

Total Physical Response Method

**"Tell me and I forget . Teach me and I remember .
Involve me in action and I learn ."** Benjamin Franklin

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التدريس ليس علماً فحسب ، بل هو فن كذلك ؛ لذلك كان حرياً بمدرسي اللغة الانكليزية أن يكونوا على اطلاع واسع بكل طرائق التدريس التي تستخدم في تدريس هذه اللغة .

علم طرائق التدريس تصدى لهذه المسؤولية وقدم للمدرسين والمعلمين فن تدريس هذه اللغة كي يمكنهم من التعامل بنجاح مع مختلف المواقف العملية التي تواجههم في قاعة الدرس في بيئات متنوعة ، وفروق فردية مختلفة وخلفيات ثقافية واجتماعية متباينة .

هذه الدراسة أهتمت بالتحري عن طريقة (الاستجابة البدنية الكاملة) ، وهي واحدة من الطرائق المستخدمة في هذا المجال .

التدريس بموجب هذه الطريقة ، والتي تعمل بظروف خالية من الشد النفسي للمتعلم ، هي عادةً تبدأ بأوامر يصدرها المدرس أو المعلم شفهيّاً ، ويستجاب لها من قبل المتعلمين بدنياً وذلك بتنفيذ هذه الأوامر . هذه الطريقة يفترض أن تغطي المهارات اللغوية الأربع وحسب اكتسابها في اللغة الأم التي تحاكيها .

الدراسة هي مسح كامل للجانبين النظري والعملية ، وتنتهي باستعراض الميزات الإيجابية ، والنقاط السلبية لهذه الطريقة ، ومن ثم الاستنتاجات والتوصيات المناسبة لضمان الاستفادة القصوى منها .

Abstract

Teaching is not only a science , but it is also an art ; therefore , EFL teachers should be familiar with all the methods and approaches used in teaching English .

Consequently , EFL methodology takes charge of this process and equips English teachers with the art of teaching this language in order to help them deal successfully with a variety of actual teaching situations they face .

This study is concerned with investigating Total Physical Response method (Henceforth TPR) , which is one of the methods used in teaching English . According to this method , teaching which occurs in a stress-free environment , usually begins with commands issued by the teachers verbally and the learners respond physically to their commands . It uses a procedure similar to a "Simon Says" game .

TPR follows the same order of the four language skills of the acquisition of a first language : listening , speaking , reading and writing . The teacher initiates teaching by giving commands verbally and the learners (s) respond (s) physically . The aim is to train the learners' ears to listening skill , to receive accurate pronunciation and to understand the meanings . Next , the learners are given opportunities to speak when they get ready . Then , they are encouraged to read those commands which are written on the board and finally , they are taught how to write them .

The study is a thorough survey which covers the two sides : a theoretical side and a practical side (under the heading : classroom scene) . Then , the study ends with the advantages and disadvantages of the method , conclusions and recommendations .

1.1 Introduction

English has become the accepted international language of politics , technology and commerce ; therefore , it is logical that ELT methodology has received a lot of attention all over the world .

The twentieth century has seen the rise and the fall of many approaches to language teaching . Many approaches appear as reactions to old methods . Their starting points is often a belief in how languages should not be taught and in how the old methods have failed . (Johnson : 1982 :3)

Methodology , which has a strong relationship with other sciences , has witnessed continued progress due to the development in linguistics , psychology and sociology . Psychological and sociological studies related to language learning have shed much light on the nature of second foreign language learning .

(Hamash : 1999 :75) and (Richards etal 1992 :25)

There are conflicting philosophies of the methods and approaches^(*) used in teaching English as a second/foreign language . Some place emphasis on accuracy , other place emphasis on fluency ; some believe in immediate correction of all errors learners make , some believe in correction some of errors and leave the rest to another occasion , some allow teachers to use a native language widely to explain the meaning on linguistic rules , others prevent using a native language completely whereas some believe that a native language should be used in some rare occasions when teachers want to save time and effort , especially in explaining the meaning of abstract words or ideas . Some adopt the strategy of teacher-centered class , others adopt learner–centered class .

TPR requires initial attention to meaning rather than to the form of items . Grammar is thus taught inductively . To achieve this objective ,the technique of using commands is mainly used .

(Richards and Rodgers : 2001:76)

From the fore-mentioned discussion , we can say that every method has its own merits and demerits . In other words , no method is completely right or completely wrong , and each method has proponents and opponents .

Consequently , teachers have to be familiar with all methods and approaches used in teaching English as a foreign/second language in order to be ready to cope with different actual situations they may face . They should be professionally qualified as they are the pillars of the teaching process .

Effective teaching is not secured through knowing the foreign language system only , but it is also necessary to know how to present the language aspects to learners properly , how to deal with various teaching situations , how to deal with mixed-ability classes which have huge individual differences and how to manage the classroom successfully . All these necessitate that all EFL teachers should be cognizant of all the methods and approaches used in teaching English , and one of these methods is TPR .

Kumaravadivelu (2006 :94) has another idea of TPR . He believes that TPR does not deserve the status of a method . He believes that it is no more than classroom procedures that are consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of a learner-centered pedagogy . He thinks that a method must satisfy at least two major criteria . First , it should be informed by a set of theoretical principles derived from feeder disciplines and a set of classroom procedures directed at practising teachers . Second, a method should be able to guide and sustain various aspects of language learning and teaching operations particularly in terms of curricular content , language skills and proficiency levels (beginning , intermediate and advanced) .

1.2 The Aim of the study

The aim of this study has been twofold : First , it is essential for every English teachers to be cognizant of all the methods and approaches used in teaching this foreign language and second , to encourage them to create their eclectic method from a range of those methods and approaches .

1.3 Eclectic Method

Although the dominant approach set by the Iraqi Ministry of Education is the communicative approach , this does not mean to neglect the other methods and approaches .

Admittedly , all EFL teachers are convinced that no single method of teaching can help them confront the challenges of everyday teaching . Therefore , they can create a "method" of their own and call it an "eclectic method" . In this method , they can choose from a range of the methods and approaches what suit their learners and the actual teaching situations in order to achieve the objectives of the teaching materials effectively .

1.4 What made Dr. J. Asher devise TPR ?

Dr. Asher noticed that only 5 percent of the learners who enrolled in a beginning foreign/second language course in the United States continue for four years . He thought of this undesirably high attrition rate (wastage) and attributed it to the negative effects of the stress that language learning causes among many learners .

Consequently , he decided to present a solution to this problem making use of the process of first language learning in which parents , who are the best language teachers in the world , provide children with utterances that lead them to acquire their first language .

Asher also noticed that children pass through a silent period before they begin to speak . Moreover , he found that about 50 percent of parents' utterances to children are commands .

After careful consideration of these factors , Asher determined to devise his stress-free method .

(Chastain 1988 :96)

1.5 Which approach TPR follows : Comprehension or humanistic ?

Most of the authors who wrote on TPR agree that TPR follows the similar principles of the comprehension approach , except Kumaravadivelu (2006 :92) who believes that TPR advocates the humanistic approach .

Consequently , it is better to have an overview of both approaches in order to decide which approach TPR follows :

Comprehension approach emphasizes that :

(Richards etal 1992 :72)

- a. before learners are taught speaking , there should be a period of training in listening comprehension .
- b. comprehension should be taught by teaching learners to understand meaning in the target language .
- c. productive language skills (speaking and writing) will emerge more naturally when learners have well developed comprehension skills .
- d. such an approach reflects how children learn their first language .

Whereas in humanistic approach , the following principles are considered important : (Ibid :169)

- a. the development of human values .
- b. growth in self–awareness and in the understanding of others .
- c. sensitivity to human feelings and emotions .
- d. active students involvement in learning and in the way learning takes place .

From this overview of both approaches , one can conclude that TPR is an example of comprehension approach and the silent way is an example of humanistic approach .

1.6 The Theoretical Background of The TPR Method

TPR is a language teaching method developed by US originator , James Asher , a professor of psychology at San Jose State University , California . (Zare-ee : 2006 :154)

This method follows the comprehension approach because it attaches importance to listening comprehension . The philosophy of this method is that language learning should start with understanding and later proceed to production spontaneously . (Razmjoo 2010 :48)

In TPR , learning follow the following sequences :

Understanding → doing → production

In this method , items are presented in the foreign language as orders , commands and instruction in a stress-free environment and learner(s) should respond physically .

This method is based on analogy to parent-child interactions, in which a parent speaks and a child reacts physically . That is why in this method the teacher gives the orders verbally and these orders are carried out by the whole class or individuals physically . The teacher usually begins with one order , for example ; stand up , Ali ; shut the door , Ahmed ; or come here , Mazin . In the process of time , the teacher can give a series of orders to a learner ; for example : Ali , stand up , walk over there , stop , turn around , salute the flag , sit down , thank you . This is thought to lead to more meaningful and effective learning . When teachers activate learners' motor skills through a command sequence .

The idea of building the TPR method is based on the principle of psychomotor association . Asher noted that children listen and respond with gestures before they speak in their learning of their mother-tongue .

(Richards , etal 1992 :385) and (Zare – ee : 2006 :154)

The foreign language , i.e. , English (Johnson : 2001 :9) is the only language used throughout the lesson . What the teacher

says in English is easy for learners to understand , because all the sentences are instructions for actions . The teacher first demonstrates these actions himself/herself several times , then s/he chooses members of the class to do them . After that , learners are asked to speak the foreign language . This means when learners can all respond to commands correctly , one of them can then start giving instructions to other classmates .

In TPR , learners do not have to give instructions themselves, i.e., speak until they get ready and they cannot read the commands they have learned to perform until after ten hours of instruction . (Al–Rifai and Mizhir , 2012 :29)

It is believed (Harmer , 2007 :68) that since the learners learn a lot of the language from commands directly at them , they can benefit a lot of this technique .

TPR which enjoyed some popularity in the 1970s and 1980s is a very beneficial method for early stages , even though it may be difficult to teach complex language through it .

(Richards and Rodgers 2001 :78) and (Zaree–ee : 2006:155)

Asher (Richards and Rodgers 2001 :74) sees a first and a second/foreign language learning as parallel processes . He sees three processes as central :

1. Children develop listening competence before they develop the ability to speak . At the early stages of first language acquisition , they can understand complex utterances that they cannot spontaneously produce or imitate .
2. Children's ability in listening comprehension is acquired because children are required to respond physically to spoken language in the form of parental commands .
3. Once a foundation in listening comprehension has been established , speech evolves naturally and effortlessly out of it .

1.7 A classroom Scene

The teacher enters the classroom and takes attendance. Then, she tells her students that they will be studying English in a way that is similar to the way they learned their native language . She tells them not to speak at first , but only listen to her commands and do the actions along with her and after a period of time , they will be given opportunities to speak . After that she calls on four students to come to the front of the room and sit with her in chairs that are lined up facing the other students and tells the others to listen and watch .

In English , the teacher says "stand up" . As she says it , she stands up and she signals for the four students to rise with her . They all stand up . "Sit down" she says and they all sit down . The teacher and the students stand up and sit down together several times , according to the teacher's commands . After that , the teacher issues a new commands , "Turn around" . The students follow the teacher's example and turn so that they are facing their chairs . "Turn around" the teacher says again and this time , they turn to face the other students as before . "Sit down . Stand up . Turn around . Sit down" , the teacher says and the four students do the actions with their teacher . Then , she says "walk" and they all begin walking towards the front row of the students' seats .

"Stop. Jump. Stop. Turn around . Sit down" The teacher gives the commands and they all perform the action together . The teacher gives these commands again , changing her orders and saying them quite quickly .

Once again , the teacher gives the commands ; this time , she remains seated and the four students respond to her commands perfectly . Then , she signals that she would like one of the four students as a volunteer to follow her commands . One of the four students raises his hand and performs the actions she commands .

Later , the teacher approaches the other students who have been sitting observing her and their four classmates . She gives them the commands and they perform the actions .

Now , the teacher is satisfied that the class has mastered all the commands she issues ; therefore , she begins to introduce some new ones . She says , "point to the door" . She extends her right arm and right index finger in the direction of the door and the four students point with her . Then , she says , "Point to the desk" , "Point to the chair" , "Walk to the door" , "Touch the door" . When she gives these commands , the teacher and the four students perform the actions . After that she changes the order of the commands . She remains seated when she gives the command to the four students . When the students seem confused , she repeats the command and perform the action with them .

Next , the teacher turns to the rest of the students and gives the commands , and the students perform the actions .

Then , the teacher issues two commands in the form of a compound sentence "Point to the door and walk to the door" . Again , the four students perform the actions .

According to this method (Zare-ee 2006 154) physical actions can promote long-term retention .

As the last step of the lesson , the teacher writes the new commands on the board . Each time , she writes a command , she acts it out and the students copy the sentences from the board into their note-books .

The class is over . No one except the teacher has spoken a word . A few weeks later , the teacher gives all the students an opportunity to speak . (Larsen-Freeman : 2000 : 108-111)

1.8 The Principles of TPR Method

The following are the basic principles of TPR upon which the teachers behaviour inside the classroom is based :

1. Meaning in the target language can often be conveyed through body movements or gestures . In the first phase of the lesson , the teacher issues commands to a few students (volunteers) , then s/he performs the actions with them . In the second phase , these students demonstrate their understanding the commands by performing alone .

2. Students' understanding the target language should be developed before speaking : Students say nothing at first , they only respond physically .
3. Other students can learn through observing actions as well as by performing the actions themselves later .
4. The imperative is a powerful linguistic device through which the teacher can direct students' behaviour .
5. Feeling of success and low anxiety facilitate learning and make it more effective .
6. Students should not be made to memorize fixed routines , therefore , teachers have to change the order of the commands .
7. Correction should be carried out in an unobtrusive manner . When the students make errors , the teacher repeats the commands while acting it out .
8. Students must develop flexibility in understanding novel combinations of target language chunks . They need to understand more than the exact sentence used in training . Novelty is also motivating .
9. Language learning is more effective when it is fun . For instance , the teacher says "Jump to the desk" . When the teacher jumps , everyone laughs .
10. Spoken language should be emphasized over written language .
11. Students will begin to speak when they are ready . A few weeks later , a student who has not spoken before gives commands .
12. Students are expected to make errors when they first begin speaking ; therefore , teachers should be tolerant and correct only major errors and leave minor ones . Even those which are major should be corrected unobtrusively . As the students get more advanced , the teacher can correct all the errors they make .

(Larsen–Freeman 2000 :111–113) and (Mirhassani : 2003:250)

1.9 How to Reinforce Reading and Writing Skills ?

It is obvious that TPR develops listening and speaking skills, and the other two skills , i.e. , reading and writing are considerably slighted .

In order to reinforce reading skill , the teacher can use cards on which commands are written , such as : stand up , sit down , clap , bring your bag , open your book , shut the door , raise your hand , etc . S/he can randomly choose one of these cards and lift it in order to be seen by all learners . Then , s/he asks one of the learners to read it bit out loud and carry it out

Concerning writing , the teacher can issue a command and ask one of the learners to carry out that order and then write it (with the help of the teacher) on the board . Then , s/he asks the learner to clean the board and read the order bit out loud to his/her classmates again in order to let the whole class write it in their copybooks .

Later , the teacher can check the spelling and then write the order on the board in order to let those who are poor at spelling improve their spelling .

1. 10 Techniques used in TPR

The major techniques of this method is the use of commands to direct behaviour . Although this technique is powerful , a variety of activities is preferred for maintaining student interest .

The following are the major teaching techniques of TPR in which its principles are put into practice :

1. Using commands to Direct Behaviours .

The commands are given to get students to perform an action ; the action makes the meaning of the commands clear .

At first , to clarify meaning , a teacher performs the actions with students . Later , s/he directs students alone . Students' actions tell a teacher whether or not students understand . A teacher is advised to vary the sequence of

the commands so that students do not simply memorize the action sequence without understanding the language . It is recommended that a teacher presents three commands at a time . After students feel successful with these , three more can be taught .

2. Role Reversal

Students command their teacher and classmates to perform some actions . It is claimed that students will want to speak after ten to twenty hours of instruction , although some students may take longer . Students should not be encouraged to speak until they are ready .

3. Action Sequence

Sometimes a teacher gives three connected commands. For example , he may tell his/her students to point to the door , walk to the door and touch the door . As the students learn more and more of the target language , a longer series of connected commands can be given , which together comprise whole procedures . This series of commands is called an action sequence or an operation . Many everyday activities . like writing a letter , can be broken down into an action sequence that students can be asked to perform , for instance :

- Take out a pen .
- Take out a piece of paper .
- Fold the letter .
- Put it in an envelope .
- Seal the envelope .
- Write the address on the envelope .
- Put a stamp on the envelope .
- Mail the letter . (Larsen–Freeman :2000:115–117)
and (Richards and Rodgers : 2001 : 77 – 78) .

1.11 Objectives of TPR

The general objectives of TPR are to teach oral proficiency at the beginning level through the use of action – based drills in the imperative form . Comprehension is a means to an end , and the ultimate aim is to teach basic speaking skills .

(Richards and Rodgers : 2001 :75) .

1.12 Advantages of TPR

1. TPR provides the foundation for learners to acquire a foreign language .
2. It reduces anxiety in learning since learners do not have the stress of producing language at early stages of learning. When anxiety is reduced , learners' self-confidence is boosted , or in other words if anxiety levels go down , attention levels go up , therefore , lessons become enjoyable as well as memorable for learners .
3. It is practical for all kinds of classes whether they are small or large , for all learners whether they are children , adults or mixed ability , and for all kinds of teachers whether they are novice or experienced because it requires very little preparation on the teacher's side .

(Hassaskhah and Vahabi : 2014 :89)

1.13 Disadvantages of TPR

1. The overemphasis of using commands as a basic technique leads to boredom on the teachers' and learners' sides .
2. Concerning abstract words or ideas , teachers cannot easily make them clear by using pictures or even dramatization .
3. TPR cannot be used as a single method . It is not easy to cover all language components by using commands only .
4. Practically , TPR has proved successful only at low levels , especially at the primary stage .

1.14 Native Language

TPR (Larsen – Freeman : 2000 :115) is usually introduced in learners' native language . After the introduction , the native language can be used only in some rare occasions .

Consequently , meaning is made clear through body movements . When learners face problems of abstract language , these problems (stressful situations) are tackled by pictures as a device to convey abstract meaning . (Ibid :108)

1.15 Learner's Role

In the first phase of the lesson , learners only listen and respond physically , but in the later phases , they are allowed to take part in giving commands through the activity "Role Reversal" . Then , they are given an opportunity to read these commands , and then copy them from the board into their copybooks . (Richards and Rodgers : 2001 :67)

From the fore–mentioned discussion , we can conclude that learners are active and there is a good interaction between the teacher and learners inside the classroom .

1.16 Teacher's Role

The teacher should be active , tolerant of the learners' errors and correct their major errors unobtrusively . S/he should also choose a well–connected commands which create meaningful social situations and then change the order of these commands in order to avoid fixed routines .

Although the teacher uses imperatives , s/he does them in a gentle , pleasant way ; the way a parent would do with a child . In other words ; the teacher's voice , manner and facial expressions should be kind . (Richards and Rodgers : 2001 :78)

1.17 A TPR Course

There is no basic text materials , but a set of commands prepared by the teacher . For absolute beginners , lessons may not require the use of materials since the teacher's voice , actions and gestures may be sufficient basis for classroom activities . Later , the teacher may use common classroom objects , such as books , pens , desks , chairs , etc . As the course develops , the teacher will need to make or collect supporting materials to support teaching points . These may include pictures , slides , word charts , films , etc . The focus is on meaning .

(Richards and Rodgers : 2001 :77)

In later stages , TPR uses sentence – based syllabus with grammar and vocabulary . Learners are provided with books which have a lot of action words .

When the teacher starts reading from those books , learners listen and act as they hear an action word such as "jump" , "run" , "write" , etc . (Hassaskhah and Vahabi : 2014 :88)

Ramiro Garcia (Ibid : 89) , a Spanish teacher who has been using TPR for more than 20 years , introduced a TPR bingo , which can be used with learners of all age groups . In this activity , the teacher prepares a set of bingo cards which include pictures corresponding to a set of directions or movements . When the teacher utters the direction , the learners will place a chip on top of the corresponding picture , if the picture is on their bingo card .

1.18 Evaluation

Formal evaluation can be conducted simply by commanding individual learner to perform a series of actions . The teacher will immediately know whether or not the learner understand by observing his/her actions . As learners become more advanced , their performance of skits (comic stories) they have created can become the basis for evaluation . (Larsen–Freeman , 2000 :115)

1.19 Conclusions

1. From all the fore – mentioned discussion , we can conclude that there is no method which is perfect . Each method has some merits and some demerits . So teachers should benefit from all the methods in order to facilitate teaching process and to transmit knowledge to their learners easily .
2. TPR suits beginners .

1.20 Recommendations

TPR should be widely used in association with the communicative approach , especially at the primary stage to provide the foundation for learners to acquire English .

Footnotes

* A method is a way of teaching . It is a set of procedures which teachers are to follow in the classroom . Methods are usually based on a set of beliefs about the nature of language and learning .

An approach is a more general , philosophical orientations that can encompass a range of different procedures .

(Nunan:2003 :5)

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