



Teaching Vocabulary through Total Physical Response to Elementary Students

Deni Setiawan⁽¹⁾, Diani Nurhajati⁽²⁾, Sulistyani⁽³⁾

English Department, Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri, Indonesia

E-mail: dianihamzah@unpkediri.ac.id

Received: 13 July 2022; Revised: 13 November 2022; Accepted: 14 November 2022

Abstract

Vocabulary is an important language component to be learned by English language learners. It should be taught since early age, especially to elementary students. Teaching English vocabulary, especially to elementary students, required effective and interesting method that suits with children's learning characteristics. Children understand something through what they see, listen, and do. Therefore, English teachers should select the suitable method that is child-friendly. One of the ways to teach vocabulary is through Total Physical Response (TPR) method. This study was descriptive qualitative research to describe teaching material, teacher's roles and teaching stage in the implementation of TPR to teach vocabulary to elementary students. The subject of this study was the English teacher who taught the elementary students. The data were obtained from observation during the teaching and learning process, interview to the subjects and document analysis. The findings revealed that the teaching material used by the teacher was correlated and suited with the students' daily life. The teacher has several roles, namely as a planner, a director, a model, and an assessor. The stages of teaching vocabulary were pre-teaching, whilst-teaching and post-teaching. The teacher used varied classroom activities such as singing, listen and do, game and dialog. In the end, the teacher conducted a test to measure the students' comprehension.

Keywords: Child-friendly learning, Total Physical Response, Vocabulary

One of the most important elements of language that must be taught and learned first when it comes to learning English is vocabulary. Vocabulary is the basic knowledge that students, especially English Second or Foreign Language learners, must master in order to improve their skills in listening, reading, speaking and writing. Vocabulary is defined, roughly, as the words we teach in the foreign language (Ur, 2008). Furthermore, Crystal (2008) stated that vocabulary is a fix set of words used as part of the definition of other words. The notion is found in such contexts as foreign-language teaching, the teaching of reading, and lexicography.

Vocabulary is an essential element of language, which learners must understand first

before acquiring language skills. Learning vocabulary will be very useful in daily communication as vocabulary is core of language. Rivers (in Nunan, 1991) argued that the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary is essential for successful second language use because, without an extensive vocabulary, we will be unable to use the structure and functions we may have learned for comprehensible communication. Moreover, Thornbury (2002) argued that learners of second language experience a similar bewilderment even with much simpler text. They may be confronted by words that are totally unfamiliar, or being used in ways that for them are novel and possibly obscure. It emphasizes that vocabulary mastery is important because by knowing it will be easier for learners to understand the meaning and the

pronunciation of words they heard or read and it will enrich their diction in speaking or writing. Thus, teacher must teach and introduce vocabulary with its context in order to enrich student's vocabulary mastery and avoid confronting unfamiliar words.

In addition, there is minimum target of vocabulary that should be taught when teaching English. According to Nation (in Cameron, 2001), report studies of foreign language learners in India and Indonesia showed that children reaching 1.000 or 2.000 words families in English after five years of regular lessons. They also suggest that a realistic target for children learning a foreign language might be around 500 words in a year, in a good learning condition.

Teaching English vocabulary, especially to elementary students, required effective and interesting method in order to engage students' interest and motivation to learn. Teaching English in elementary school ideally uses a method that suits the characteristics of children, namely learning through what they see, listen, and do. The fact shows that there are still many elementary school English teachers, who use the translation method. They do not apply child-friendly learning. This is in line with Nurhajati (2020) which stated that a very crucial problem of teaching English in elementary schools is that the material provided is not child-friendly. Moreover, many of them do not have a graduate background from the English Education Study Program (Nurhajati, 2020). As a result, many of their English teaching competencies for elementary students are still limited.

One of the most recommended methods for teaching vocabulary, especially for young learners, is Total Physical Response. Total Physical Response (TPR) is a language teaching method built around coordination of speech and action; it attempts to teach language through physical activity (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). It means that TPR is a method that involves motion of body following the teachers' instructions or expressions. TPR also can be applied to teach vocabulary indirectly while promoting physical activities. In TPR, vocabulary is emphasized as it is embedded within imperatives. The imperatives are single words and multi-word chunks. One reason for the use of imperatives is their frequency of occurrence in the speech directed at young children learning their native language (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

There are some studies that have been

conducted before which related to the use of TPR to teach vocabulary. Rokhayani (2017) found that Total Physical Response is effective to be applied in teaching English for young learners and the teachers can introduce new vocabulary when they applied it. Further study conducted by Nuraeni (2019) showed that using TPR method periodically could escalate the vocabulary and comprehension of the students. In addition, study conducted by Eka & Setiawan (2018), Fadiana et al. (2020), Gayanti & Satriani (2020), and Supriyatin & Argawati (2021) found that there was a significant improvement of students' vocabulary mastery after being taught by using Total Physical Response.

Realizing the facts that there are few studies dealing with describing the implementation of TPR and the material used to teach vocabulary using TPR, the writers were interested to do this research. It intends to describe teaching material, teacher's roles, and teaching stage in the implementation of TPR to teach vocabulary to elementary students.

Materials and Method

This study is descriptive qualitative research. The focus of the study was describing the teaching material, teacher's roles and teaching stage in the implementation of TPR. Subject of this study was English teacher. The observation was conducted during Covid-19 pandemic in house regency located in Purwokerto, Ngadiluwih, Kediri, East Java. So, it took place in a class outside school's activity which consisted of six elementary students from 4th-6th grade.

Data of this study are teaching material, teacher's roles and teaching stage which were obtained from observation, interview and documentation of lesson plan and teacher's handout. The observation was conducted by recording the teaching process from beginning until end of the class. Interview and documentation were carried out to obtain more data regarding the focus of this study. Furthermore, in analyzing the data, the researcher used data analysis technique proposed by Miles et al., (2014), namely data condensation, data display and drawing and verifying conclusion.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study, which obtained from observation, interview and documentation were described below.

Teaching Material

The teaching material was selected beforehand by the teacher. It was because not all vocabularies were flexible to be taught using Total Physical Response. The material used by the teacher was vocabularies with a theme of daily activities. In creating the teaching material, the teacher considered the aspect of elementary student's way of learning, through what they see, listen, and do. Therefore, the material was suited and correlated to the context of activities they familiar with and do every day. So, the students could remember the vocabularies and its motions easily.

The chosen vocabularies were positive activities. It was intended to encourage students to imitate and carry out positive daily activities as well. The following are the vocabulary of daily activities that were taught by the teacher using Total Physical Response: get up, take a bath, brush the teeth, comb the hair, have breakfast, do exercise, sweep the floor, wash the hands, wear the mask, and water the flower.

In order to enrich the students' vocabulary knowledge, the teacher introduced all of the vocabularies above with context/expression. Along with that, the teacher also taught about the way to ask concerning on someone's daily activities. Here was the example of expression taught to the students:

A: What do you do every morning?

B: I have breakfast every morning.

A: What do you do every day?

B: I take a bath every day.

Teacher's Role

After the class of teaching vocabulary using Total Physical Response was done, it could be seen that the teacher has several roles in the classroom. The teacher's roles were as a planner, a director, a model, and an assessor.

a) Teacher as a Planner

This role was performed by the teacher before the teaching process began. First, the teacher made lesson plan that was used for teaching vocabulary through TPR. Next, the teacher prepared the teaching material to be taught. Teachers compiled, designed and developed the teaching material according to TPR method and student needs, also selected the movements used to represent the vocabulary taught. Then, the teacher prepared learning media and classroom activities such as pictures, songs and games.

b) Teacher as a Director

The teacher performed this role during the learning process, where the teacher acted by directing the students' actions while in the class. This role was performed in all stages of teaching.

In the pre-teaching stage, the teacher gave instructions to students to sing the opening two songs together and encouraged students to be more excited and enthusiast.

While in the whilst-teaching stage, the teacher instructed the students to follow the utterances and movements he did during the session of introducing vocabulary. Then he asked the students to guess the pictures in game sessions and asked them to practice and present it in front of the class in dialogue session.

Moreover, in the post-teaching stage, the teacher's role as a director could be seen when he rearranged the student's sitting position before conducting the test. In addition, the teacher played director role when reviewing vocabulary in which he gave instructions to the students to follow him and asked them to keep focused.

c) Teacher as a Model

This role was widely seen during the whilst-teaching stage. For example, the teacher first exemplified utterance and its movement when introducing vocabulary. The teacher also gave an overview of the game of guessing the picture by exemplifying it with one of the students. It means the teacher acted as a model for students by providing examples directly during the learning process.

Moreover, the teacher through his intonation, action or gestures and mimicry, indirectly set an example and became model for students to stay enthusiastic, energetic and focused in the learning process.

d) Teacher as an Assessor

This role was occupied by the teacher in the post-teaching stage in which the teacher gave a test to the students to assess their understanding about the material. The teacher gave the question paper to the students and discussed the answers together with them after they finished. Afterward, the teacher assessed their grade and wrote it on their answer papers.

Teaching Stage

The teaching process of introducing vocabulary using Total Physical Response was carried out through three stages, namely Pre-teaching, Whilst-teaching and Post-teaching, in which the

teacher adopted it from standard of process in the regulations of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic Indonesia Number 22 Year 2016.

In the Pre-teaching stage, the teacher managed the students' seat positions, greeted them, opened the class and prayed together. The teacher asked the students to sing two songs. It was intended to make them more enthusiastic and excited.

First song:

Good Morning

(Melody: Happy Birthday)

Good morning to you... 2x

Good morning... 2x

Good morning to you...

Second song:

Say Yes, Yes

(Melody: If You Are Happy)

If you ready to study say yes... yes

Yes... yes

If you ready to study say yes... yes

Yes... yes

If you ready to study 3x

Say yes... yes

Yes... yes

Those two songs were sung together twice with the teacher led them first.

In whilst-teaching stage, the teacher implemented three learning activities, namely listen and do, game and dialog. In the first activity, listen and do, the teacher started introducing four vocabularies of daily activities. The vocabularies that were introduced were: get up, take a bath, brush your teeth and comb your hair. While uttering the vocabulary, the teacher practiced and exemplified the motion of each vocabulary and asked the students to follow. They repeated it until the students could comprehend the vocabularies.

Then the teacher introduced new vocabularies with its motions: have breakfast, do exercise, sweep the floor, wash the hands, wear the mask and water the flower. They kept doing listen and do activity together for many times.

In the next classroom activity, game, the teacher used pictures as media. The rule was the students should say 'no, next' when the teacher uttered unmatched vocabulary with the displayed picture and they should say 'yes' if it matched. The teacher started to display random picture and the students answered by sticking on the rule until all the pictures were guessed.

The next classroom activity was dialog, where the teacher introduced the context of the daily activity vocabularies they have learned. Using the same pictures as media, the teacher taught the students about the expression to ask about daily activities: 'What do you do every morning?' and 'What do you do every day?' The students had to pick random picture given by the teacher. Then they were asked by the friend beside them and should answer based on the picture they handed. Here was the example of the dialog:

A: "What do you do every morning?"

B: "I water the flower"

In the last teaching stage, post-teaching, the teacher conducted test to measure the students' comprehension about the material they have learned. The test consisted of four parts, A until D, where each part consists of four questions. They discussed it together after they had answered all the questions.

Then the teacher reviewed back all of the daily activity vocabularies and the motions along with the students before closing the class. Each student was asked to answer and perform at least one vocabulary and its motion following the teacher's question. Finally, the teacher wrapped the class by giving applause and partings.

In this study, TPR was implemented to teach vocabulary to elementary students. The findings drawn from the observation conducted were focused on teaching material the teaching stage of TPR, teacher's role and. It was found that the teacher implemented TPR through three stages, namely pre-teaching, whilst-teaching and post-teaching, which was adopted from standard of process in the regulations of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic Indonesia Number 22 Year 2016. Several classroom activities were applied by the teacher. In pre-teaching, the teacher applied singing activity. In whilst-teaching, the teacher was modelling and demonstrating the commands, asking the students to perform by themselves in listen and do session and then expand the activities into games and dialog. In post-teaching, the teacher carried out a test to assess their comprehension. By applying those classroom activities, the students had more fun, spirit and interest, which made them more active and learned the material taught enjoyably.

The teaching stage found is in line with Larsen-Freeman & Anderson (2011) who state that the teaching phases of TPR are modelling the commands, demonstrating the commands, the students perform the actions, recombining components of the commands, the students learn how to

respond, uttering the commands by themselves and then the activities will expand to include skits and games. All of the teaching phases of TPR were applied by the teacher but it was adapted through three stages of teaching based on standard of process in the regulations of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic Indonesia Number 22 Year 2016. In addition, it supports the findings of different studies conducted by Ummah (2017) and Nuraeni (2019b) which showed that there were three steps in implementing TPR method namely pre-teaching, whilst-teaching, and post-teaching in which each steps has different activities.

In addition, it was found that the teacher has several roles, namely as a planner, a director, a model, and an assessor. The three roles, as a director, a model, and an assessor, were performed during the three stages of teaching where the teacher's role as a director appeared to be the most dominant role. Meanwhile, the role as a planner was acted before the class where the teacher made lesson plan and teaching material. It is in line with Asher (in Richards & Rodgers 2001) who states that the teachers have an active and direct role by modeling the commands and planning the material. It is also similar with Larsen-Freeman & Anderson (2011) theory which state that initially, the teacher is the director of all student behaviour. Moreover, it supports study conducted by Ummah (2017) which emphasizes that the teacher's role was as a model and an instructor. A little difference found is that in this study it was found that the teacher has more roles, namely as a planner, a director, a model, and an assessor.

Furthermore, through interview, it was discovered that in creating the teaching material, the teacher considered the aspect of elementary student's way of learning, through what they see, listen, and do. Therefore, the material was selected from vocabularies they familiar with in their daily life in which it led the teacher to choose vocabulary of daily activities as the teaching material. It supports Mariyam & Musfiroh (2019) who state that the English vocabularies taught using TPR in their study are vocabularies which children usually heard and used in their daily life. It was found that nouns are the most introduced vocabulary. Meanwhile in this study, it was verbs that are more focused to be introduced.

From the discussions above, it can be concluded that the findings of this study have similarities and differences with previous studies. The similarities found are: the teaching stage is carried out through three stages (pre-teaching, whilst-teaching and post-teaching), a director and a model

are the teacher's roles in TPR class and the material is selected from vocabularies the students encounter in daily life. As for the differences, it was found that verbs are the type of vocabulary that was taught more and that the teacher also acts as a planner and an assessor.

In addition, the findings of this study can be used as slight information in consideration to select the method to teach vocabulary or as reference on how to implement Total Physical Response to teach vocabulary. However, there is limitation of this study in some certain aspects. Therefore, further study is needed to narrow the limitation by exploring some aspects that have not observed or discussed yet, such as using TPR which focused to teach other language skills, implementing TPR in big class, using different classroom activities and broaden the types of vocabulary taught.

Conclusion

The implementation of TPR was carried out through teaching stage, which consists of three stages, namely pre-teaching, whilst-teaching and post-teaching. The teacher used varied classroom activities such as singing, listen and do, game and dialog. In the end, the teacher conducted a test to measure the students' comprehension.

Furthermore, in implementing TPR to teach vocabulary to elementary students, the teacher has several roles namely as a planner who created lesson plan and the material, as a director who directed students' behavior by giving instruction, as a model who gave example and modeled the motions, and as an assessor who assessed the students' comprehension using test.

In addition, the material delivered was vocabulary with a theme of daily activities that they familiar with the students. The vocabularies were: get up, take a bath, brush the teeth, comb the hair, have breakfast, do exercise, sweep the floor, wash the hands, wear the mask, and water the flower. They were positive activities vocabularies which intended to encourage students to imitate and carry out positive daily activities as well.

Suggestion

The result obtained in this study was a descriptive which can be used as reference for teacher to teach vocabulary using TPR, especially to elementary students. In teaching vo-

cabulary using TPR, teachers should implement varied classroom activities such as singing, game, and etc. to make students more interested in learning the material and enjoy the class.

This study still has many weaknesses. Therefore, the researcher suggests to the next researchers to explore many aspects of teaching vocabulary through TPR that have not been explored yet, such as implementing TPR in big class, using TPR which focused to teach other language skills and etc.

References

- Crystal, D. (2008). *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Eka, E., & Setiawan, J. E. (2018). Teaching English Vocabulary Using Tpr (Total Physical Response) Method At the Fifth Grade Students of Sdn Cinerang Cianjur in Academic Year of 2017/2018. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 1(5), 696–702.
- Fadiana, D., Ys, S. B., & Inayah, N. (2020). Teaching Vocabulary by Using Total Physical Response. *Research in English and Education Journal*, 5(1), 1–6. <http://www.jim.unsyiah.ac.id/READ/article/view/14908>
- Gayanti, R., & Satriani, I. (2020). Teaching Students' Vocabulary Through Total Physical Response. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 3(3), 414. <https://doi.org/10.22460/project.v3i3.p414-419>
- Larsen-Freeman, D., & Anderson, M. (2011). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis : a methods source-book*. SAGE Publications.
- Nunan, D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology : a textbook for teachers*. Prentice Hall.
- Nuraeni, C. (2019a). Using Total Physical Response (TPR) Method on Young Learners English Language Teaching. *Metathesis: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Teaching*, 3(1), 26–34. <https://doi.org/10.31002/metathesis>
- Nuraeni, C. (2019b). Promoting Total Physical Response (Tpr) Method On Early Childhood English Language Teaching. *Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora*, 20(2), 67–79. <https://doi.org/10.23917/HUMANIORA.V20I2.7144>
- Nurhajati, D. (2020). Pelatihan Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris SD Ramah Anak. *Jurnal ABDI-NUS : Jurnal Pengabdian Nusantara*, 4(1), 119–130. <https://doi.org/10.29407/JA.V4I1.14275>
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667305>
- Rokhayani, A. (2017). Promoting Total Physical Response (TPR) for Young Learners In English Class. *Indigenous Norms to the Coming Age of One Asia*, 75–80. <https://doi.org/10.24176/03.3201.09>
- Scott, Wendy A. & Yteberg, L. H. (2004). *Teaching English to Children*. Longman, Pearson Education.
- Sukra, I. N. (2016). Penerapan Pendekatan Pembelajaran Kontekstual untuk Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar Bahasa Inggris Perhotelan. *Jurnal Pendidikan Universitas Dhyana Pura*, 1(2), 129–144.
- Sumihatul Ummah, S. (2017). *The Implementation of TPR (Total Physical Response) Method in Teaching English for Early Childhood*. 58, 421–428. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icece-16.2017.74>
- Supriyatin, A. A., & Argawati, N. O. (2021). the Use of Total Physical Response Method in Teaching Vocabulary At Junior High School in Cimahi. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 4(4), 548. <https://doi.org/10.22460/project.v4i4.p548-553>
- Thornbury, S. (2002). *How to Teach Vocabulary*. Pearson Education Limited.
- Ur, P. (2008). *A Course in Language Teaching* (2nd Edition). Cambridge University Press.