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EFFECTIVENESS OF TPR METHOD IN TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY TO
KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Total Physical Response (TPR) Method is one of the tools which facilitate stress-free learning, listening skills and vocabulary building. TPR method involves actions and commands of the teacher followed by the students. The study includes 100 respondents from Kindergarten classroom and examines the advantages of TPR method in the Kindergarten classroom by the use of songs, games, models, storytelling and realia. The experimental study showed that learning of vocabulary was faster in TPR classroom than the traditional classroom.

Keywords: Total Physical Response (TPR), listening skills, speaking skills, kindergarten students, vocabulary.

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INTRODUCTION

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 (Richards.J.c and Rodgers,T.S. Approaches and methods in language teaching C.U.P p-87). It was James Asher who developed the idea of TPR after 30 years of research in 1970's. Countries like America, Europe, China, Indonesia etc., adopted TPR classroom to teach foreign language to the beginners. TPR method is used to learn many more languages. Some of the application of TPR method – The performance of an Americans in learning a Russian language is very less even though the students were trained for two years in school, their performance is very poor in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Later TPR method was adopted where 21 experiments were conducted, the result was excellent with a very good performance in reading, writing, listening and speaking. In Indonesia the schools has been encouraged to teach English at elementary schools. The students who fall under the age group of 8-10 years goes to Elementary schools. The experiments were conducted to find out the Effectiveness of TPR method in Elementary schools which included 7 samples. The teachers made use of models for the excellent output. In Colombia most of the schools will not have English teacher to teach English in primary schools. Only mentor will be in charge of teaching English language. A descriptive and interpretative case study was conducted for 35 students from 3rd grade in Gamma school- Colombia. TPR method was implemented for 1hour; the output was that students learnt many new English Vocabularies. The study deals with the kindergarten students. TPR method was adopted to teach vocabularies to the young learners whose

second language was English. The objectives of the paper is to enable the young learners to actively participate in classroom activities, to investigate the effectiveness of Total Physical Response method in teaching English vocabulary and to examine whether gender specific- grouping of students helps in learning vocabulary effectively. In the traditional classroom the teachers make use of black board, which makes the students to lack interest to learn language since the classroom is dry and boring. TPR classroom makes the students to enjoy the learning hence for the experimental study 100 students were picked up from the L.K.G classroom, who were about 3-5years old children. Usually, children spend most of their time in playing instead of learning. In order to create an atmosphere where language is acquired through playing a few activities were introduced using the Total Physical response method. Most of the students from rural areas find it difficult to move with the opposite gender in the learning system, in order to prove one of the objectives gender grouping was done in the learning system. The students were divided into three groups having boys alone as group-A, girls alone as group-B and boys and girls together as group-C. Five activities were conducted to examine the effectiveness of TPR method.

Methodology

James Asher states that “most of the grammatical structures of the target language and Hundreds of vocabulary items can be learned from the skillful use of the imperative by instructor” (Richards & Roders, 2002 p.73). TPR method gives importance to listening comprehension. The idea of focusing on the listening comprehension is based on the notion that a child learns the first language by observing the people around it. TPR method is one of the apt methods for the young learners to learn the vocabulary. The teacher gives the command in the target language the students respond through the action. The meaning in target language was conveyed through actions by the teacher. TPR gives a way for a stress free environment. TPR is based on three learning hypotheses (Richards & Roders,1997) firstly, there exists a specific innate bio-program for the language learning which defines an optimal path for first and second language development. Secondly, brain lateralization defines different learning functions in the left and right brain hemispheres. Thirdly, stress (an affective filter) intervenes between the act of learning and what is to be learned; the lower the stress, the greater the learning. In the TPR classroom the students are not forced to speak until they feel free in the classroom. The teacher plays a dual role of acting out the activity and directing the learners. In the TPR courses there is no basic text to be followed, for the beginners teacher does not use any study material for imparting language module, since the teacher’s voice, actions and gestures are sufficient for the classroom activities. The teacher uses objects like doll, toys, animals etc. most of the activities for the beginners are conducted orally or by showing pictures. Through meaningful and fun interactions students can develop their vocabulary skills. A careful choice of words is needed before conducting an activity in the classroom for beginners. In order to prove my objectives, I have conducted five experiments- (i)Words expressing emotions, (ii) The names of animals and birds, (iii)The names of fruits, vegetables and colors (iv)Story sequence (v)Action song. Before getting into the activity the students were introduced with the target vocabulary through pictures and objects and realia, later actions were taught to the students. The classroom atmosphere was entirely changed. All the three groups were monitored separately by getting the support of two more teachers. The student’s performance was recorded and they were familiar with the words which were taught. At the end of the each session the students came forward to recite the words. The students were rewarded for their performance which encouraged them to be active throughout the experimental session. When the objects and realia was given in the hands of the students, they were able to touch and feel which connected them to learn new words. The teacher enacted and the students followed, later the teacher was giving only the commands the students were performing the actions.

Results and discussions

The purpose of the study is to answer the questions whether gender specific- grouping of students help in learning vocabulary effectively and to investigate the effectiveness of TPR method in teaching English vocabulary. The observation from the experiments supports the use of TPR method in the classroom for effective learning. According to the experiments conducted, when the vocabulary was taught using TPR

techniques, the students learning was faster and their attention on the teacher was found for a longer period of time. The TPR technique relies heavily on student participation and attention. Unfortunately, if a student is absent, inattentive, or doesn't participate they will miss the effectiveness of learning. The TPR make the students to actively participate in the classroom activities. In order to get the proper output, the environment is important for the students to learn. Some students are comfortable when they are in their own gender group whereas some may not be, the teacher should know the expectations of the students. The Group-A students were much involved playing more than learning. Only few numbers of students were interested in learning, whereas other students were not concerned with the classroom activities. The language barrier was found between teacher and students. The group-A students were unable to understand the second language used by the teacher. The group-B students were active participants in the classroom. Most of the students came forward in the classroom to recite all the words learnt in the classroom, whereas few students were unable to recite everything. The confidence level was excellent in the learning process. Few students were not fully thorough with the words but the confidence to recite was excellent. The Group-C students were encouraging among themselves, participations was stunning, almost everyone participated in the activity and recited all the words. Only in few activities they were lacking. The overall study proves that gender specific – grouping of students helps the students in learning process. If the classroom consists of group-C sets of students, the output will be excellent in the learning.

Hence my study has proved the objectives- that TPR method enables the young learners to actively participate in Classroom activities, TPR method is effective in teaching English vocabulary and gender specific-grouping of students helps in learning vocabulary effectively. My study supports the TPR method, where the coordination of speech and mind are found in the learning process. TPR method is the apt method for teaching vocabulary where the students learn by playing games, singing songs, storytelling etc. As the teachers of English language the instructor must realize that their role is to help the students to acquire the skills of language. As Aellen and Corder says "Language teachers are not so much teachers of language, that is a new and unfamiliar set of manifestations of what their students already process"(error analysis and inter-language; oxford university press,p.68,1973). The present study makes a revelation on the following: The teacher should make use of the English language effectively in the classroom. The use of mother tongue must be avoided. The students must be encouraged with more activities. The classroom atmosphere must be learning place for a student. The class should consist of small number of students for an effective outcome. The TPR method is the appropriate method for teaching vocabulary and storytelling. If the TPR method is implemented in the classroom, the outcome will promise excellent results.

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