



Total Physical Response (TPR)

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"Babies don't learn by memorizing lists;
why should children or adults?"

James J. Asher

an emeritus professor of psychology at San José State
University in California

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikZY6XpB214>



TPR is...

- a language teaching method built around the **coordination of speech and action**
- a method of teaching a language using **physical movement to react to verbal input**



The Origins

- Originated in late 1960s, became popular in 1970s-80s.

Why?

High dropout rates in second language classes.

... but almost no problems learning the first language.



Learning fundamentals

- **Bio-program**

- Children understand complex utterances they cannot spontaneously produce

- **Brain lateralization**

- Directed to right brain hemisphere

- **Reduction of stress**

- The lower the stress, the better the learning



Principles

- Understanding of TL before ability to speak
- Meaning of TL words conveyed through actions
- Spoken language preferred over written language
- Understanding should evolve through the movement of the student's body
- No forcing to speak



Objectives

- To teach oral proficiency (at a beginning level), and the ultimate aim is to teach basic speaking skills
- To produce learners who are capable of free communication, which is understandable to a native speaker
- all goals are attainable through the use of action-based drills in the imperative form



Syllabus

- Sentence-based
- Lexical criterion is primary
- Initial attention to meaning rather than to the form



Learning activities

- Fixed number of items (usually no more than 30)
- Predominantly imperative drills
- Role playing can also be used
- Conversational dialogues begin after at least 100 hours of instruction.



Roles of Learners

- Listener & performer
 - Recognize and respond to novel combinations of previously taught items
 - Produce novel combinations
 - Encouraged to speak not until they feel ready



Roles of a Teacher

- Active and direct role
- Select supporting materials, and model the lesson
- Allow speaking abilities to develop in natural pace
- Parent-like feedback



Materials

- Generally no basic text
- Initially: teacher's voice, actions and gestures, later – classroom objects and/or supporting materials
 - TPR student kits (focus on specific situation)

TPR student kit



- Put the table in front of the sink.
- Put the bread on the table.



Learning process

- Review
 - Teacher repeats items from previous time
- New commands
 - Teacher gives new commands, repeat and vary them
- Role reversal
 - Student command their teacher and classmates
- Reading and writing
 - Teacher writes new items on the blackboard



Myths about TPR

- TPR only works for children
- TPR is limited to imperative
- TPR is limited to beginning students



Advantages

- TPR is fun and easy.
- TPR is inclusive.
- Good tool for building vocabulary for long-term retention.
- Does not require long preparations.
- Effective for both adult and young learners.



Disadvantages

- Challenge for shy students.
- No opportunity to talk in a creative manner.
- Can become too repetitive and boring.
- Preparation becomes an issue at higher levels.



Conclusions

- TPR is a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action
- TPR proved to be useful in second language acquisition
- **BUT!** In order to be successful TPR should be used in association with other methods and techniques.



Useful links

- <http://www.tpr-world.com>
- <http://www.teacherjoe.us/TeachersTPR.html>
- <http://www.tprsource.com/>