

## TPR: The Old but Gold Strategy in Enlarging Young Learners' Vocabulary

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**Abstract:** English has a decisive role in the global era and is required by all students to master and acquire. This paper aimed at reviewing literature to help teachers enlarge young English learners' vocabulary. The problem is that they are afraid to say words because they are in lack number of vocabularies related to what level they should use. EFL school students would need an active vocabulary at least 3000 high-frequency words of English. This would be great for students to develop the knowledge of vocabulary, or it can be encouraged for them to have an average of seven words per day. Therefore, this paper focused on discussing Total Physical Response (TPR) which concerns on speech and actions at the same time. It could be an old strategy but still the gold one which emphasizes meaningful and purposeful vocabulary for young learners.

**Keywords:** *vocabulary, young learners, TPR*

**Abstrak:** Bahasa Inggris mempunyai sebagai peran penting yang menentukan dalam era global dan semua pelajar dituntut untuk menguasainya. Artikel ini bertujuan meninjau literatur untuk memperluas kosakata pelajar, terutama pelajar muda. Masalahnya adalah mereka takut untuk mengucapkan kata dalam bahasa Inggris karena mereka kekurangan jumlah kosa kata yang berhubungan dengan tingkat apa yang harus mereka lakukan. Pelajar sekolah *EFL (English as a Foreign Language)* membutuhkan kosakata aktif setidaknya 3000 kata bahasa Inggris. Jumlah ini bagus bagi siswa untuk mengembangkan pengetahuan kosa kata, atau dapat disoroti untuk rata-rata tujuh kata per hari. Oleh karena itu, artikel ini berfokus pada membahasa tentang Total Physical Response (TPR) yang strategi pembelajaran kosa kata bahasa Inggris dimana berbicara dan melakukan tindakan pada saat yang sama. Ini dapat saja dianggap sebagai strategi lama tetapi tetap merupakan strategi emas yang menekankan penguasaan kosakata yang penuh makna dan tujuan bagi pembelajar muda.

**Kata-kata kunci:** *kosa kata, pembelajar muda, TPR*

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Vocabulary plays a decisive role in language learning. It is one of the linguistic aspects that must be mastered by learners at school in learning English. By having this aspect they can produce words correctly in English. For example, they can listen to, speak, read and write words. According to Cameron (2001), vocabulary, as one of the knowledge areas in language, plays a great role for learners in acquiring a language. Hatch and Brown (1995) state that vocabulary is a list or set of in a particular language or a list or set of words that individual speakers of language might use. Moreover, Richard and Renandya (2002) emphasizes that vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read and write. Without extensive vocabulary and strategies for acquiring new vocabulary, learners often achieve less than their potential and may be discouraged for making use of language learning opportunities.

To fulfill the objectives of vocabulary achievement, the government has included vocabulary learning into English education curricula beginning from the Curriculum of 1996/1997, Curriculum 1984, and Curriculum 1994, Competence-Based Curriculum (2004), School-Based Curriculum (2006) to the Curriculum 2013 according to Huda (1999), the 1996/1997 Ministerial Degree on English Instruction in secondary schools aims to equip students with working knowledge of English through the development of the language skills of reading, listening, writing, and speaking in that order. In the 1984 Curriculum, English instruction was geared toward the objectives of enabling junior-high-school students to develop English language skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing in thematic situations in accordance with their individual developmental levels (Depdikbud, 1986).

The Curriculum of 1994 adopted the "Meaningfulness approach", a version of the communicative approach, so that the

objective of English instruction is not misinterpreted (Huda, 1999). This curriculum implemented some principles, one of which is the mastery of communicative competence. It emphasizes the importance of language components, such as grammatical structures, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Furthermore, Competence-Based Curriculum (2004) and School-Based Curriculum (2006) emphasizes the development of communicative competence. Linguistic competence includes components as grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation. Curriculum 2013 also emphasizes on four communicative competence covering linguistic competence, discourse competence, socio-cultural competence, and strategic competence. In other words, it focuses on how learners will be able to learn, remember, comprehend and produce words, and use language in certain contexts and meaningful ways.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that vocabulary is always an essential part in learning English as a foreign language including four skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Vocabulary is so crucial that teaching vocabulary should be concerned with the words which are suitable to students' interest level to make students learn language smoothly.

In addition, to reach the vocabulary achievement, Renandya (2013) claims that for students' needs, in relation to the number of words, it would be "Many, the more the better". However, for pedagogical purposes, we can be a bit more precise, at least in terms of a number of words required for good comprehension. Moreover, EFL school students would need an active vocabulary of at least 3000 high-frequency words. This would be great for students to develop the knowledge of vocabulary in order to use them in a certain context, in other words, the good speakers choose the right situation.

An individual learns new words in the process of a learning language. During early

childhood, children learn vocabulary at the rate of approximately 2,000 to 4,000 words per year (Brabham & Villaume, 2002; Nagy, Anderson, & Herman, 1987), or an average rate of seven words per day (Anderson & Nagy, 1991; Beck & McKeown, 1991). Indonesian learners commonly face difficulties in learning vocabulary. Indonesia uses English as an EFL (English as a Foreign Language). Therefore, EFL learners only practice English in the classroom. The learners are afraid to convey what they say because they lack vocabulary to express their ideas or they do not practice it in social contexts. In line, Coady and Huckin (1997) state that research has shown that foreign language readers rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge and the lack of that knowledge is the main and the largest obstacle for L2 readers to overcome.

There was a discrepancy between what should be done and what had been performed by students to enlarge their vocabulary. Some studies related to EFL students' vocabulary were conducted in Indonesia context. For example, Nurweni (1997) found that EFL school students only knew 987 of the 3000 most frequent words. It can imply that students only know less than what is expected. From this research, the cause is that students may forget or less expose the vocabulary they learn. Theoretically, students are required to learn 7 words a day (Renandya, 2013), in fact, they only learn 7 words a week.

Nurweni and Read (1999) conducted a study dealing with vocabulary in Indonesia to examine whether the students are familiar to a number of words and how well they know them. The finding showed that a total of 324 freshmen, who completed Nation's Vocabulary Level Test, had some knowledge of 1226 English words on average. This fact was so insignificant since EFL university students would need 20000 words to range in acquiring a second language (Renandya, 2013). In short, the writer revealed that since attending primary school until the university, students are not

motivated to learn English continuously and deeply. Therefore, they lack adequate knowledge of vocabulary.

Furthermore, from the 8 Indonesian EFL undergraduate students as the research participants, the students revealed that the difficulty to speak the language because it deals with language barriers such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency. In relation to vocabulary, they had a limited range of them, and they stated that they were sometimes confused to use appropriate vocabulary in speaking (Abrar et al, 2018). Similarly, Priyono (2004) states that the main problem of Indonesian EFL students is their limited vocabulary, he then emphasized that teachers need to inform the EFL students about the importance of vocabulary learning. Moreover, based on his observation, Pranowo (2006) claims that most Indonesian learners lack strategies in dealing with new words. Therefore, teachers should know the effective language instruction that is relevant to target students, in this case, young learners to develop their vocabulary mastery.

### **TPR (Total Physical Responses)**

Considering the importance of vocabulary, teachers have significant roles in developing students' vocabulary achievement in the learning process. The writer would like to suggest one of the alternative strategies, TPR, the old one but still being a gold one related to students' vocabulary learning achievement. According to Asher (1977), Total Physical Response (TPR) is about speech by teacher and actions by students at the same time. Larsen-Freeman (2000) states that the purposes of TPR strategy are to listen and perform what the teacher tells. Moreover, Brown (2000) states that in TPR students are required to respond nonverbally (physically) to a series of commands. In other words, the teacher gives a command given by the teacher and the students respond physically, the teacher ascertains students' comprehension of the command.

Eventually, the students give the command to develop their oral proficiency.

Curriculum 2013 emphasizes communicative competence covering linguistic competence related to how learners learn, remember, comprehend, and produce words in a certain context. It is related to Asher (2001) who states that TPR is to achieve an understanding of the target language in terms of language acquisition. The teacher also uses some gestures and physical response in the teaching process due to directly to the context.

Furthermore, the new curriculum is about learning in a fun, meaningful, and purposeful way. It is related to TPR goals. Brown (2000) states that TPR is an excellent method to deal with the students who are in the preproduction/silent stage of language development. In other words, students who are not yet speaking are able to be involved in lessons and respond nonverbally. Therefore, physical and fun activities can help young learners to develop their learning in vocabulary achievement. In addition, TPR has somewhat limitation dealing with a classroom; however, the teacher with the use of gestures, pictures other types of manipulatives and realia can bring media of the outside world into the classroom. The teacher gives mediation by demonstrating the actions following the command given and students follow the introduction. That is a good way to introduce new vocabulary using TPR.

Musthafa (2010) also states that teachers of English for young learners should use activity-based teaching-learning techniques such as Total Physical Response (TPR), games or project. Teachers play a significant role in a such way through activities that allow students to use English and enable them to relate it to the world but still focus on the subject matter. For example, things in the classroom, names of animals, can be used in daily activities. In other words, teachers can start from the most frequently-used words, or provide with vocabulary lists

as a reference and to determine how many words to be taught by teachers and mastered by students within a particular period of time.

The idea of TPR in learning the target language is to let the students learn the language barriers or language components, therefore, students not only learn vocabulary but also learn how to pronounce the words and the grammatical structures. Teachers should use useful English during their instructional time in the classroom to make students able to acquire useful vocabulary from teachers' speech. It is beneficial to encourage children to speak up their thought and, respond to it so there is a new transaction of an idea and vocabulary. Asher (1977) states that most of the grammatical structures and vocabulary of the target language can be learned through the teachers' instruction in the classroom.

In addition, Putri (2016) reveals that TPR can be used to teach and practice language components such as:

1. Vocabulary (Smile, Dizzy, Hungry, etc)
2. Grammar (Tenses; present/ past/ future; I comb my hair twice a day)
3. Classroom Language (Take your pen)
4. Imperatives/ Instructions (Up your hand)

In line with this, Ghani and Ghous (2014) conducted a study on the effectiveness of TPR approach in helping young learners who are slow in acquiring English as a second language. A number of 48 Year 2 pupils, who are listed as the low achievers, are selected from a whole population of Year 2 pupils within South West district in Penang. The study suggested that the experiment group shows better improvement than the control group for post-test. In conclusion, this study shows that TPR approach is effective in helping young learners in acquiring English as a second language.

Furthermore, Handoyo (in Ghani and Ghous, 2014) listed eight advantages of

using TPR approach:

1. TPR is a lot of fun as learners enjoy it and it can lift the pace of a lesson and the mood
2. TPR is a memorable activity as it assists students to recognize phrases or words
3. It is good for kinesthetic learners who are required to be active in class
4. It can be used both in a large class or in a small class because as long as the teacher takes the lead, the learners will follow
5. It works well with mixed-ability classes because the physical actions get across the meaning effectively
6. There is no requirement to prepare a lot of preparation or materials. The most important part is being competent in what you want to practice
7. It is very effective with teenagers and young learners
8. TPR involves both left and right-brained training

### What Should Be Done?

Vocabulary plays a decisive role in acquiring a second language. By mastering vocabulary, learners can listen, speak, read, and the write words. We also know that we need a lot of words in order to communicate our feelings and ideas. However, in fact, learners are sometimes afraid to deliver ideas because they lack adequate vocabulary. To motivate students to comprehend a large vocabulary, teachers should have students practice using vocabulary a number of times, and give simply the direct command and students respond to it while developing their oral proficiency. That is the main idea of strategy of Total Physical Response.

Furthermore, teachers can provide pictures or multimedia and realia as media to fulfill the objectives of this strategy. Once they learn with the command and realia, it would develop their listening and knowledge of vocabulary. However,

teachers also need to consider how many words a day young learners to comprehend, that is at least 7 words a day. By having this strategy, TPR emphasizes listening comprehension and oral proficiency in order for young learners to be able to speak up and deliver ideas with a large number of words. Therefore, the writer suggests that TPR is one of the best strategies to teach vocabularies to young learners. It is an old strategy but still a gold one in order to enhance students' vocabulary achievement.

### CONCLUSION

Total Physical Response (TPR) is one of interesting strategies to teach young learners because the learners listen to instructions and directly respond them with the physical movement. In other words, learners play actively as they act and perform what the teacher says or cammands. Based on the discussion, this strategy is very effective to enlarge young learners' vocabulary mastery and language skills. It is good for kinesthetic learners who are required to be active in the classroom with fun and various activities. The students are not allowed to be passive and shy. Therefore, the writer suggests that TPR is one of the best strategies to teach vocabulary to young learners. It is an old strategy but still gold one.

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