

# THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE METHOD IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT *TK KHAIRUL IMAM MEDAN*

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Received: 2023-03-27

Accepted: 2023-05-20

Published: 2023-05-29

## Abstract

This research is aimed at finding and describing how Total Physical Response (TPR) method can improve the ability of students at *TK Khairul Imam Medan* in learning English. The application of English for early childhood is not an easy thing. Therefore, it is necessary to use methods so that early childhood can better understand the meaning of the English language. One of the methods probably used is TPR method. It aims to make English easier to understand by early children. This research was conducted with the aim of knowing the results of the implementation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) Method in early childhood English learning. This study uses a qualitative descriptive field research method. The research location is at the *TK Khairul Imam*. The research subjects include the head of the kindergarten and the teacher. Data obtained through interviews, observation, and documentation. The results of this study describe the implementation of TPR method in early childhood English learning carried out in the school. This study shows the role of the teacher and the stages of English learning activities with the TPR method in the school.

**Keywords:** *kindergarden; teaching method; total physical response; TPR method*

## 1. Introduction

The development of increasingly sophisticated technology has become an important means to achieve educational goals that are more effective and efficient (Siregar, Nasution & Pardi, 2022). So, language as a medium of communication becomes very important especially English as one of international languages. English is one of the most fundamental subjects to be taught to early childhood. Teaching English to early childhood is not easy. Learning English for early childhood is very different from learning English for teenagers and adults. Harmer classified three groups in language learning; young pupil, adolescent (teenagers), and adult (Harmer, 2018). The learning method is important to master because it is a tool to achieve a goal.

Language learning refers to the processes which occur when a certain language is introduced. When children learn a language, it will be more effective to teach them naturally, or through direct communication by using the target language (Mariyam & Musfiroh, 2019). Teaching English to early childhood is different from teaching English

to adults. It takes patience from a teacher to teach English to PAUD pupils (Ahmad, 2010). In addition, in dealing with pupil a teacher must be creative and fun in conveying the material. This is certainly inseparable from strategies, techniques or fun methods to teach English to early childhood. (Isaacs, 2018). One of the methods is Total Physical Response (TPR).

TPR method in learning process is a language learning method that is structured on the coordination of commands, speech, and motion or action. The TPR learning method aims to provide an English language learning that is easily understood by students, introduced through command words and given using physical movements. TPR itself is deliberately designed so that learning becomes more interesting and easier for pupil to understand because it contains elements of motor activity. (Freeman & Anderson, 2016)

From the above understanding, it can be concluded that the TPR method is a method that begins with speech (verbal) and continues with actions or motor activities.

Based on the results of interview with the head of the *TK Khairul Imam*, Medan most of the students do not have a background in using English at home. Therefore, they are taught from basic vocabulary such as nouns around to verbs. Regarding pupil's language skills at school, most of them understand the meaning of the teacher's speech but are not yet able to speak. And one of the teaching programs at *TK Khairul Imam Medan* includes an introduction to English for pupils; therefore, the introduction starts early and it is carried out with habits in daily learning. The pupils of *TK Khairul Imam Medan* are usually instructed to point at objects and name objects in English. With this, they will understand the names of objects in English and will be familiar with the language.

Preliminary observations conducted by the researchers. It was found that at *TK Khairul Imam Medan* the application of English was used at the opening of learning by using songs and motion. For example, the pupils were ordered to sing songs with the lyrics *up and down and shake, up and down and shake*, or *turn to the right and turn to the left*, and the pupil were instructed to follow the movements according to the meaning of the song, such as moving their hands up and down, shaking their hands and turning them right and left. In addition, when learning, the pupils are introduced to English according to the existing theme. When learning with the theme of fruit plants, when the teacher introduces various fruits in Indonesian, the pupils are also introduced in English. And they are often ordered with commands from the teacher using English. Then, the students imitate it and makes movements according to the command. For example, when the teacher says, "*Run and bring the starfruit*"; then, they run and take the star fruit and then tell his friend (Freeman & Anderson, 2016).

Based on above explanation, this research reveals and describes the strategies used in the implementation of TPR method at *Khairul Imam Integrated Islamic Kindergarten (TK Khairul Imam Medan)*.

## 2. Literature Review

Total Physical Response (TPR) is defined as a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action; it attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activity (Freeman and Anderson, 2016). The Total Physical Response (TPR) method is a method that teaches language by giving orders to pupil, then the pupils will respond to the action so that the pupils unconsciously understand and remember the language they are learning (Muhren, 2003). This method is really good

for teaching young learner because they will not feel under pressure but feeling happy to learn new English vocabularies that they never heard before or listened to the English Language which they do not use for communication in daily life with their families, relatives, and also people around them (Aprilia, 2016).

Total Physical Response (TPR) method was first developed by James J. Asher (1968). He explains that his theory has to do with how pupil acquire their mother tongue. Pupils are directed to basic commands; pupil will respond physically before they begin to produce verbal or speech responses. In the learning process using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, there are many activities that can be carried out by teachers and pupils, including role play, dialogue or conversation, presentation with tools, practice using commands, reading and writing activities to increase vocabulary and also train on sentence structure, the teacher teaches with a movement.

In the first stage of TPR method, the teacher acts as the model. The teacher gives a movement to several pupils and gives an example in front of the pupils so that pupils can understand the meaning of the given movement. In the second stage, if pupils understand the movement, they can understand the meaning of the vocabulary given.

The advantages of TPR are being a good tool to increase vocabulary, being easy and fun, being able to learn a language better, and being faster if they associate a movement with a particular word, creating positive thoughts for involving in the learning process, and achieving English fluency. The disadvantages of TPR are: a challenge for pupils with shy nature, requires more preparation for teachers if using this method to a higher level, steps to Implement TPR are seriously arranged, and planning stage is adjusted accordingly.

However, teachers have to prepare a learning implementation plan (RPP) first. RPP is the beginning of all processes of rational implementation of activities. Teachers must be able to visualize the goals to be achieved and how to achieve these goals effectively and efficiently (Muhren, 2003).

There are several stages of implementation learning that must be considered by a teacher, namely: initial activity and core activities (Freeman & Anderson, 2016). The steps for the core activities are: provide new vocabulary or verbs in a foreign language related to the material being studied, the teacher provides training to pupils related to the material, ask pupils to listen and observe the orders or training given, gives appropriate instructions or orders, guide pupils in carrying out instructions or orders, experience errors or mistakes in speaking, the teacher tolerates their mistakes and gives them the correct answer, and end activities. This activity evaluates what pupils have gotten and have understood from learning so that at the next meeting pupils do not forget what they have learned in today's lesson. The final activity is to measure the level of success of the core activities. The three stages discussed above are an integrated series of activities, which cannot be separated from one another (Freeman & Anderson, 2016).

At learning evaluation stage, it is carried out to determine whether or not the learning objectives have been achieved and also the learning process that has been carried out. The evaluation system when measured in terms of usability can be divided into three types of tests: diagnostic tests, formative test, and summative test.

There are several factors that can affect the ability of English learners' vocabulary skills, namely: pupil factor (pupil interest and attention), teacher factor (teaching experience and education background), facilities and infrastructure factors (media and room), and time factor.

In general, sometimes teachers teach pupils with monotonous learning methods. This can make pupils feel bored and not concentrated at the time of learning. Finally, the impact on pupil learning outcomes is less satisfactory. The TPR method was chosen in this study because it requires physical activity, a movement which will involve communication between teachers and pupils. The existence of communication between teachers and pupils makes pupils more concentrate in learning.

### **3. Research Method**

Since the data are words, a research uses qualitative method. As stated by Moleong in Siregar, Nasution & Pardi (2022), qualitative method is as a research strategy to produce descriptive data and the research results are in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behavior. The location of this research in *Khairul Imam Integrated Islamic Kindergarten (TK Khairul Imam)* located on Jala STM/Suka Teguh No. 1 Medan with the considerations that the school uses English in daily learning. The method used in the school is very interesting. It can develop early childhood English, and the location is strategic for teaching learning process. The research was conducted for two months in the first semester of 2022/2023 academic year. The sampling technique used in this research is non-probability. The data were taken by interviewing the head of the school and teachers, by observing the students in the class, and by documenting the relevant sources. These techniques are used to select the relevant data to the research problem by selecting information without depending on the amount of information (Pardi & Ardescy, 2022). The data were analyzed by reducing data, displaying data, and drawing conclusion or verification based on Miles, Huberman, Saldana (2014).

### **4. Discussion**

This research focuses on finding and describing how Total Physical Response (TPR) teaching method can improve the ability of students at *TK Khairul Imam Medan* in learning English. *Khairul Imam Foundation* started establishing *Raudhatul Atfhal (RA)* school for the dhuafa (Poor Community) without any fees. Students are not charged anything except sincerity to study. After running for 5 years, seeing the enthusiasm of residents who care about education, the foundation established kindergarten, elementary, middle and high school levels which are all Islamic-based so that they were named *Khairul Imam Integrated Islamic Kindergarten (TK Khairul Imam)*, *Khairul Imam Integrated Islamic Elementary School*, *Khairul Imam Integrated Islamic Junior High School*, and *Khairul Imam Integrated Islamic High School*.

*TK Khairul Imam* has implemented English learning since its inception. Learning English at the kindergarten uses many learning methods, but the most frequently used is the Total Physical Response (TPR) method. The method in its application is not only carried out during learning but also outside of learning. The results of this study will be directly described in accordance with the conditions in the field. The following is a description of the results of the research conducted. The objectives of holding English language learning at the kindergarten are that the pupils know English vocabulary from an early age, they easily learn English vocabulary in a fun way, they are accustomed to using English, and they master by recognizing movements and objects directly.

#### 4.1 Process of Learning English with Total Physical Response at the School

In learning English, there are several things that must be conducted. Before entering class and starting learning activities, the teachers usually prepare English material that will be taught to pupil. The material taught is usually adjust to the learning themes every day. For example, on October 17, 2022, the learning theme is about fruit. The English material taught is fruit area. Pupils are taught about fruit names in Indonesian and English such as banana, pineapple, apple, watermelon, starfruit, etc. The teacher usually brings pictures or real objects to be studied so that pupil knows and understand what they learn by seeing the object directly. As stated by Mrs. Heny as the Head of *TK Khairul Imam*.

“Here, the English that will be studied usually takes from the theme being studied and in reference to the curriculum book in *Khairul Imam Kindergarten*, that also already exists. So we follow the existing reference. For preparation, the teacher usually brings real objects or pictures related to the learning theme that will be given to children.”

Data 1 above shows that all English learning process is already in the theme of reference books or daily lesson plan. The teacher applies it in learning process in the classroom. To make it easier for pupil to understand what the teacher says, the teacher usually brings pictures or real objects that match with learning theme for the day.

At the *TK Khairul Imam*, there are no special hours for learning the language English but learning English is directly included in the the scope of daily learning content as mentioned in Data 2 below.

“There are no specific hours for English lessons here, but every day there must be vocabulary and daily interactive given to children.”

The vocabulary is not only teaching and learning in basic English, but also during opening, closing, command and give compliment activities as shown in Data 3 below.

“English is not only used during learning but also used during opening and closing activities such as good morning, good afternoon, how are you today, are you happy. During core learning, the emphasis is more on vocabulary according to the theme. Teachers also often praise good job, you are the best. And also give commands like let's go, wait a minute, sit down please.”

It is clear that in language teaching there is no special hour in English, but it is directly applied in opening activities, core learning, closing activities, command and giving compliments in every day. The teacher emphasizes more about vocabulary and daily interactive according to the theme learned in the core learning activities. During the opening and closing parts the teacher always familiarizes greeting sentences in English. The teacher also gives a compliment to pupil by using English. The expression are for example: good morning; good afternoon; how are you; are you happy; fo you like it; thankyou; wait a minute; sorry; good job; you are the best; sit down please; come here. It aims to make pupils accustomed to pronouncing English vocabulary by practicing in their daily life at school so that the pupils will be more fluent in pronouncing it and understand the meaning of the word.

#### **4.2 Aspect of the Implementation of Learning English with TPR Method.**

The implementation of learning process requires several aspects to run smoothly and produce good activities as follows:

##### **Application of English material**

Process of implementing learning English at *TK Khairul Imam* cannot be separated from the aspect of the curriculum. Curriculum for teachers is the most important and essential element. The curriculum implemented at the school is the 2013 curriculum. Modifications are performed to accommodate the condition of the students as proved in Data 4 below.

“We use the 2013 curriculum according to government recommendations, but we make a few modifications to suit children's abilities in the learning process. We have an English lesson guide for kids which contains vocabulary and daily interactive that must be taught to children. So every day there is a new vocabulary for children according to the learning theme given that day.”

Data 4 above shows that the learning process at the school cannot be separated from the curriculum developed to support English learning process. *TK Khairul Imam* made English lesson for pupils as the guidance. There is development materials that include vocabulary and daily interactive that must be learned by every pupil. there would be assessments for developmental materials. So, there is a vocabulary that must be taught to pupil every day based on the order of existing vocabulary and based on the themes of ongoing learning.

##### **Student role**

In the TPR method, the students have a major role as a listener and executor of the movement. They listen attentively and respond appropriately and physically to the commands given by the teacher. At *TK Khairul Imam*, when learning English, students are expected to be able to listen carefully to what the teacher says then they continue with language activities and movements according to the command given.

##### **Teacher Role**

In TPR method, teacher plays the role as an active director. The teacher decides what to teach, becomes a model and presents new material. Teacher also chooses the supporting materials used in the classroom. On implementation of English learning at *TK Khairul Imam*, teacher's role is important. Teachers are components that must exist in every provider of an education. The more competent and experienced teachers are, the better the quality services provided to pupils.

A teacher must understand that every child has different ways or styles of learning. Teacher has to choose the best learning method can be used to make the children easily understand the lesson. This is in accordance with Data 5 below.

“Every child has different strengths, weaknesses, and behaviors. Children's learning abilities also vary. Therefore, teachers must use learning methods that are easily understood by children.”

At the *TK Khairul Imam*, the teacher in learning English also uses a lot of methods. but as stated in Data 6 below, the more frequently used method is the Total Physical Response (TPR) method.

“Learning English at *TK Khairul Imam* actually uses a lot of methods such as using the GTM method or the audiolingual method. But here more often use the TPR method. Sometimes, this TPR method is also combined with other methods.”

Data 6 above shows that TPR is sometimes combined with other methods such as singing which makes pupils will be happier when learning process. This method is also quite possible to make pupils understand when learning English. Teachers must understand pupil's learning styles, and must be able to make pupil understand what is being taught by making a method that can covers all learning styles of pupils. TPR method uses several elements. Teacher gives pronunciation that contains elements of command, then the student will respond logically and verbally and continue with physical movements.

#### **4.3 Stages of Implementing of TPR Method in Learning English**

Teachers must understand what stages are carried out in the implementation of the TPR method in learning English to make learning process run optimally. The stages of implementing TPR method in learning English at *TK Khairul Imam* are as follows.:

##### **Vocabulary are introduced to pupil through pictures or real objects.**

This activity can cover pupil's visual learning styles. Pupils will remember faster and stronger by looking pictures or real objects displayed. By visual method, the pupil will have a strong memory of shapes, colors, and artistic understanding about something.

In this activity, the teacher must be able to pronounce the English correctly, so that the pupils understand and follow with the correct pronunciation as well. But there are a few obstacles experienced by the teacher in this stage as shown in Data 7 below.

“The teacher here is basically not very good at pronouncing words in English, so sometimes there are difficulties so you have to practice more often, because the words conveyed must be understood correctly by the children.”

Based on data 7 above, the teachers at *TK Khairul Imam* have difficulty with pronouncing words in English because they are also still learning. The teacher should be make a preparation by practicing the pronountiation of the words at lesson plan before teaching.

##### **Vocabulary is repeated by the teacher slowly several times in a sequence.**

This stage includes the auditory learning style of pupil. Auditory learning style has a better sense of hearing and more focus. Students will understand the words easily using this style of learning. The most important thing in this stage is to adjust the speed between the teacher in teaching and the pupils in learning.

**Sentences in the form of commands are introduced to pupil gradually.**

Command sentences are introduced to the child gradually one by one in sequence, such as (walk and take this apple, and then say to your friends "this is apple"). The teacher repeats one command sentence several times before goes to the next command sentence. The teacher must make a regular order when delivering sentences. Furthermore, the teacher can make a random sequence of the command sentences and it is hoped that the child can imitate the movements of the ordered sentences that have been scrambled. Finally, the objects mentioned and command sentences are given to the pupils. Then the pupils were asked to perform the command based on the sequence of movements given. This activity involves the children's kinesthetic learning style by involving the children's movement styles or motoric activities. When the children mentions vocabulary, the language intelligence of the children also develop. However, at this stage, sometimes, some pupils feel reluctant when asked to demonstrate a movement or language that can be taught using commands, as shown in data 8 below.

“In applying the TPR method, not all children want to move, for example when introducing simple movements, standing up. There are children who do not want to participate. Maybe that's because every child is different. There are children who are shy, are feeling reluctant or maybe are not excited to learn.”

In the implementation of TPR method in learning process at the *TK Khairul Imam*, the teacher also teaches English by providing a variety of methods combined with singing activities. Data 9 below proves it.

“Learning in Kindergarten is indeed accompanied by playing which of course has to be fun. Therefore, the TPR method must still be combined with other methods such as singing so that children do not feel bored and can understand lessons easily.” (Data 9).

Based data 9 above, TPR method sometimes should combined with other learning methods such as singing method or the simple gymnastic movement method. It is necessary that in early childhood learning it must apply a fun way so that pupils do not get bored. By using singing and movement they will feel more relax and interested in following the instructions given by the teacher. Introducing adjectives, like happy, sad, cry, angry, for examples, sometimes is quite difficult if only applied with the TPR method. Therefore, teacher needs to combine several methods so that pupil can understand the material given. Data 10 below proves it.

“The TPR method is combined with the singing method with the aim that learning is more interesting and the children don't feel bored so they can understand the vocabulary being taught.”

The teacher gave a song with a variety of movements that match with the lyrics. This song is introduced to pupils about various verbs. In the initial stage, the teacher sings first and then next sing with movement. After that the pupils were asked to imitate the song and the movement with one stanza. Data 11 below proves it.

“Hello, hello.

Can you clap your hands? (the pupils clap they hands)



Hello, hello.  
Can you clap your hands? (the pupils clap they hands)  
Can you stretch up high? (the pupils tiptoe)  
Can you touch your toes? (the pupils touch they toes)  
Can you turn around? (the pupils do circular motion)  
Can you say, "Hello?" (the pupils say "hello")."

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion, the conclusion is that implementation of learning English with TPR method at *TK Khairul Imam* uses aspects of the TPR method in learning process in the class such as opening, closing, commanding and giving praise. The method is also applied outside of class hours. TPR method is appropriate to be implemented in English teaching and learning process for the kindergarten students at *TK Khairul Imam Medan*. In teaching English, the teacher also combines TPR method with the English song in order to make the students interest to join the English teaching process in the classroom. Teacher's response can use supporting media such as real objects, posters, pictures, and flashcards in learning English. It is to make easier for kindergarten pupils to learn new vocabulary. The barrier to the implementation of the method in learning English is the pupil who has a shy nature, and sometimes does not want to follow orders that the teacher gives.

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