Open Access
AL-MANAR: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Pendidikan Islam
Vol. 15, No. 1, June 2026
https://journal.staimsyk.ac.id/index.php/almanar/index

The Effectiveness of Implementing the Total Physical Response Method in Improving English Learning Outcomes

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ARTICLE INFO
Article history:
Received
March 21, 2026
Revised
May 10, 2026
Accepted
June 22, 2026

Abstrak

Education is a conscious effort made by adults to those who are considered immature or do not yet understand the knowledge, culture, and norms that apply. English is one of the subjects taught to improve students' language skills. The basic core of language mastery is as a tool for communication. Recognizing the importance of using English in global communication, English learning has begun to be implemented in educational settings, from university students to elementary school students. Many still find low English learning outcomes, especially for elementary school students. This low learning outcome can be seen from three domains: psychomotor, affective, and cognitive. Given these problems, this study aims to find an effective method for learning English. One learning method is Total Physical Response. The effectiveness of a method greatly influences student learning outcomes. The focus of this research problem is the effectiveness of the Total Physical Response method in improving English learning outcomes for students, especially grade 4 at Al-Madina Elementary School. To find valid results, this study used a descriptive qualitative field method. By conducting interviews and direct observations in the field or research location. After conducting the study, it was found that the Total Physical Response method is effective in improving students' English learning outcomes. Based on interviews and observations, many students reported a better understanding of English when teachers used the Total Physical Response method. This method is considered effective because it mimics the natural way humans learn their first language as children. Rather than forcing students to memorize rigid grammar formulas, TPR connects language with physical movements and concrete actions, which can improve students' memorization abilities.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Total Physical Response, Learning Outcomes

Published by STAI Masjid Syuhada Yogyakarta
Website https://journal.staimsyk.ac.id/index.php/almanar/index
ISSN 2615-8879
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INTRODUCTION

Education is a conscious effort undertaken by adults to educate those considered immature or who do not yet understand knowledge, culture, and prevailing norms. Philosophically, Indonesian education is based on the thoughts of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, through the Taman Siswa concept and the Among system, which guides the character and development of students. Within the education system, the curriculum is one of the most important components. Education is a crucial element in developing superior human resources. Education is not only a means of transferring knowledge but also a means of

character development, moral development, and skills development for students. Education has evolved simultaneously with the emergence of humans on earth. Therefore, education is a true human need because humans cannot live properly without it. Meanwhile, according to Made Pidarta, education is inseparable from human life. In the era of globalization, English plays a crucial role in communication, as it is used in trade, social interactions, and education. Recognizing the importance of English in global communication, English learning has begun to be implemented in educational settings, from university students to elementary school students.

The low English learning outcomes of students at Al-Madina Elementary School are often due to ineffective learning methods, which generally focus on grammar and memorization, resulting in less engaging and engaging learning. A crucial component of early language learning for children is vocabulary. This aligns with Harjono's statement that vocabulary is the foundation of all aspects of a foreign language. This opinion reaffirms that without vocabulary skills, it is impossible to master good language skills.

According to Laufer, vocabulary is the "heart" and "core" of a language. Therefore, mastering vocabulary is crucial for mastering language skills, especially when linked to children's future reading and writing abilities. Children's English vocabulary is developed by learning to associate meaning with sound. In English, many words have more than one meaning, and some words have similar sounds but different meanings..

To address this issue, I believe the Total Physical Response (TPR) method is necessary. The Total Physical Response method was developed by James J. Asher, a developer of foreign language learning methods for children. Direct speech conveys a command to the child, causing them to respond physically before they begin to respond verbally. Larsen and Freeman add that Total Physical Response is an approach to foreign language learning using commands. Fourth-grade elementary school students are generally 9 to 10 years old. At this age, their thinking patterns are not yet separated from concrete matters, and their cognitive developmental characteristics align with the principles of TPR. TPR allows students to respond to verbal commands with movement, mimicking the way children learn their native language. This method has been shown to reduce anxiety, increase motivation, and strengthen memory by directly linking the meaning of words and phrases to the physical context.

Although TPR is promising, further study of its specific effectiveness in the context of English learning in Indonesia is still needed. Therefore, this study aims to test whether the TPR method is effective in improving students' English learning outcomes, with the hope of contributing to the development of more innovative and effective language teaching methods.

METHOD

Selecting the right method is a crucial step to ensure the data collected is valid and relevant to the research objectives. In this study, the researcher used a qualitative method, with a descriptive field research type. Qualitative research methods are research methods based on postpositivism philosophy, used to research in natural object conditions, where the researcher is the key instrument. Data collection techniques are carried out using triangulation, data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize

meaning rather than generalization. Because the researcher used a descriptive method with a qualitative approach, the main goal of the research is to understand the phenomenon in depth in its original context, not to test hypotheses or generalize the results. Therefore, the most appropriate data collection techniques are observation, interviews, and documentation. In addition to data collection techniques, research instruments are also needed. In the data collection process, the researcher used several methods such as observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis technique used in this study uses the Miles and Huberman model, which states that activities in qualitative analysis are carried out interactively and continue continuously until complete. Activities in data analysis according to the Miles and Huberman model are three: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Learning is essentially a process, namely the process of organizing and regulating the environment around students to foster and encourage them to learn. Learning is also defined as the process of providing guidance or assistance to students in their learning process. Teaching is a conscious effort with a clear purpose. Regarding this purpose, teaching seeks to transform a person from ignorance to knowledge, from inability to action to ability, from lack of understanding to understanding, transforming someone into someone others hope for. The purpose of teaching is to shape all aspects of humanity in a holistic, complete, and integrated manner. The success of a learning method is not always perfect; with several obstacles, even a method can be ineffective without the teacher's effort and without students' enthusiasm for learning.

Based on observations of the implementation of English learning using the Total Physical Response method, the learning process did not always run smoothly, especially in the learning atmosphere. A positive classroom atmosphere was observed, with 19 students actively engaged in the learning process. The students did not always listen to the teacher; many were still joking, playing, and otherwise preoccupied with themselves. The TPR method requires dedicated focus from the students to effectively follow the lesson. The aging teacher's learning environment is evident. However, this does not make the TPR method unsuitable for use as a learning method. Teachers can often employ additional methods to control inattentive students. Before teaching in class, teachers typically prepare a lesson plan. Planning is the initial step in the teaching and learning process, ensuring a smooth and systematic learning process. Several steps or plans are developed before starting a lesson: creating lesson plans, compiling materials, and determining learning methods. Observations show that the English language learning process is not limited to the required textbook but also integrates interactive methods such as songs and games. The use of these media aims to create a pleasant learning environment so that students feel more comfortable and enjoy learning English. Furthermore, to hone students' productive skills, teachers also provide trial sessions in the form of speech texts and conversation practice. In an effort to optimize students' English vocabulary mastery, the choice of learning method is a very common factor. Based on interviews, data showed that the use of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method is a highly recommended approach for children. Teachers are not always able to follow lesson plans due to several reasons, such as noisy students, sometimes limited or tight learning hours, the large

amount of material to be presented, and sometimes because teachers are no longer young, so their voices and energy are overwhelmed by the noisy students.

Every learning process is challenging. Several factors can sometimes act as supporting and inhibiting factors in the learning process. Supporting factors include the availability of facilities and infrastructure, but beyond that, supporting factors can also come from within the students themselves. Supporting factors don't always have to be material. Sometimes, supporting factors come from within the students themselves, or internal factors, such as learning motivation, interests, and talents. Several of these factors were identified during the research. In addition to supporting factors, there are certainly inhibiting factors. The inhibiting factors in the learning process identified by researchers include internal factors, such as students' own inhibitions, and a lack of student interest, especially in learning English. Many students find learning English difficult and unenjoyable. Therefore, inhibiting factors significantly impact the student learning process. Another inhibiting factor is the teacher's advanced age, which makes it difficult to control students in the classroom during lessons. However, teachers always find ways to address classroom noise. One way to address this is by interspersing the learning process with play. Play, such as guessing games or other games, can help students refocus on the learning process.

After researchers conducted observations, interviews, and documentation during the English learning process in fourth-grade students at Al-Madina Elementary School, data was obtained regarding the effectiveness of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in improving student learning outcomes. The effectiveness of this method is measured across three domains of learning outcomes: cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitude), and psychomotor (motor skills). These three domains are commonly used benchmarks to assess the success of a learning method in achieving its objectives.

The cognitive domain relates to students' ability to understand and remember the material taught. Based on observations conducted in fourth-grade students at Al-Madina Elementary School, the TPR method proved quite effective in helping students master English vocabulary, particularly in the "Parts of Our Head and Body" section. When the teacher gave instructions such as "touch your head" or "point to your nose," most students were able to respond quickly and accurately without much thought. This indicates that the vocabulary had been successfully incorporated into their long-term memory through consistent repetition of the movements. This is consistent with Bloom's Taxonomy (Benjamin S. Bloom): students successfully reached levels ranging from Knowledge (remembering vocabulary) to Application (applying understanding in physical responses). Furthermore, these results support the assertion that memory is strengthened through direct physical stimulation, in line with vocabulary retention theory, which states that the more intense the memory stimulation, the stronger the associations and the easier it is to recall.

The affective domain relates to changes in students' attitudes, feelings, and motivation in participating in learning. Direct observations in a fourth-grade class at Al-Madina Elementary School revealed that the TPR method had a significant positive impact on student enthusiasm and emotional engagement. Students who previously appeared passive or unmotivated became more enthusiastic when asked to perform movements following the teacher's instructions. The classroom atmosphere also felt more lively

compared to learning that relied solely on lectures and memorization. One of the most visible moments was when the teacher gave students the opportunity to come to the front of the class and take on the role of instructor. At that moment, students who were usually quiet and unsure of themselves appeared to be bold in speaking in front of their peers. This kind of activity indirectly builds students' confidence and reduces their fear of making mistakes in using English. This aligns with one of the advantages of the TPR method: its ability to create a fun and stress-free learning environment, making students feel more comfortable in learning a foreign language.

The psychomotor domain relates to students' ability to respond to instructions through precise and coordinated body movements. Essentially, the TPR method is closely related to this domain because its core principle is linking verbal commands with physical actions. Observations in a fourth-grade class at Al-Madina Elementary School revealed that students experienced a significant increase in the speed and accuracy of responding to teacher instructions from the first meeting to the next. This provides concrete evidence for James J. Asher's basic theory of TPR, which states that children respond physically before producing verbal responses. This development also reinforces Renandya & Widodo's view that TPR involves simultaneous right- and left-brain learning, effectively developing both kinesthetic and cognitive abilities.

Based on the data analysis above, the implementation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method at Al-Madina Elementary School is considered effective in improving the English learning outcomes of 4th grade students, especially in mastering concrete vocabulary for the material "Part of Our Head and Body". Although its effectiveness was distorted by the constraints of noisy classroom control and the age factor of the teacher, the instructional objective of improving learning outcomes in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains was still successfully achieved overall. The Total Physical Response method is said to have succeeded in achieving the learning targets set by Al-Madina Elementary School. This method is also supported by other methods, such as role play.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research and data analysis obtained from the study conducted at Al-Madina Elementary School, regarding the effectiveness of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in improving English learning outcomes for fourth-grade students at Al-Madina Elementary School for the 2025/2026 academic year, the following conclusions can be drawn:

The implementation of the TPR method in fourth-grade students at Al-Madina Elementary School involves three main stages: the first stage begins with a warm-up or icebreaker, followed by instructions and movements. The second stage involves the teacher as the provider of instruction, giving verbal commands accompanied by physical movements, while the students, as listeners or those instructed, respond by imitating the teacher's instructions. This implementation of the Total Physical Response method aligns with the TPR steps outlined by James J. Asher.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors: Factors supporting the successful implementation of Total Physical Response (TPR) include the characteristics of elementary school-aged students, especially fourth-grade students who are active and

enjoy physical activities, concrete learning materials, high student enthusiasm, and school support. Inhibiting factors include less-than-conducive classroom conditions, as students feel they have the opportunity to play and move freely, which can sometimes lead to noise; differences in ability between students; and limited learning time.

This research indicates that the TPR method is suitable for elementary and middle school students because it aligns with the principle of learning by doing. The method's greatest advantage lies in its ability to create a fun and meaningful learning environment, enabling students to understand through direct physical experience rather than passive memorization. An English teacher at Al-Madina Elementary School stated that she will continue using this method in the future, as it has proven effective and minimizes stress for students.

The implementation of the Total Physical Response method has proven effective in improving fourth-grade English learning outcomes at Al-Madina Elementary School across all three domains: affective, cognitive, and psychomotor. Students experienced improvements in memory, self-confidence, and the ability to respond to verbal instructions through increasingly rapid and precise physical movements.

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