



## Total Physical Response (TPR) Method in Improving English Vocabulary Acquisition of 5-6 Years Old Children

Siti Nurfalah Mariyam\*, Tadkiroatun Musfiroh

Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

### Article History:

Received: April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Revised: August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Accepted: October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Published: December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019

### Keywords:

English vocabulary,  
Total physical response,  
Vocabulary acquisition

### \*Correspondence Address:

sitinm7.2017@student.uny.ac.id

**Abstract:** Nowadays, English has become one of the subjects that must be mastered. Thus, English learning should be done from an early age. This research aimed to describe how Total Physical Response (TPR) method can improve English vocabulary achievement in 5-6 years old children. TPR is the language learning approach which stimulates the children in acquiring their mother language which implemented in teaching foreign languages. The samples of this research were 5-6 years students of TK (Kindergarten) An-Nisa, Rokan Hilir, Riau Province, Indonesia with the total samples 15 students. This research used qualitative research. The data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics, analyzing the scores of English vocabularies. The results showed that noun categories had the highest percentage in vocabulary acquisition (97.78 %), then followed by verbs (86.67 %) and adjectives (62.22 %). Meanwhile, the percentages of vocabularies that used by children were verbs (24.44 %), nouns (11.11 %), while the children were still not capable in using adjectives (0 %). The results of this research is expected to contribute to the development of English learning for young learners.

## INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition is defined as the period when someone acquires languages or vocabularies in his brain (Iskandarwassid & Sunendar, 2009). Language acquisition occurs in early age or when someone acquires the first language or usually called as mother language (Hashim & Yunus, 2018). Language acquisition is different from language learning. In language acquisition, it happens spontaneously and unconsciously. Meanwhile, language learning refers to the processes which occur when a certain language is introduced. When children learn a language, it will be more effective to teach them naturally, or through direct communication by using the target

language. Crain states that one of the children's development stages, according to Piaget, is pre-operational (2-7 years) while in this stage, the children needs a concrete situation to process the idea rather than the abstract ones (Crain, 2014). Therefore, it is suggested to teach language to children by using concrete situation.

Children aged 5-6 years old have a high curiosity. It should be supported with the activities which can develop their growth. Language is one of the aspects that should be developed in these ages. They are not only taught by using the mother language, but also foreign languages. The earlier the children learn a language, the better their memories and

brain development will be (Faqihatuddinitah, 2016).

In kindergarten, English teaching is conducted in order to develop the international perspective in learning and utilizing the children's critical period when learn a language. However, the processes for teaching English for children still have difficulties, especially in developing the material, learning activities, and the methods which are not appropriate with children's characteristics.

The ability to mastery a language is related with the ability in mastering the vocabularies. If the students are not able in mastering the vocabularies of the language, they will have difficulties in mastering the language. The vocabularies should be introduced and taught to the students appropriately, by using formal techniques which encourage the students to give active participation in the classroom. It is necessary to teach vocabulary as early as possible, as the learning method. The appropriate method can affect the learning results. One of the appropriate language teaching methods is Total Physical Response (TPR). TPR is an approach in language teaching which developed by James Asher, an American psychologist, when the implementation is based on how the children acquires their mother language. Understanding is the integral aspect from TPR method. The findings which support Asher's theory are some us teach the language unsuccessfully, since we ignore the natural order when acquire languages. Hence, the children cannot be forced to produce a language in early stage until they are ready (Al Harrasi, 2013).

The learning activities will be more interesting when followed by physical activities. Physical activities can reduce children's anxiety, which reduce the affective filter which facilitates language learning. This physical activities refer to the direct and spontaneous activities in language learning, since the children

needs direct involvements when learning (Uysal & Yavuz, 2015). Children show their understanding through their native language by doing physical responses. Asher states that the first achievement of TPR in language acquisition is the capability to understand the target language. The more target language learning filled with physical activities, the stronger the recollection in their memories (Brown, 2007).

The choice in the language learning method will affect the learning success. Any improvements in language leaning through new method and approaches will make an innovation in our understanding of language and how language occurs (Richards, J, C & Ridgers, T, 2001). However, in Indonesia, the methods which are used in teaching vocabulary to children is still conventional (memorizing). Therefore, this research aims to identify how Total Physical Response (TPR) method improve the vocabulary acquisition of 5-6 years old children.

## **THEORETICAL SUPPORT**

Total Physical Response (TPR) is language learning method which is developed by James Asher, an American psychologist, in 1970, whom is a professor in San José State University, California. TPR is a language learning method which relates to the utterances and actions (Asher, 2009). This method aims to stimulate the ways children acquire their mother languages in learning foreign languages.

The learning theory developed by Asher is based on the belief that language is learned by motoric activities, which are emphasized in the physical activities in improving meaningful learning (Levey, s, 2011). This method is related to "trace theory" in psychology, that the more target language learning filled with physical activities, the stronger the recollection in their memories (Brown, 2007).

The implementation of TPR method is related to the use of the right brain, meanwhile some of them also use left brain (Richards, J, C & Ridgers, T, 2001). It is based on the activities which are done in the right side, while the cognitive ones belong to the left ones. In the implementation of TPR method, the right brain processes physical activities while the left brain produces languages. The theory is supported by the research which are conducted by (Li, 2010) when the children show their understanding through actions, and associate their vocabularies with their actions. When the children can connect the target language with the actions, they will understand the languages unconsciously. Hence, they will memorize the vocabularies unconsciously.

The implementation of TPR method in vocabularies learning can be divided into several stages. First, one-word stage, when the children can follow teacher's instruction in one word. For example "sit down, stand up, get up" and etc. Second, one sentence stage, where in this stage, the instruction is said in one sentence. For example "walk to the door, sit in the chair" and etc (Asher, 2009).

Understanding is an integral aspect of TPR method. Asher reveals a strong evidence which supports the theory how foreign language teaching is not successful since we ignore the natural orders, such as listening and understanding before speaking off. Asher also states that the children will observe and try to understand their parents' languages for a while, which called as silent period. Therefore, the children should not be forced to produce the language suddenly, and it should be postponed until the children are ready (Al Harrasi, 2013).

The mastery of a language is related to the vocabularies mastery (Ilham, 2009). The vocabularies mastery is related to the language mastery. It can be acquired by

doing reading (Liu, 2015; Takach, V, 2008) or listening (Takach, V, 2008) the target languages. Other previous researchers also find that the vocabulary acquisition of the children can be seen from the way they are speaking, writing, and translating, even though they are not as much as reading (Liu, 2015). The children who learn second languages also acquire new vocabularies unconsciously or without a conscious learning. It can be obtained by listening, speaking, and reading, in order to give them understanding, or giving new information (Zhao & Olszewski, 2016).

The development of children's language acquisition can be influenced by the inputs that they receive. Based on this the statement, (Paradis, Nicoladis, Crago, & Genesee, 2011) state that students' vocabulary level can be predicted in every language based on the length of the language that is received. Hence, the longer the utterances that they receive in the target language, the better their acquisition to that language.

In this study, it refers to English as foreign language. The contexts of English as foreign languages is when there is no native speaker in the children's environment (Steinberg, Denny, Nagata, & P, 2013). However, it cannot be stated that English is foreign language for children, since there is a possibility that English is considered as second language or intensive language. The implementation of second languages for children can be seen through their understanding.

## **METHOD**

This research used qualitative research where the research was conducted based on the actual conditions. Qualitative research is a research process that is conducted naturally based on the objective conditions without any manipulation (Arifin, 2011).

This research is conducted in TK (Kindergarten) An-Nisa in District Rokan Hilir, Riau Province, Indonesia. The populations are all students of TK An-Nisa. The samples are students of TK B (5-6 years). The total of the samples are 15 students. The sample is monolingual, which only use one language in communication.

The data presented in this article is the result of trial data on the application of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method to see the acquisition of children's English vocabulary. The English vocabulary which taught in this article is a vocabulary that is commonly heard and used by children in daily life. This is based on the previous research which conducted by (Spencer, Goldstein, & Kaminski, 2012) where teachers can

choose a theme in teaching vocabulary, for example the names of objects contained in the classroom or school environment which used by children in communication.

Teaching vocabulary is related to vocabulary of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Each type of vocabulary is introduced into three vocabulary words. Hence, there are nine vocabularies which are introduced. The implementation of the method was conducted in two meetings. Each meeting is held for 15 minutes. The implementation of the method is conducted by using games. All children participate in activities by following physical activities related to the commands. The steps in implementing the TPR method in this study can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The Steps in Implementing TPR Method

Step	Description
1.	The children are asked to sit on a chair in a semicircle, with the teacher sitting in front of the children.
2.	The teacher asks two children to sit on the teacher's left and right sides.
3.	The teacher mentions the word "car" while presenting the movement of driving car.
4.	The children are asked to follow the teacher without repeating the command.
5.	Then, it is continued by introducing other vocabularies.
6.	After the children are considered understand, ask the children to do the command by themselves.
7.	Perform these activities repeatedly with the commands that are getting faster.
8.	When a child does not hesitate to make a move, innovate them by shuffling the command in order to make the children do not memorize the sequence of movements.

The implementation of the method was conducted in two meetings. The first meeting, the children were introduced 6 vocabularies. At the second meeting, the teacher repeated the vocabulary which learned at the first meeting, and also add three new vocabularies. At the third meeting, the teacher assessed the results children's vocabularies which obtained from the first and second meetings.

The data was collected by giving the students some orders related to the pictures that involve physical activities. Then, interviews and observations were also conducted. Interviews were conducted to find out what vocabulary that is introduced to the children and the method used, while observations were

made to determine the use of English vocabulary that had been introduced through the TPR method in communicating. Several questions which used as the instruments to find out the English vocabulary obtained by the children. The questions were not formally asked, but in the form of games. Each question applies to all vocabulary taught. The question can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The Assessment Instrument for Vocabulary

No	Questions
1.	What is the meaning of car (in Indonesian)?
2.	Which one is car ?
3.	How to drive a car? (practice it)

The results of the TPR method were analyzed based on scoring guidelines which made based on the total value obtained.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of interviews with teachers before the adoption of the TPR method, it can be seen that the vocabulary that has been introduced to children is in the form of color, body

parts, numbers, names of objects in class, and animal names. While the method used in introducing vocabulary is the method of memorization and sometimes using images to show the vocabulary.

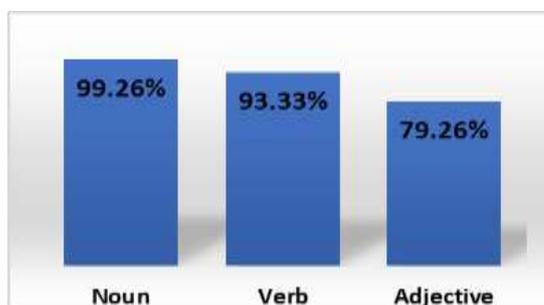
Based on the results of the TPR method trial conducted in February 2019, it is known that the results of obtaining children's English vocabulary can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The Calculation Results of Vocabulary Acquisition

		Noun	Verb	Adjective
Mentioning the meaning	Total	44	39	28
	Percentage	97.78 %	86.67 %	62.22 %
Showing the picture	Total	45	43	36
	Percentage	100 %	95.56 %	80 %
Making a movement	Total	45	44	43
	Percentage	100 %	97.78 %	95.56 %

Based on Table 3, it can be seen that the indicator mentions the meaning of vocabulary for the noun category reaches a percentage of 97.78 %, the verb category reaches 86.67 % while the adjective category only reaches 62.22 %. Then, the indicators of showing the picture related to the vocabulary introduced, in the noun category the percentage reaches 100 %, the verb category reaches a percentage of 95.56 % and the adjective category reaches 80 %. For indicators of movement related to the command, the noun category reaches a percentage of 100 %, for the verb category reaches 97.78 %, and the adjective category reaches 95.56 %.

Comparative graphs of obtaining children's English vocabulary for the noun, verb, and adjective categories using the TPR method can be seen in Figure 1.

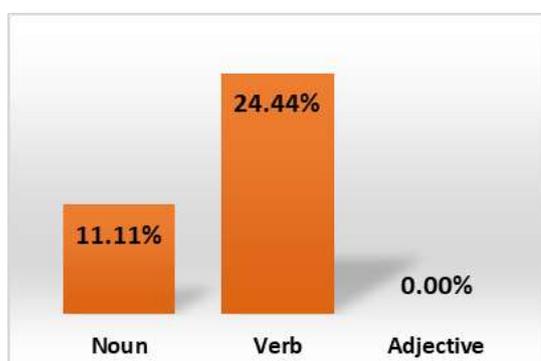


**Figure 1.** The Comparison of the Percentage of Vocabulary Acquisition

Based on the results of the Figure 1, it can be seen that by using the TPR method in increasing the acquisition of English vocabulary for 5-6 years old children, the highest percentage was obtained in the noun category which reached 99.26 %. Then followed by the verb category which reached 93.33 %. The lowest percentage is 79.26 % in the adjective category. The high percentage for the noun category is influenced by the chosen noun showing concrete objects that can be seen, touched and felt by the child. The percentage of verb categories is in the second place because children do the activities all the time, so it is easier to remember the names of certain activities, especially those which done by children

every day. While the percentage of adjective categories is in third place, since children use adjective less than nouns and verbs in communication. The results of this study are supported by the results of research conducted by (Dardjowijojo, 2018) which can be concluded that not long after the emergence of many nouns at the beginning of the child's life, several verbs appear. Also, based on the observation results in implementing TPR method, the students still doubt in following the activities related to adjectives. This result is suitable with theory Musfiroh which stated that the vocabulary sequences in pre-school are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs (Musfiroh, 2008).

The results of observations in using English vocabulary which introduced in this study can be seen in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** The Comparison of the Percentage of Observation Result

Based on Figure 2, it can be seen that the percentage of English vocabulary that has been introduced for the verb category is more used, which is as many as 24.44 %. The percentage of vocabulary usage for the noun category is 11.11 %. While the percentage of vocabulary usage for the adjective category is 0 %. The percentage results of the use of English vocabulary that introduced are related to the physical activity of children's daily activities. In addition, during the observations, children use verbs more than nouns and adjectives in communication. The more often children

use certain types of vocabulary, the more they understand the vocabulary.

The language skills of the children are influenced by how many vocabularies they have and the stimulation of vocabulary received by the children. The level of knowledge of children's vocabulary in each language can be predicted by the number and length of exposure received in the language (Paradis et al., 2011). If we see the percentage of the results of using the TPR method in increasing the acquisition of children's English vocabulary, in general the highest percentage is in vocabulary with noun categories, then work and adjectives. When viewed from the side of using English vocabulary by children, the vocabulary in the verb category is more used compared to the noun category. While for the adjective category, no one used the vocabulary in communication.

The implementation of the method is done in the form of a game. During the implementation of the method, children have high enthusiasm. Each vocabulary category is chosen by three vocabulary words which introducing to the child. In the stage of introducing nouns, the words chosen are "car, airplane, and bicycle". The three words were chosen because the vocabularies are commonly used by children in communication. In addition, the children tend to have their own interest in the three vocabulary. At the stage of introducing verbs, the words chosen are "eat, drink, and sleep". They use of these three verbs since the children are eating, drinking and sleeping every day. In the stage of introducing adjectives, the selected words are "sleepy, hungry, and thirsty". The three words are chosen because they relate to activities that done by children every day. The use of vocabulary related to the children's daily life is done in order to make the students easier in mastering the vocabulary faster. In implementing the TPR method, the children have not been able to do it if one

complete sentence is used. Hence, this study only applies the one word stage.

It cannot be denied that the more children are introduced to foreign vocabulary, the easier they acquire those languages. The activities in implementing TPR creates a meaningful learning for the children. The activities are successful in motivating the children to learn English. In two meetings which held for 15 minutes, which can improve students' understanding in using target languages which taught are great achievement. It is not easy to teach foreign language to the children, but by implementing an appropriate method and technique, it will produce an appropriate method which gives positive impact to the learning process.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research result, it can be concluded that all children have high enthusiasm in following the learning process. For the English vocabulary achievement, the children mostly master the nouns category. Then, it is followed by verbs and adjectives category. Meanwhile, the English vocabulary that mostly used by the children are verbs and noun. The students are still not capable of using adjectives in communication.

## REFERENCES

- Al Harrasi, K. T. S. (2013). Using "Total Physical Response" With Young Learners in Oman. *Childhood Education*, 90(1), 36–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2014.872513>
- Arifin, Z. (2011). *Penelitian Pendidikan Metode dan Paradigma Baru*. Bandung: Rosda Karya.
- Asher, J. J. (2009). *Learning Another Language Through Action: Total Physical Response* (Seventh Ed). California: Sky Oask Production.
- Brown, D. (2007). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to language pedagogy*. Pearson Education ESL.
- Crain, W. (2014). *Teori Perkembangan: Konsep dan Aplikasi*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Dardjowijoyo, S. (2018). *Psikolinguistik Pengantar Pemahaman Bahasa Manusia*. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Faqihatuddinitah. (2016). *Persepsi Orangtua dan Guru mengenai Bahasa Inggris Pada Anak Usia Dini di TK ABA Karangmalang Yogyakarta*. Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta.
- Hashim, H. U., & Yunus, M. (2018). English as a Second Language (ESL) Learning: Setting the Right Environment for Second Language Acquisition. *Tadris: Jurnal Keguruan Dan Ilmu Tarbiyah*, 3(2), 207–215. <https://doi.org/10.24042/tadris.v3i2.2941>
- Ilham, D. (2009). Teaching Speaking Using Direct Method at Fifth Grade of SDN 1 Cimerah Tasikmalaya.
- Iskandarwassid, & Sunendar, D. (2009). *Strategi pembelajaran bahasa*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Levey, s, P. (2011). Language Development: Understanding language Diversity in the Classroom.
- Li, C. (2010). Applicaton of Total Physical Response in Children's ESL Education.
- Liu, C. L. (2015). A Review of Effect of Different Tasks on Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition. *Higher Education Studies*, 5(5), 56–63. <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v5n5p56>
- Musfiroh, T. (2008). *Memilih, Menyusun, dan Menyajikan Cerita untuk Anak Usia Dini*. Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana.
- Paradis, J., Nicoladis, E., Crago, M., & Genesee, F. (2011). Bilingual children's acquisition of the past tense: A usage-based approach.

- Journal of Child Language*, 38(3), 554–578.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000910000218>
- Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Spencer, E. J., Goldstein, H., & Kaminski, R. (2012). Teaching Vocabulary in Storybooks. *Young Exceptional Children*, 15(1), 18–32.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1096250611435367>
- Steinberg, Denny, D., Nagata, & P. H. D. (2013). *Psycholinguistics: Language, Mind, and World*. (Second Edi). Longman.
- Takach, V. P. (2008). *Vocabulary learning strategies and foreign language acquisition*. Cromwell Press Ltd.
- Uysal, N. D., & Yavuz, F. (2015). Teaching English to Very Young Learners. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 197(February), 19–22.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.042>
- Zhao, A., & Olszewski, A. (2016). Exploring learner factors in second language (L2) incidental vocabulary acquisition through reading, 28(2), 224–245.