

USING TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE

WITH YOUNGER LEARNERS

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1. WHAT IS TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE?

Total Physical Response (TPR) involves the children in making some physical response to what the teacher says. This can be either carrying out an action, eg. stand up, or carrying out an unrelated action on hearing a specific language item, eg. jump every time I say yellow.

Total physical response as a technique for teaching a foreign language was taken up by an American psychologist called James Asher in the 1970s. Although it was originally developed with adults, it has been increasingly included in the teaching of younger learners.

This is not surprising as the techniques and ideas behind them are ones which parents instinctively use with their non-speaking children, eg: Parent says:-

Come here. Hold my hand. Don't touch. Put teddy in the box. Give granny a kiss. No, just one biscuit. No, don't pull your brother's hair.
and the child carries out the command.

The meaning is clear from the context or from parent demonstration and the child shows it understands by making a physical response. At this stage there is no expectation for the child to speak. Children are allowed to stay at this stage as long as they need to, hearing the same language over and over again before being expected to speak.

The usefulness of T.P.R. in the younger learner classroom has been confirmed by recent research which has found that the way children learn a second language has many similarities to the way they learn their first.

2. WHY USE IT WITH 8 - 12 YEAR OLDS?

1. It is a game-like activity.
2. Children of this age need to be physically active. T.P.R. is controlled physical activity.
3. It doesn't need any explanation i.e. it uses the foreign language in the classroom from the beginning.
4. It's easy to organise. Pupils can do it in their places.
5. Children of this age are still relatively uninhibited and enjoy T.P.R. immensely.
6. Children's concentration span is limited. T.P.R. provides a good change of focus.
7. Children hear the same language over and over again. This is essential before they can be expected to speak.
8. Children forget quickly. With T.P.R. children get lots of practice until the language becomes very familiar.
9. All children are kept busy all the time.
10. Children feel comfortable. There is no pressure to perform alone.
11. It allows for a silent period to suit individuals.
12. It caters for different learning paces. Slower learners can copy others. Faster learners are still kept busy.
13. The teacher gets lots of opportunities to evaluate pupils receptive performance.

3. WHEN TO USE TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE

T.P.R. can be used to present practise and recycle classroom language, vocabulary and verbs of action. It can also be used as a listening task when listening to the teacher, a cassette, a song/chant or a story.

ACTION GAMES

1. Teaching / practising new language

A basic procedure when presenting or practising new language is:

1. Teacher says the word / phrase and mimes the action
2. Teacher says the word / phrase and pupils join in with the action (the whole class)
3. Teacher says the word / phrase and pupils do the action (in groups eg. a team, a row, a table, the boys / girls / a group of pupils the teacher names)

Action Games can be used to present / practise:

- Classroom Language eg:-

stand up, sit down, open your book, close your book, pick up your pencil, put down your pencil, come here please, go back to your place please, look at the blackboard, look at me.

- Verbs eg. ways of moving: run, walk, tiptoe, hop, jump, crawl.

Pupils can do these - on the spot

- around the classroom eg. to the door / window / blackboard / cupboard
- to flashcards you have put around the room
eg. hop to the bus flashcard.

To add variety you can add adverbs eg hop quickly / slowly.

- Vocabulary Sets where the meaning can be mimed (animals, food, leisure activities etc.) eg:

It's windy. It's snowy. It's rainy. It's sunny. It's hot. It's cold.

It's hot and sunny. It's cold and windy. It's cold and snowy...

- New Words the pupils need to understand in order to do a song or a story.

2. For recycling vocabulary and language

- Simon Says (in this game the pupils have to mime what you say but ONLY if this is preceded by "Simon Says" eg Simon says eat an apple. If you don't say Simon says eg. eat an apple and they do the action they are "out") eg:

Simon says be a giraffe. Simon says put your hands up. Simon says run fast. Eat spaghetti.
Simon says you're playing football. Simon says it's windy. It's snowy. etc.

You can vary this game by substituting Simon says for "Please" eg. jump three times please, be a rabbit please, eat a pizza etc.; or for "Don't ..." eg. jump three times, be a rabbit, don't eat a pizza etc.

- Mime Stories. This is a way of bringing together two or more vocabulary areas. Pupils mime the parts of the story as you go along. eg:

You're going up a mountain. It's very hot and sunny. You're tired. You stop and eat some spaghetti, some meat and a salad. Now you're at the top of the mountain and you're drinking a cup of hot chocolate. It's very hot! Now you're going down the mountain. Oh dear! There's a lion! It's very fierce! You run very fast!!

Alternatively pupils can react to words in a story by putting their hands up, banging the table etc. eg:- (members of family or country)

My family is very European. My mum is from the U.K. and my dad is from Denmark. I've got one sister and two brothers and we were all born in different countries. I'm the oldest and I was born in Germany. My brother Tom is eight and he was born in Greece. Then comes my sister Sally. She's six and she was born in Portugal. And the baby of the family is Martin aged three and born in Holland. We've got cousins in France and a granny in Spain.

- Musical Bumps. You play music and the pupils dance. Stop the music and say eg. blue trousers. All the pupils wearing blue trousers sit down. All the others freeze. Pupils who make a mistake are eliminated. Repeat with more colours and items of clothing. (You can also play this game with members of the family, birthday months, likes/dislikes etc.)
- Musical Mimes. Play music and the pupils dance. Stop the tape and the pupils freeze. Say eg. you're playing football. The pupils mime the action until the music starts again. Repeat with more sports / animals etc.

PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

T.P.R. is very useful for revising the areas the pupils have to understand before they do an activity and it ensures that ALL the pupils are able to do the task. eg. they are going to do a listening where mothers are asking their children what they had for their school dinner. They are going to tick the corresponding pictures in their activity books.

BEFORE THEY OPEN THEIR BOOKS

- The pupils listen to the cassette and make some physical response each time they hear food mentioned (they can listen more than once, making different physical responses eg. pull their ears, put one hand behind their backs, stamp on the floor)
- The pupils listen to the cassette and mime eating the food they hear.

WITH THEIR BOOKS OPEN

- The pupils point to the pictures of the food as they hear it mentioned.
- The pupils do the task but with their fingers rather than their pencils.
- The pupils do the task with their pencils.

SONGS AND RHYMES

Pre-school and primary children's culture is full of action songs and rhymes. Some can be found in coursebooks alongside songs and rhymes written specially for the language learner. (See appendix 1 for a list of authentic action songs.)

IN CONJUNCTION WITH FLASHCARDS

Children need to hear a word many times before they say it and say it many times before they remember it - using flashcards alongside T.P.R. helps to give them the opportunities they need. (see Appendix 2 - Using Flashcards to teach Vocabulary to Children for some ideas.)

IN CONJUNCTION WITH STORY BOOKS

Many pre-school books (especially the ones with flaps) can give great enjoyment to children learning the language. T.P.R. can help both with comprehension of the story and then as a stepping stone for the children to join in (see appendix 3 for a list of books we have found useful).

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APPENDIX 1 - SOME ACTION SONGS

Sing a Rainbow
Wind the Bobbin Up
Two Little Dickie Birds Sitting on a Wall
That's What Makes The World Go Round
Never Smile at a Crocodile
Incey Wincey Spider
Old MacDonald Had a Farm
Hey Diddle Diddle
Head and Shoulders Knees and Toes
I Saw a Mouse
The Wheels on the Bus
This is the Way We Brush Our Hair
Row Row Row Your Boat
One Finger one Thumb Keep Moving
Nobody Likes me Everybody Hates me
How Much is That Doggie in the Window
The Sun has got his Hat on
I'm a Little Teapot
Twinkle Twinkle Little Star
Hickory Dickory Dock
Five Little Ducks Went Out One Day
The Hokey Cokey
If You're Happy and You Know it Clap Your Hands
The Green leaves Grow Around
Five Currant Buns in The Baker's Shop
Ten green bottles
One Man Went to Mow
One Potato, Two Potato

APPENDIX 2 - TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE AND FLASHCARDS

Speaking

1. Divide the class into groups (horizontal / vertical) and give each group a flashcard. Point to the flashcards and say the words several times. The pupils put their hands up or make some other physical response when they hear their word eg. stamp on the floor, pull their ears, put one arm behind their backs). The person with the flashcard holds it up in the air. The groups exchange flashcards and repeat the above.
2. Put the flashcards around the room or ask pupils to hold them up. Pupils point to them as they hear the words.
3. Say the words, pupils mime

Reading + writing

1. Any of the activities in section 1 above using the word side instead of the picture side of the flashcard.
2. Spelling Game - Hold up the picture side of a flashcard. Pupils write the word in the air / on a piece of paper

APPENDIX 3 - SOME BOOKS WE HAVE FOUND USEFUL

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle (Picture Puffins)
Dear Zoo by Rod Campbell (Picture Piper)
It's Mine by Rod Campbell (Picture Piper)
Oh Dear! by Rod Campbell (Picture Piper)
Just Like Jasper by Nick Butterworth and Mick Inkpen (Picture Knight)
Baby Goz by Steve Weatherill (Frances Lincoln)
Old MacDonald had a Farm by Colin and Jaqui Hawkins (Little Mammoth)
There was an old lady who swallowed a Fly by Colin and Jaqui Hawkins (Little Mammoth)
Old Mother Hubbard by Colin and Jaqui Hawkins (Little Mammoth)
What's the Time Mr. Wolf by Colin Hawkins (Picture Lions)
Where's Spot by Eric Hill (Picture Puffins)
Spot's Birthday party by Eric Hill (Picture Puffins)
Andrew's Bath by David McPhail (Picture Puffins)
Winnie the Witch by Korky Paul and Valerie Thomas (Oxford)

Once your pupils are used to being read stories in English:-
The Mr. Men and Little Miss series especially Mr. Tickle and Little Miss Naughty by Roger Hargreaves (World International Printing Ltd.)
The Usborne First Story series (Usborne)

If you can't get hold of authentic books see the *Footsteps* range of books (Collins ELT) see also *The Oxford Reading Tree* (Oxford).

SOURCES FOR BOOKS

* The Red House, Witney, Oxford OX8 5YF, will send you a monthly catalogue of British books and an order form. For information phone England (0993) 771144

*For Puffin books and catalogues you can contact: Baker Books, Puffin Book Club, Manfield Park, Cranleigh, Surrey GU6 8NU, England. For information phone England (0483) 267888; Fax (0483) 267409.

In MADRID:

*Booksellers, Jose Abascal, 48, and Turner's Bookshop (Génova,3).