychomotor competence. This process of learning activities supported them in developing their skill in mastering vocabulary, expression, and language command. The exercises that teachers at the school might carry out to inspire visually impaired pupils to acquire and improve their English abilities were reported in the experience of visually impaired students studying English using Total Physical Responses. Students who were learning English found the program to be beneficial. The instruction was tailored to the needs of the visually impaired students in order to maximize their use of hearing while they learned.

However, despite its benefits, Total Physical Response (TPR) also has its drawbacks (Al Harrasi, 2014). One challenge is that teachers may feel pressured to adhere strictly to the curriculum and complete teaching tasks within limited time frames, typically around 40 minutes. This can be especially challenging when course books are densely packed with activities, leaving little room for teachers to ensure thorough comprehension among students. Another limitation of TPR is its potential lack of creativity. TPR activities primarily involve students imitating the teacher's speech and actions, which may limit opportunities for students to generate novel utterances or express their own viewpoints. Activities such as listening, singing, matching, and performing actions are typically based on commands or instructions, which may restrict students' ability to engage creatively.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The articles for this study were sourced using internet search engines like Google Scholar and Mendeley. To meet the paper's objectives, extensive literature searches were conducted, applying specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The criteria used to select articles are outlined below:

1. This study is based on library research.
2. The publication year of the selected articles ranges from 2010 to 2023.
3. The research may represent the result of various researches
4. Keyword for first theme is "Total Physical Response".

5. Keyword for second theme is "Stress-free Learning".
6. The articles will be evaluated and categorized into subthemes to facilitate analysis.
7. The study is situated within the context of English language teaching in educational settings.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Various research has been conducted regarding to TPR method to teach English. There are also numerous results. There are some same result that come from those studies, that the teaching environment with TPR is in zero stress atmosphere and the result come from (Mohan et al., 2022) which conducted TPR to dyslexic students even stated that by employing the TPR method to teach the dyslexic students reduces their stress level. The TPR method is also proven to be stress-free and joyful for the visual impaired students, as they gain improvement in their English by learning with TPR method (Savić, 2014). Student's engagement in TPR method's classroom is also very high. These results goes with (Richards & Rodgers, 2010) who stated that the TPR is a method that integrates speech and action, aiming to teach language through physical (motor) activities. Students are encouraged to speak at their own pace, without the use of textbooks, fostering a non-threatening classroom environment.

The Total Physical Response method also said that is the most appropriate method to teach the young student. As it is done by Er who examined the study to early childhood students (Er, 2013a), Duan who examined TPR in preschool Children (Duan, 2021), Xie (Xie, 2021) and Diana (Diana et al., 2022) who examined TPR to young student which all come to a statement that TPR is very appropriate to be conducted to young students. TPR method can train children's listening skills with activities such as imperative drills, action songs and using flashcards). It is also align with the statement from Mariyam and Musfiroh (2019) that using TPR method to teach ESL for kindergarten students helps advance our understanding of effective pedagogical approaches in early language education, contributing to the improvement of teaching practices, students outcomes, and the overall quality of ESL instruction for young students. In the experimental study done by Xie which observe full TPR taught classroom and another with limited TPR taught classroom also outcame with the result of the full TPR taught classroom is doing better than the limited TPR-taught classroom. as it is shown by the student's focusing enthusiasm, interest, motivation and confidence (Xie, 2021). According to Rokhayati (2017), this teaching and learning approach helps students remember English words and expressions effectively. It is versatile, suitable for both large and small classes, as well as adult learners, and particularly beneficial for active students in class. Implementing the TPR method enhances student engagement with the lessons, leading to improved comprehension and learning outcomes.

Rokhayati stated that one of the benefits of doing the Total Physical Response method in the classroom is that the method is not only appropriate to be conducted to young students but also for adult learners. Ibrohim (Ibrohim et al., 2019) and Ilmi

(Dzurotul Ilmi & Anwar, 2022) conducted research on the TPR method in junior high classrooms. Which has different characteristics for young students. Both of the studies showed that the TPR method is proven to develop students' vocabulary skills. The students enjoy TPR. It created a fun and relaxed environment. It also motivates students to be interested in English vocabulary through certain activities. TPR method's activity helps the students with dyslexia to learn. The activity that is the most helpful for dyslexic students to learn English is by mind map. Not to mention the other activities, such as action songs, storytelling, fun games, etc. because of the fun process of learning, it reduces stress among dyslexic students.

However, nothing is perfect, as it stated by Al Harrasi, TPR also has its limitation. One of the primary challenges for teachers is the obligation to adhere to the curriculum and complete teaching tasks within a limited time frame, typically 40 minutes. This becomes particularly difficult when textbooks are densely packed with activities, leading to rushed lessons and less attention to students' needs. Another limitation of TPR is its potential lack of creativity, as activities primarily involve students imitating the teacher's commands like listening, singing, matching, and performing actions, which may restrict opportunities for students to express their personal viewpoints (Al Harrasi, 2014).

Similarly, Xie (2021) noted similar issues with implementing TPR in classrooms due to time constraints caused by extensive planned activities. Teachers may find it challenging to effectively employ TPR methods within limited time frames. Furthermore, Duan (2021) emphasized that successful implementation of TPR requires teachers to possess strong professional skills and comprehensive abilities, underscoring the need for rigorous training in these areas. Additionally, Xie (2021) highlighted that TPR may not be suitable for introverted students and may not effectively teach grammar concepts, further pointing out limitations in its applicability.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The article discusses numerous advantages and obstacles encountered by educators when utilizing the TPR method to teach English. From the findings here we can conclude The TPR method is highly suitable for use with both young students and adult learners. The usage of TPR increased student's engagement for the fun activities, memory games, songs, etc. TPR increases student's interest and motivation in learning English. It also helps the visually impaired students and students with dyslexic. For it creates "zero stress" atmosphere. And the TPR also has some drawbacks. TPR is not suitable for introverted students, not suitable for grammar, and TPR require high quality of teacher's professionalism & comprehensive ability. To effectively implement the TPR method, teachers must enhance their professional skills through rigorous training.



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