CAPÍTULO 2

THE TPR METHOD IN ENGLISH VOCABULARY TEACHING: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES

EL MÉTODO TOTAL PHYSICAL TOTAL EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL VOCABULARIO EN INGLÉS: PERSPECTIVAS Y EXPERIENCIAS DE LOS ESTUDIANTES

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Abstract

The Total Physical Response method has been considered as a key method for students' vocabulary learning; therefore, the present research aimed to describe the Lower Secondary students' perceptions of the Total Physical Response method for developing English vocabulary learning. To achieve this purpose, the researcher employed the mixed method based on action research by applying a questionnaire to the participants. The results revealed that the students had a positive perception of Total Physical Response since they were able to actively participate with their teacher, interact with their classmates, memorize new words, feel motivated and enjoy their English classes. In that regard, it was concluded that this method provided them with a meaningful experience due to its multiple advantages.

Keywords: Efficacy; interaction; memorization; method; participation

Resumen

La Respuesta Física Total ha sido considerada como un método clave para el aprendizaje del vocabulario en los estudiantes; por ello, la presente investigación tuvo como objetivo describir las percepciones de los estudiantes de secundaria inferior respecto al método de Respuesta Física Total para el desarrollo de vocabulario en inglés. Para lograr el objetivo, la investigadora empleó el método mixto basado en una investigación-acción, aplicando un cuestionario a los participantes. Los resultados revelaron que los alumnos tuvieron una percepción positiva sobre la Respuesta Física Total puesto que pudieron participar activamente con su docente, interactuar con sus compañeros, memorizar nuevas palabras, sentirse motivados y disfrutar de sus clases de inglés. En ese sentido, se concluyó

que este método les generó una experiencia significativa por sus múltiples ventajas.

Palabras clave: Eficacia; interacción; memorización; método; participación.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Umaralieva and Kizi (2023), vocabulary acquisition is a significant component to produce oral and written texts for effective communication. Therefore, students are expected to achieve an A1 level where they must understand, identify, and produce simple texts using basic words and expressions. Unfortunately, they do not reach the level in the vocabulary component due to the monotonous text-based teaching methods, which make students feel bored and unenthusiastic about learning.

Based on this background, Total Physical Response has been established as one of the most useful methods for teaching vocabulary. As Xie (2021) mentions "TPR can facilitate young learners' development of seven types of intelligence" (p.297). Additionally, Inciman et al. (2021) point out that TPR is an important method to increase students' motivation, participation, and interest in learning since it makes them feel comfortable during their English lessons. Together, these authors agree that Total Physical Response is effective in promoting not only enjoyable teaching strategies but also a multisensory approach that helps students remember and internalize words.

From these benefits of the Total Physical Response, the present research work was relevant for the educational community because it showed the students' perceptions about the benefits of this method to improve their English vocabulary learning through their active participation, interaction with their classmates, memorization of new words, motivation and enjoyment of the English classes. Additionally, it offered teachers interactive activities to teach new words without relying on technological resources, benefiting educational institutions with limited internet access.

In that regard, the following study aimed to describe the Lower Secondary students' perceptions of the Total Physical Response method for developing English vocabulary learning. Therefore, a specific objective was proposed which was to analyze the Lower Secondary students' perceptions of the Total Physical Response method for improving English vocabulary learning.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Definition of the Total Physical Response

Total Physical Response (TPR) is defined as a teaching method proposed by Dr. James Asher at the end of the 1960s that combines body movements with language learning to create an effective educational experience. According to Arsai and Arsai (2023), "TPR is based on the theory that memory is enhanced through association with physical movements" (p.392). Therefore, this strategy has been widely used by English teachers to make their classes more understandable, enjoyable, and interesting and to promote a positive learning environment within the classroom.

2.1.1 Advantages of TPR for English language teaching and learning

TPR is a useful method for language teaching because of its advantages. Firstly, it allows teachers to plan their English lessons with fun and easy activities. According to Nuraeni (2019), "Total Physical Response is fun, so many children enjoy the teaching and learning process" (p.68). This approach makes learning enjoyable and encourages students to feel more engaged and motivated to participate and interact during the instructions given by their teacher.

Secondly, TPR allows students to create a multi-sensory learning experience to recall the words and their meanings. This is supported by Mariyam and Musfiroh (2019) who state that "When the children connect the target language with the actions, they can understand the vocabulary unconsciously" (p.259). In that sense, it can be said that TPR is a helpful strategy for teaching English vocabulary as students can easily memorize new words through their physical actions and gestures.

Thirdly, TPR contributes to the low-affective filters, making students feel more motivated to participate in the activities, interact with their teacher, and learn the target language engagingly. In this vein, Fayzullaeva (2024) claims that the creation of a low affective filter through TPR allows students to reduce their anxiety and stress levels and increase their self-confidence and interest in language acquisition. Therefore, the TPR activities must be designed according to the students' age, preferences, and multiple intelligences to encourage natural learning and promote a positive atmosphere among classmates.

Furthermore, students are active and collaborative participants since they often work in groups to develop their teacher's instructions, providing them with peer assessment and feedback opportunities. In this regard, some authors have found that TPR effectively strengthens learning and interaction among classmates, thereby promoting social skills and communication (Sumarni et al., 2022). Thus, teachers should design activities that foster a cooperative environment where students can learn from each other's actions and grow together.

Finally, TPR is an inclusive teaching method for students of different ages, abilities, and learning styles, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. As Saputra and Sahid (2023) mention "TPR can be used in the mixed-ability

classes. The physical actions and the picture enable all the learners to comprehend the target language effectively" (p.15). From this premise, it can be concluded that TPR promotes a multimodal learning environment where students can see, listen, read, write, and physically engage with English through interactive and enjoyable activities.

2.1.2 Teaching and Learning Activities of the Total Physical Response Method

2.1.2.1 Simon Says. One of the most popular activities in the TPR method is the game "Simon Says" in which the teacher gives instructions that students must perform through actions. As Abdurasulova and Muhitdinov (2024) point out, "Simon Says" is a classic game where the teacher gives commands preceded by "Simon Says," and students must follow only if the command includes that phrase. If the command is given without "Simon says," students should not follow it" (p.616). This means that Simon Says is not only a game for children but also an educational resource to teach the English language and contribute to the students' cognitive and emotional development.

2.1.2.2 Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS). It is a teaching and learning method where students acquire the language by participating in stories through actions, gestures, and dramatization. As Satriani et al. (2024) claim "This method allows students to choose the foreign language through listening, reading, visual sources, and action" (p. 94). Due to this approach, TPRS has been considered an effective activity to stimulate the students' interest, improve their reading skills, and expand their English vocabulary.

2.1.2.3 Action Songs. These refer to the combination of music with physical actions that correspond to the lyrics. According to Kumar and Sandaran (2018), this type of song allows students to act and dance while singing, ensuring a lively and dynamic learning environment. Consequently, many authors recommend using them with children and young learners to help them overcome feelings of shyness and develop their language skills, particularly in listening comprehension.

2.1.2.4 Charades. It is a classic game in the TPR method where one student acts out a word without speaking while the others try to guess what is being acted out. This is supported by Schulte (2005) who explains that:

> Each group receives a card with a different term on it and must devise a movement that represents the concept. The rest of the class has to guess the term. Students must identify the similarities/differences between the movement analogy and the concept. (p.15)

Due to its dynamics, charades are a favorite game for young students, as it allows them to interact with their peers, share their ideas, actively participate, and enjoy learning while playing.

2.2. Concept of Vocabulary

The term vocabulary refers to the set of words used in a particular language that allows people to effectively communicate and interact with others on different topics or situations. According to Afini et al. (2023), "An acceptable definition of vocabulary is a collection of terms individuals use to communicate with one another in a given language" (p.112). Consequently, this component has been considered essential for developing the four basic language skills.

2.2.1 Importance of Learning English Vocabulary

Learning vocabulary is key to mastering any language for different reasons. Firstly, it enables people to convey oral and written messages using meaningful words. As Sembiring and Simajuntak (2023) mention "Vocabulary aids pupils in understanding and communicating in English" (p.213). This suggests that communication starts with vocabulary. Therefore, teachers must incorporate activities where students can acquire new words and strengthen their language skills.

Secondly, vocabulary helps students understand language and its practical use in real-life situations, improving their listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. This is supported by Rini and Indah (2023) who point out that "Vocabulary is an important element in the development of language skills such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading, which are embodiments of the unity of feelings and thoughts" (p.24). From this concept, it can be said that a broad vocabulary in the target language will allow students to master all areas of communication.

2.2.2 Components of Vocabulary

In English, vocabulary is divided into three main components: form, meaning, and use. These elements enable people to understand and apply the language in various contexts. In that sense, Nation (2001) claims that these components include sub-aspects such as written form, spoken form, associations, grammatical functions, and collocations. Therefore, the teaching activities must be designed to foster the students' reflection on the importance of learning new words.

2.2.2.1 Form. The first component of vocabulary is the form, which covers pronunciation, spelling, and word parts. According to Nation

(2001), the form can be categorized into two types: written and spoken in which students must recognize the structure of words and their corresponding sounds through their phonological awareness.

2.2.2.1.1 Written form. It refers to the spelling of the words in a text which requires writing and reading skills to avoid making mistakes that affect the content and message.

2.2.2.1.2 Spoken form. It is associated with the pronunciations and sounds of the letters within the texts. This element is considered an important part of vocabulary because it allows people to understand oral messages during conversations.

2.2.2.2 Meaning. The second aspect is meaning which refers to the idea conveyed by a word as well as the connection between concepts through association (Kilag et al., 2023). Therefore, this component is essential for understanding texts and communicating with others

2.2.2.2.1 Association. It refers to the connection between words to give meaning to the sentence, taking into account the context where the vocabulary is being used by the speakers.

2.2.2.3 Use. The last component, known as use, is associated with the pragmatics field since it refers to how the word is used in real language for communicative purposes between people through conversations. This is supported by Nation (2001) who mentions "When communicating, whether in speech or writing, we must be careful about the words we use" (p.103). This means that words employed by the speakers must be closely related to the topic of the conversation; otherwise, the message will not be clear and understandable.

2.2.2.3.1 Grammatical functions. It refers to the role played by a word within a sentence like the subject, verbs, nouns, and objects, which helps people convey clear written and spoken messages.

2.2.2.3.2 Collocations. They consist of pairing two or more words to create a specific meaning. As Bui (2021) points out "Collocation is the way words combine in a language to produce natural-sounding speech and writing" (p.100). Consequently, mastering these collocations is critical for language learners because it will enable them to produce efficient oral and written messages.

2.2.3 Stages for Teaching Vocabulary

Teaching vocabulary is one of the most important processes in the students' learning since it provides them with the necessary tools to understand and produce the language. Based on this, the ABC model has been considered a successful resource for designing face-to-face English lessons because it includes three essential phrases: anticipation, building, and consolidation (Crawford, 2005). Together these stages help learners memorize new words, develop their language skills, actively participate, build their knowledge, and strengthen their critical thinking skills.

2.2.3.1 Anticipation. The first stage is anticipation where the teacher activates the students' previous learning and asks questions about the topic. As Crawford (2005) claims "The anticipation phase serves to call up the knowledge students already have, set purposes for learning, focus attention on the topic, and provide a context for understanding new ideas" (p.2). Therefore, this phase can include activities associated with open-ended questions, barnstorming sessions, videos, games, discussions, and predictions.

2.2.3.2 Building Knowledge. The second stage is building knowledge where the teacher introduces the vocabulary and provides all the details about the topic. Additionally, the teacher explains to students the meaning of the words with their usage and gives them practice opportunities. According to Crawford (2005), "The building knowledge phase serves to compare expectations with what is being learned, revise expectations or raise new ones, identify the main points, monitor personal thinking, and make inferences about the material" (p.3). In this stage, the teacher must be creative in teaching and include a wide variety of resources such as flashcards, videos, songs, realia, and interactive activities that make English lessons more enjoyable and interesting.

2.2.3.3 Consolidation. The last phase is consolidation where students reflect on what they have learned through different exercises and receive constructive feedback to address any mistakes. In this view, Crawford (2005) mentions that consolidation is one of the most important stages in the lesson plan since it summarizes the main ideas, allows students to share their opinions, make personal responses, assess learning, and ask additional questions. Consequently, it is suggested that English teachers incorporate activities like peer review, self-assessment, memory games, word puzzles, role-playing, and storytelling to reinforce the students' knowledge.

2.2.4 Strategies for Teaching Vocabulary

To teach vocabulary effectively, it is essential to use different strategies based on the students' levels, ages, and interests. By doing so, teachers can promote enjoyable learning experiences that engage students and enhance their vocabulary acquisition. Based on this, using visual aids like photos, flashcards, pictures, and drawings is considered an excellent resource for

illustrating the meaning of the new words and creating a positive learning environment. This is supported by Putu and Agung (2021) who claim that "flashcards are an effective strategy in education which is a visual source and approach to ensure the learning process becomes meaningful" (p.26). From this information, it is recommended that teachers implement flashcards to make their classes more engaging and interactive.

Similarly, realia are another important resource for teaching vocabulary as it provides students with concrete and tangible examples of new words. According to Cando et al. (2024), "Realia can help students connect abstract language concepts to life experiences, which can improve their understanding and retention of new vocabulary" (p.94). Therefore, it can be determined that realia are particularly beneficial for visual and kinesthetic students, allowing them to see, feel, and touch what they are learning.

2.2.5 Teaching of Vocabulary through Total Physical Response Method

Learning new words is not an easy process since this involves memorizing and understanding them. From this situation, the TPR has been proposed as an effective method for teaching vocabulary because of its multiple benefits. First, it makes English lessons funnier by integrating physical movements with language learning. Second, it enhances students' memory retention through the multi-sensory approach. Finally, it is an adaptable approach across levels and ages from young children to adult beginners (Kenjabaev, 2024). In general, the TPR is characterized by providing positive results in the learning of English vocabulary.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The following research was carried out during the 2024-2025 academic period in a private institution in Loja City. This institution did not have enough technological resources like computers, projectors, and speakers for each participant; therefore, using the Total Physical Response was effective in helping students learn vocabulary through a traditional but interactive method.

The participants were students belonging to the eighth year of General Basic Education. The sample was taken from 22 students, divided into 11 males and 11 females, who were selected with the convenience method based on their availability and accessibility (Verma et al., 2024). These students were between 12 and 13 years old with an A1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and shared some difficulties in the English vocabulary learning process. Considering their age, their legal representatives signed a consent form to authorize the researcher to apply the different activities and strategies within the classroom (Manandhar & Kumar, 2020).

This research employed a mixed method that integrated both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Quantitative data was collected to describe students' perceptions of the benefits of the Total Physical Response method for English vocabulary learning, while qualitative data allowed participants to justify their responses. Consequently, this approach supported the findings and gave more credibility to the study.

Additionally, this study used practical action research that included four stages: Planning, acting, developing, and reflecting (Mertler, 2024). In the first stage, the researcher identified the problem in English vocabulary learning, and designed the methodology, detailing the study design, setting

and participants, methods, approaches, instruments, techniques, and data analysis procedures. In the second stage, the researcher implemented the intervention plan using four Total Physical Response activities such as Simon Says, active songs, Total Physical Response Storytelling, and charades during vocabulary teaching. This process was evaluated by applying the survey technique with a questionnaire as a data collection instrument. In the third phase, the researcher developed an action plan to implement changes to the Total Physical Response method. Finally, in the last stage, the researcher reported the results and findings to the educational community and offered recommendations for future research.

The researcher used the survey technique with a questionnaire as a data collection instrument (Kumar, 2011). The questionnaire included four multiple-choice questions using the Likert Scale from disagree to agree and one ordering question to gather information about the students' perceptions of the TPR activities such as Simon Says, TPRS, active songs, and charades for their active participation, enjoyment, memorization of words, motivation and interaction. Additionally, it involved five open-ended questions that supported the quantitative data collected by the researcher and enabled participants to justify their responses about the Total Physical Response (Kumar, 2011).

The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were presented using frequencies and percentages as well as a bar graph to show the students' perceptions of the Total Physical Response method concerning their active participation, enjoyment, memorization of words, motivation, and interaction (Creswell, 2012). These data were illustrated through tables designed with the Excel program. On the other hand, the qualitative data obtained from the five open-ended questions were analyzed with thematic analysis (Creswell, 2012).

4. RESULTS

This section shows the results collected from the questionnaire presented in percentages and illustrated with a table and a bar graph.

4.1 Questionnaire

Objective one: To analyze the Lower Secondary students' perceptions of the Total Physical Response method for improving English vocabulary learning.

Sub question one: What are Lower Secondary students' perceptions of the Total Physical Response method for improving English vocabulary learning?

Table 1.

Students' perceptions of the benefits of the Total Physical Response method

Students' Perceptions of the Total Physical Response	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree
The Total Physical Response method allowed you to actively participate during vocabulary learning (Participation)	5%	25%	75%
The use of the Total Physical Response method made your English lessons more enjoyable (Enjoyment)	0%	5%	95%

The Total Physical Response method helped you to interact with your classmates (Interaction)	10%	20%	70%
The Total Physical Response method motivated you to learn vocabulary (Motivation)	5%	10%	85%

The table above presents in percentages the levels of disagreement, neutral, and agreement expressed by the participants regarding the benefits of using different activities such as action songs, charades, Simon Says, and TPR storytelling to encourage their activate participation, make their English classes more enjoyable, interact with their classmates and motivate them to learn vocabulary. All in all, the majority of the students showed a positive perception of the Total Physical Response method.

As can be seen in Table 1, 75% of the participants agreed with the use of the Total Physical Response activities to promote their active participation as they could share their opinions with the teacher and classmates while having fun. In that regard, Guerrero (personal communication, November 25, 2024) mentioned that TPR liked her because she learned actively. On the other hand, 25% of them had a neutral position since they described the games as interactive resources but too complex to follow the English instructions. Last but not least, 5% of the students disagreed with the TPR because they indicated that they did not like playing games in class due to their shyness.

In response to question 2, most of those surveyed (95%) agreed that Total Physical Response made English lessons more enjoyable as they included gestures, movements, music, stories, and songs focused on improving their vocabulary learning. This was also corroborated by Cabrera (personal communication, November 25, 2024) who stated that TPR was a new and interesting method within the classroom. Nevertheless, a small number of participants (5%) chose neither agree nor disagree option because they found the classes innovative but very traditional and monotonous.

Regarding question 3, 70% of the students agreed that the Total Physical Response method allowed them to interact with their classmates since they had to listen to their commands and understand their gestures to win the games. Instead, 20% of them neither agreed nor disagreed since they described the TPR as a funny method to learn vocabulary but also detected that not all the students worked as a team. Even Roldan (personal communication, November 25, 2024) reported that she did not talk to her classmates during the activities. By contrast, 10% of the respondents disagreed with the statement proposed by the researcher as they commented that many students were not organized and respectful, so they had problems communicating with each other.

As shown in Table 1, 85% of the respondents to question 4 agreed that the Total Physical Response method motivated them to learn new vocabulary because the lessons were more dynamic and incorporated some technological devices such as computers and speakers. Conversely, 10% had a neutral perception because they felt that vocabulary was one of the most complex parts of learning English. On the other hand, 5% of the participants disagreed, commenting that the body movements made them feel frustrated and unfocused when trying to memorize the words.

Figure 1. *Students' preferences for the Total Physical Response activities that help them to memorize words*
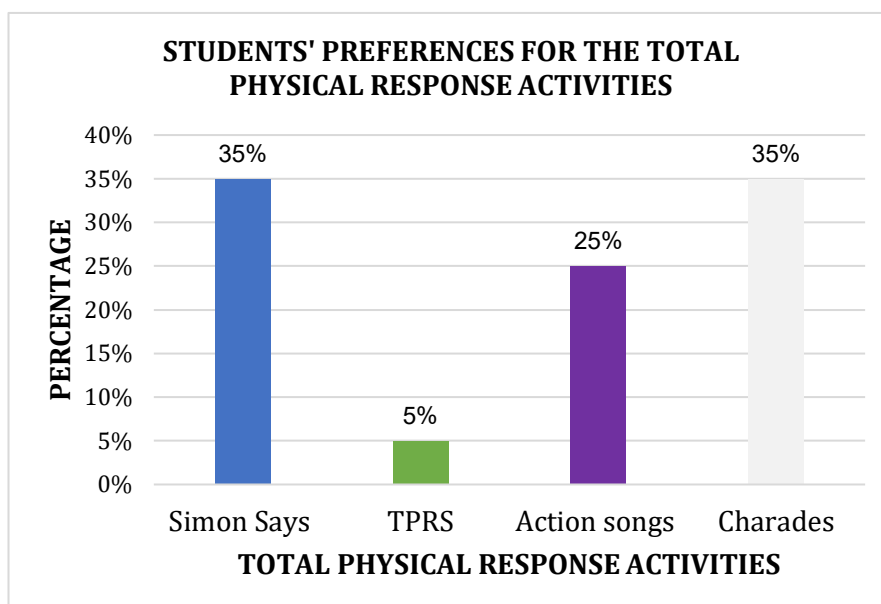
The bar graph above illustrates the eighth-grade students' preferences regarding different Total Physical Response activities, such as action songs, Simon Says, charades, and Total Physical Response storytelling to memorize new English vocabulary.

Figure 1 shows that 35% of the students preferred the Simon Says activity because it promoted an active body movement where they also developed their listening skills to follow the instructions given by the teacher. Similarly, the other 35% of the participants liked playing charades since the game included funny gestures that helped them interact with their classmates and have fun while guessing the correct words. In that regard, Gualpa (personal communication, November 25, 2024) pointed out that charades were an entertaining game to learn English. In contrast, 25% selected action songs, as they could sing, dance, reduce their stress, and memorize new words. However, only 3% of them opted for Total Physical

Response storytelling because it allowed them to improve their lexical range within their productive skills.

5. DISCUSSION

The following mixed research was designed to describe the Lower Secondary students' perceptions of the Total Physical Response method for developing English vocabulary learning. For this purpose, the researcher established one research sub-question.

What are Lower Secondary students' perceptions of the Total Physical Response method for improving English vocabulary learning?

From the questionnaire, the researcher found that most of the students had a positive perception of the benefits of using Total Physical Response activities to improve their vocabulary learning. For instance, the participants agreed that Total Physical Response helped them to actively participate, which is corroborated by Mariyam and Musfiroh (2019), who mention that students understand vocabulary unconsciously when they participate and connect their body movements with the target language. At the same time, the respondents expressed that Total Physical Response made their English classes more comfortable, which is validated by Nuraeni (2019), who states that Total Physical Response is fun, so many children enjoy the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, these results illustrated that the students liked the Total Physical Response because they could interact with their classmates and share their opinions during the development of the activities. This is consistent with the comments of Sumarni et al. (2022), who point out that Total Physical Response strengthens learning and interaction among classmates, thereby promoting social skills and communication. Additionally, they reported

that Total Physical Response motivated them to learn vocabulary as it combined gestures, songs, stories, and movements, which confirms the information provided by Fayzullaeva (2024), who notes that Total Physical Response allows students to reduce their anxiety and stress levels and increase their self-confidence and interest in language acquisition.

6. CONCLUSION

The present study was designed to describe the Lower Secondary students' perceptions of the Total Physical Response method for developing English vocabulary learning. According to the study, the participants showed positive perceptions of the benefits of using the Total Physical Response method to actively participate, make English lessons more enjoyable, interact with their classmates, memorize new words, and motivate them to learn vocabulary. In that regard, the results indicated that Total Physical Response activities were valuable tools for creating a positive learning environment, nurturing students' enthusiasm for learning English, and enhancing the educational field. Hence, it is suggested to apply it with realia and other innovative didactic materials.

7. CONTRIBUTION OF THE AUTHORS

J M A C: Introduction, research design, data collection, analysis of results, discussion, and conclusions.

J B V L: Final review of the article

M A H M: Final review of the article

K L G J: Final review of the article

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