

## Total Physical Response Approach in Language Skills Development in Early Childhood



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**ABSTRACT:** Language is one of the most important developments in early childhood. Language is used to communicate with others. However, the language learned is not only the mother tongue, but also a foreign language. The development of language skills in early childhood requires the right approach in its implementation so that children easily recognize vocabulary. One approach used is Total Physical Response, where the method uses coordination of commands, speech, and motion so that all aspects of child development can be optimal. The purpose of this study is to describe the *Total Physical Response* approach in the development of language skills in early childhood. The research method used is qualitative descriptive type. The result of this study is the Total Physical Response approach includes several children's learning styles including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic or physical motion with various elements.

**KEYWORDS:** Total Physical Response, Language, Early Childhood

### INTRODUCTION

Childhood is a golden time for learning languages, both mother tongue and national language. This process of learning a language occurs naturally and cannot be avoided. Mother tongue is usually acquired from interaction with parents, while national languages are learned in school and community environments. Language learning in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) requires a creative and fun approach so that it is easily understood by children. Teachers need to apply innovative strategies, techniques, and methods to attract children's interest in learning. It is important to build a strong language foundation for children in the future. One example of creative methods in language learning in ECCE is the use of songs, games, and stories. This method can help children to learn new vocabulary, sentence structure, and understand the meaning of language more easily and enjoyably. By implementing creative and fun language learning, children in ECCE will be more motivated to learn and achieve optimal language development (Astuti & Aulina, 2017).

The *Total Physical Response* (TPR) approach is one effective way to develop language vocabulary, especially for children. This method focuses on coordination between commands, speech, and physical movements, so that language learning becomes easier to understand and engaging. Through TPR, children can associate new vocabulary with the movements performed, thus helping them in processing and remembering information better (Fachrurrozi, 2016). TPR's approach is intentionally designed to create a fun and interactive learning atmosphere, so that children do not feel bored and are more motivated to learn languages. In addition, the element of motor activity in TPR also helps children to develop their gross and fine motor skills. Overall, TPR's approach offers an effective and fun language learning method, especially for children.

The Total Physical Response (TPR) approach is based on trace theory which states that the more often a memory association is repeated, the stronger and easier it is to remember. This is done through verbal repetition and motor activities, such as body movements. The advantage of TPR lies in its ease of application in language learning because it involves elements of gestures, thus helping to relieve stress and create a positive mood in students. This supports the learning process and increases student motivation in learning the language. Overall, TPR is an effective and fun language learning method, especially for children, because it combines psychological theory with physical activity that stimulates memory and learning motivation.

In the Total Physical Response (TPR) approach, the role of teachers is very important for the success of language learning in schools. The teacher acts as a facilitator and director, determining the subject matter and designating the students who will act it out. Students, on the other hand, act as active listeners and doers, responding to the teacher's commands with physical movements individually or in groups. The effectiveness of TPR in teaching language depends on the teacher's ability to pronounce the language fluently (verbal) and practice movements actively (movement / action) (Astuti & Aulina, 2016). Teachers who are proficient in both aspects can create interesting, easy-to-understand, and memorable learning for students, thereby increasing their motivation and learning outcomes.

## **Total Physical Response Approach in Language Skills Development in Early Childhood**

The Total Physical Response (TPR) approach provides a comfortable and enjoyable learning atmosphere for students, where they can enjoy the process of learning a foreign language while practicing it directly ("learning by doing"). Developed to reduce pressure and create a positive classroom atmosphere, TPR emphasizes the development of language skills through physical motor activity. Teachers use verbal commands that students respond to physically before moving on to verbal communication. It mimics the process of first language recognition in children, where they understand the meaning of words and phrases through observation and action before using them verbally. Research shows that the TPR approach is effective in developing language skills in children, especially early childhood. This approach creates a conducive and fun learning environment, where children are motivated to be actively involved in the learning process and improve their communication skills in a foreign language.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **A. Total Physical Response**

##### **1. Definition Of Total Physical Response**

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a language development concept initiated by Prof. James J. Asher, a psychologist from San Jose State College California, in the mid-60s. He pioneered innovative language teaching methods utilizing body movements. The TPR method has proven effective in teaching a variety of languages, including Japanese, Russian, German, and English, to both children and adults. As explained by Fachrurrozi et al (2016), TPR is based on coordination between speech and action, where language is learned through physical activity and motor movements.

Richard and Rogers, in Fachrurrozi et al (2016), link TPR with the "trace theory" of memory (trace theory) in psychology. This theory states that the more often and intensively a memory association is traced, the stronger the association and the easier it is to remember. This retracement can be done verbally (for example, by rote repetition) or combined with motor activity. Asher, in Setiyadi, defines TPR as a language learning approach that combines command, speech, and action. This method aims to provide an immersive foreign language learning experience through physical (motor) activity. Asher observed that humans, when learning a language, tend to listen a lot before speaking, and this listening process is accompanied by physical responses (grabbing, touching, moving, seeing, and so on). This is the basis for the application of TPR, where language learning is associated with movement and physical activity to strengthen comprehension and memory.

TPR's approach offers a dynamic, enjoyable and effective foreign language learning experience. By combining movement and physical activity, TPR helps learners to more easily understand and remember vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar. This method proves to be beneficial for learners of different ages and backgrounds, making it the right choice for holistically improving foreign language skills.

##### **2. Total Physical Response (TPR) Approach Design**

###### **a. Purpose (General and Specific)**

The Total Physical Response (TPR) approach has the general goal of developing spoken language skills at the beginner level. This approach uses comprehension as a tool to achieve the ultimate goal, which is to teach basic speaking skills. The main objective of teaching foreign languages with the TPR method is to produce students who are able to communicate with foreign languages clearly and easily understood by native speakers. In addition, this approach also aims to eliminate feelings of pressure and boredom in learning languages. Specific objectives in language teaching with the TPR method are tailored to the specific needs and skills needed by students. However, all these goals must be achieved through action-based activities in the form of commandments (Setiyadi, 2016).

###### **b. Syllabus Model**

Although Asher does not explicitly explain the order in which language skills must be mastered, his procedure suggests that foreign language teaching with this method begins with spoken language, then continues with written language. The ability to speak takes precedence over the ability to write. Students only learn to write after they are able to understand and carry out commands, and can give commands to other students. Asher's method uses a sentence-based syllabus, where teaching materials are selected based on grammatical and lexical criteria. Unlike other methods that use a grammar-based syllabus or structural flow, this method emphasizes meaning rather than the order in which the material is presented. Therefore, grammar is taught inductively, that is, by the way students learn from the examples given and then deduce their own rules. Asher's method focuses on developing the ability to speak and understand spoken language first, before moving on to reading and writing. This method also emphasizes the importance of meaning and context in language learning, and grammar is taught inductively.

###### **c. Types of Learning Activities**

The Asher method divides the language learning process into several stages, namely: 1. Presentation of the Model; The teacher gives orders to several students and carries out actions with them. It aims to demonstrate the meaning and use of language directly.

2. Understanding and Demonstration; Some students who had observed then demonstrated their understanding by carrying out the command independently. Other students who had previously only observed also got a chance to demonstrate their understanding.

3. Flexibility and Combination of Commands; The teacher then recombines the elements of the command to help students develop

## **Total Physical Response Approach in Language Skills Development in Early Childhood**

flexibility in understanding unfamiliar speech, even though sometimes the spoken command sounds funny. 4. Reading and Writing; After learning to respond to some oral commands, students begin to learn to read and write those commands. This helps them to connect meaning with the written form of the language. 5. Self-Talk; When the students are ready to speak, they give orders to the other students. This helps them to practice their ability to speak independently. 6. Expansion of Activities; Once students are able to communicate basically, learning activities are expanded to use short comedies and various games. It aims to make learning more fun and interactive.

Giving and performing commands is the main activity in the Asher method class. These commands are generally used to trigger action and physical activity from the students. A Q&A or conversation only begins after about 120 hours of lessons. In addition to practicing commands, Asher's method also uses several other activities, such as: 1. Role playing; Role-playing focuses on everyday life situations, such as in the dining room, supermarket, place of worship, cafeteria, or market. This activity helps students to practice communication skills in real contexts. 2. Slide presentation; Teachers can use slides to help students visualize new concepts and vocabulary. This can help increase understanding and make learning more interesting.

### **d. The role of the teacher**

In the Asher method, the teacher plays an active directing role. The teacher is responsible for: 1. Determining the learning material: The teacher decides what will be taught and how the material will be taught. 2. Become a model: The teacher sets an example for students by demonstrating the use of language directly. 3. Presenting new material: The teacher introduces new material to students in a clear and interesting manner. 4. Choose supporting materials: Teachers choose supporting materials used in the classroom, such as images, videos, and audio. 5. Despite having an active role, teachers still have to provide many opportunities for students to participate in learning. The teacher is responsible for providing the best type of language learning so that students can understand and internalize the basic provisions of the target language. Thus, the teacher must control the language that students will receive and provide raw materials for the "theoretical map" that students will build in their minds. This requires teachers to be creative in creating a lively and fun learning atmosphere. Teachers in the Asher method have a crucial role in helping students learn foreign languages effectively. Teachers must be active, creative, and provide opportunities for students to participate in learning.

Asher's method has a unique approach in providing feedback to students. This approach is inspired by the way parents give feedback to their children. At first, parents only slightly correct their child's mistakes as they learn to speak. As the child grows, parents gradually begin to raise their standards and become more assertive in correcting mistakes. Asher's method applies a similar approach to language learning. At the initial stage, the teacher should refrain from too many corrections. This is because excessive correction can hinder students and make them feel embarrassed. The teacher should focus on the meaning of what the students are saying. Teachers can provide positive feedback and use body language to show that they understand what students are saying. As students' language skills develop, teachers can begin to give corrections in more detail. However, this correction should be done in a positive and helpful way. The Asher Method emphasizes the importance of providing positive and supportive feedback to students. Teachers should refrain from too much correction in the early stages and focus on the meaning of what students are saying. With this approach, students will feel more confident and motivated to continue learning a foreign language.

### **e. Student Roles**

In the Total Physical Response (TPR) approach, students have a leading role as active listeners and implementers of movements. They must listen attentively and respond physically to the commands given by the teacher. Here are some of the important roles of students in TPR: 1. Understand instructions: Students must be able to understand the meaning of commands given by the teacher, both verbally and non-verbally. 2. Carry out movements: Students must be able to carry out movements that are in accordance with the teacher's orders precisely and smoothly. 3. Recognize new combinations: Students are expected to recognize and react to new combinations of previously taught material. 4. Create new combinations: Students are required to produce new combinations from the commandments they have learned. 5. Speaking: Students are encouraged to speak up when they feel ready to speak. This is important to help them develop natural speaking skills. Learning classes with the TPR method generally have a limited number of students, which is around 10-12 people. This aims to make it easier for teachers to monitor and pay attention to each student. Students in TPR have an active role in the learning process. They should actively participate in classroom activities and strive to develop their overall language skills.

### **f. The Role of Teaching Materials**

The Total Physical Response (TPR) approach does not use the subject matter text in general. This is because this method focuses on learning language through physical actions. Therefore, various objects and realia play an important role in the learning process. For beginner students, learning doesn't even require subject matter at all. The teacher's voice, actions, and gestures are enough to form the basis of class activity. Teachers can use objects that are common in class such as books, pens, trophies, maps, newspapers or magazines, and furniture tools in class. As the lesson progresses, the teacher needs to create or collect materials to support the teaching. These materials can be images, realia, slides, and word lists. The developers of the TPR method have also developed boxes containing objects related to certain situations, such as houses, supermarkets, beaches, and others. Students can use the boxes to establish teaching settings and simulate various situations in the target language.

# Total Physical Response Approach in Language Skills Development in Early Childhood

## B. Early Childhood

### 1. Characteristics of Early Childhood

In Indonesia, early childhood is defined as a child in the chronological age category from 0-6 years. This is in accordance with Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System Article 1 number 14, which states that Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to the age of six years which is carried out through the provision of educational stimuli to help growth and development both physically and spiritually so that children have readiness to enter further education. Based on the chronological age limit, experts then re-categorized early childhood into prenatal, infancy, and early childhood: Age 2-6 years. Each of these age groups has its own characteristics and differences. Here are some of its characteristics according to some experts including rapid development, high curiosity, learning through play, needing support and guidance.

### 2. Early Childhood Language Development

Everyone's language skills are different, some are of good quality and some are low. The development of this language begins early in life. Until the child is 5 months old (0-1 years), a child will begin to nag like a person who is talking with a regular series of sounds, even though the sound is released when he is 2 months old. At this stage, the child begins to receive conversations and distinguish conversational sounds. This babble became the basis for composing the language (Rahman, 2009). Linguists divide this stage into five stages, namely:

#### a. Holophrastic stage (1-2 years)

At this stage, the child has already begun to say one word. According to Tarigan (2008), one-word utterances at this stage are called holophrastic because children can express the meaning of the entire phrase or sentence in one word they say. At this stage, physical movements such as touching, pointing, catching objects are combined with one word. The first word used aims to comment on objects or events in their environment. That one word can be a command, a notice, a refusal, a question, and so on.

#### b. Phase II, Two Word Sentences (2-3 years)

Children enter this stage by first uttering two holophrases in a rapid network (Tarigan, 2008). The communication he wants to convey is in the form of asking and asking. The words used for it are all the same as the initial development, namely: there, here, that, see, want, and ask. At this stage, the child's creativity is very visible. These skills arise in children due to the increasing vocabulary obtained from their environment and also because of cognitive development and biological functions in children.

#### c. Linguistic stage III: Grammar Development (3-4 years)

Marrat (2003) mentions this development with sentences of more than two words and periods of differentiation. Children begin to be able to converse with peers and begin to actively start conversations. According to Marrat, there are some striking skills that the child masters at this stage. Broadly speaking, the child has mastered his mother tongue. The child also begins to be able to distinguish verbs, pronouns, and auxiliary verbs. The child can already hold a conversation in a way that can be understood by adults.

#### d. Linguistic Stage IV: Language Towards Adulthood / Preadult (4-5 years)

At this stage, the child has already begun to apply grammatical structures and rather complicated sentences. For example: simple compound sentences, for example: 'mother buys vegetables and crackers'; 'Let's sing and nari'. The ability to produce sentences has varied, there are question sentences / news sentences, command sentences, and question sentences. According to Clark (2007), at this stage children still have difficulty how to map ideas into language. Children have difficulty in expressing their thoughts into meaningful words.

#### e. Linguistics Stage V: Full Competence (5 years-more)

From the age of 5, most children who are of normal development have mastered the syntactic elements of their mother tongue and have adequate competence (language comprehension and productivity). According to Tarigan (2008), one of the extensions of language as a means of communication that must get special attention in elementary schools is the development of literacy. The development of children's literacy will lengthen and expand the disclosure of children's personal intentions, for example: through writing diaries, writing letters. Children have been able to make news sentences, question sentences, and a number of other constructions. Children at this preschool age have been able to learn things that are beyond vocabulary and grammar. They can already use language in various social contexts (Madyawati, 2016).

Children have great energy and short attention spans. They learn better through physical activity and direct interaction with their environment. The Total Physical Response (TPR) method is perfect for early childhood because it meets the child's need to move: TPR involves a lot of movement and physical activity, so children can expend their energy and stay focused on learning.

Improve Motor Skills: The movements in TPR help children to develop their gross and fine motor skills. Second, it strengthens understanding: TPR uses real objects and movements that children can easily understand, thus helping them to understand new concepts and vocabulary better. third, increase self-confidence: TPR provides opportunities for children to actively participate and express themselves, thus helping them to increase self-confidence. Fourth, fun: TPR is a fun and interesting learning method for children.

## Total Physical Response Approach in Language Skills Development in Early Childhood

TPR also benefits children with a variety of learning styles namely kinesthetic, visual and auditory. *Total Physical Response* (TPR) was developed by James Asher in 1977. This approach involves the child's physical activities in response to instructions or something he is learning. Songs and singing are very beneficial and effective activities for language learning for early childhood. In language learning, this activity is very useful, especially for children who are not yet able to produce language. Singing activities can improve language development and physical motor development, especially if the activity is integrated with music and movement (*dance*). Singing activities can facilitate children with different learning styles such as visual, auditory and kinesthetic.

TPR does not cause children to be under stress or cause children stress. Through language activities in the classroom full of songs, movements and songs, as well as stories and movements, children will feel happy and continue to strive so that children enjoy every process in doing these activities. By using the TPR approach, in addition to relieving stress, children can also create a positive mood from students so that it can facilitate learning. In the end, it can increase children's motivation and achievement in language learning.

According to Richards and Rodgers (Hafidah & Kusuma, 2019), the TPR approach has two features. First, that linguistic activities are coordinated by the left brain while physical activities are coordinated by the right brain. Using TPR in language learning will help children to use these two parts of the brain. Second, when learning a language and the child focuses on the movements, so that the child will acquire the language without realizing it. This will certainly reduce stress in children when they learn the language. However, this TPR approach has several advantages and disadvantages, including:

### 1. The advantages of the TPR approach

- a. Students be it children or adults, are able to pick up and learn language better and faster if they associate physical actions to certain words. It is also useful for children because children want to respond using the first physical response better than using the verbal response. It is fun and easy.
- b. Students will enjoy getting up from their chairs and moving around.
- c. Simple TPR activities do not require much preparation on the part of teachers. However, some other more complex applications may exist. It is good for kinesthetic learners who need to be active in class.
- d. This approach is a good one for building vocabulary. It is good for stimulating children to learn.
- e. This approach can facilitate students with meaning in real contexts. It is easy to remember.
- f. Actions or activities help strengthen connections in the brain. This does not require much preparation on the part of the teacher although the teacher must be willing to create a conducive situation.
- g. Class size doesn't matter because it doesn't require a large role.
- h. Help students to immediately understand the target language.
- i. TPR is inclusive and works well with mixed ability levels.
- j. Help learners achieve fluency faster by immersing learners in activities that engage them in the use of situational language.
- k. TPR seems to work effectively for both children and adults. There is no age limit according to Asher. The only setback is that if language training begins after puberty, the probability is almost certain that one will have at least some accent in speaking a second language, no matter how many years a person lives in a foreign country.
- l. Teachers pay attention to growth in students' learning, and improve the academic level of their classrooms.
- m. Creating positive thinking that facilitates students to engage in the learning process, so as to develop not only motivation, but also student goals in learning.

### 2. Disadvantages of the TPR approach

- a. Although it can be used at a higher level, TPR is most useful for beginners. It is also at higher levels where preparation becomes an issue for teachers.
- b. Students are generally not given the opportunity to express their own thoughts in creative ways.
- c. It's easy to overuse TPR. "Every new thing, if done for too long, will trigger adaptation". Asher writes, "No matter how exciting and productive the innovation is, people will get tired of it".
- d. Teachers may find that it is limited in the scope of language. Certain target languages may not be suitable for this approach. This can be challenging for shy students.
- e. This is not a very creative method. Students are not given the opportunity to express their own views and thoughts in creative ways. It is limited because everything cannot be explained by this method.
- f. It must be combined with other approaches.

### 3. Stages of Implementation of TPR Approach

Teachers must understand what stages are carried out in the implementation of the *Total Physical Response* approach in language learning as an example of English so that children's learning styles are also conveyed and English learning can run optimally. Activities carried out in this method, the teacher will provide material about fruit (*fruit*). The stages of implementation of the *Total Physical Response* approach in developing children's language skills include:

## Total Physical Response Approach in Language Skills Development in Early Childhood

1. Vocabulary is introduced to children through pictures or real objects. This activity can include children's visual learning styles where children can remember more quickly and strongly by looking at real pictures / objects that the teacher displays. At this visual stage the child will have a strong memory of shape, color, and artistic understanding.
2. The vocabulary is repeated by the teacher slowly several times in a sequence (*apple, star, fruit, banana*). This stage includes the auditory learning style of the child where the auditory learning style has a better sense of hearing and is more focused. The child then understands the words. In doing this, the most important thing is to adjust the speed at which the teacher teaches and the speed at which the child learns.
3. Sentences in the form of *commands* / command sentences are introduced to children gradually one after another in sequence, such as (*walk and take this apple, and then say to your friends "this is apple"*). The teacher repeats several times one sentence of the command before being given the next sentence of command. The teacher must make a fixed order when delivering the sentences of the command. Furthermore, the teacher can make a random sequence of the command sentences and it is expected that children can imitate the movements of the command sentences that have been randomized. Finally, the objects mentioned and the command sentences are given to children. Then the children are asked to perform commands based on a given sequence of movements. This activity involves the child's kinesthetic learning style by involving the child's movement style or motor activity. When the child mentions vocabulary, the child's language intelligence also develops.

Many aspects affect the development of a child, these aspects contribute greatly to child development, including motor, cognitive, social, physical, emotional and language development. Language development without realizing it language is an aspect that contributes greatly to children's growth and development. Especially in early childhood, language and communication skills are necessary and essential for the beginning of the school process. By mastering language a child is able to communicate with people around him both with his peers and even with adults, so that the child can gain knowledge from what they hear and say.

Language learning is not only limited to the mother tongue (first language), but also foreign languages. In Indonesia, the use of foreign languages in this case is English has been widely used as a daily language. Teaching English in early childhood is different from teaching English to adults. A teacher must be creative and fun in delivering his material. This is certainly inseparable from strategies, techniques or fun methods for teaching English to early childhood (Anh & Ho, 2018).

Mastery of foreign languages, especially English in today's communication era, is a very important skill that must be possessed by every individual. In fact, the current issue of globalization demands qualified human resources and able to communicate using foreign languages, especially English. For this reason, as educators, they must be able to introduce English to children. At least give him a simple vocabulary. The most sensitive period in language aspects in children is at the age of two years to seven years. All kinds of language aspects must be introduced to children before the sensitive period runs out (Kompasiana, 2020).

As it is known that the characteristics of children and children's needs are play, so the learning model that must be done by parents and teachers should be to play while learning. In the aspect of language development, competence and expected results are that children are able to use language as passive language understanding and can communicate effectively which is useful for thinking and learning well. Language development in children aged 4-6 years emphasizes the development of listening, speaking, and early reading/early reading. Therefore, a way is needed so that the learning message is conveyed to students.

Richard and Rogers in Fachrurrozi et al (2016), the *Total Physical Response* approach is associated with the "trace theory" of memory (trace theory) in psychology which argues that the more often / intensively a memory association is traced, the stronger the memory association, and the easier it is to be generated or recalled. Tracing or re-tracing can be done verbally (e.g. with memorized tests, without thinking) or combined with motor activity. The general goal of the *Total Physical Response* approach is to develop spoken language skills for the entry level. Teaching foreign languages with this method aims to produce students who are able to communicate in a foreign language that can be understood by native speakers of that language.

### CONCLUSION

The Total Physical Response (TPR) approach offers many benefits and advantages in foreign language learning, especially for children. Here are some important points that can be concluded from the previous explanation, namely easy and fun, covering various learning styles, building a positive atmosphere, increasing vocabulary and pronunciation, and developing motor aspects, as well as ice breaking and opening activities.

The Total Physical Response (TPR) approach is a foreign language learning method that is effective, fun, and beneficial for children. This approach offers various advantages that can help children to learn foreign languages more easily, achieve optimal results, and develop various aspects of themselves. Therefore, TPR is highly recommended to be applied in foreign language learning in schools and other educational institutions.

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