

# Promoting Total Physical Response for Teaching English Vocabulary in Secondary School across Pekalongan Regency: Teachers' Perspective on its Application

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Received: 1<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Accepted: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Published: 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025

## Abstract

Teaching English vocabulary is very important because vocabulary has an important role in communication. The Total Physical Response (TPR) method is considered an effective method in teaching vocabulary. This research focuses on teachers' perspectives on teaching English vocabulary using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method. Data was collected using a survey in the form of a closed-ended questionnaire focusing in the area of teachers' perspective, usefulness, advantages, disadvantages and obstacles. The survey was sent to English Teachers Association in Pekalongan Regency. Thirty (30) English teachers participated in this research. The results show that the Total Physical Response (TPR) method helps teachers in teaching vocabulary. However, teachers also encounter obstacles when teaching vocabulary using the TPR method. An exploration of how to overcome the challenges faced by teachers has the potential to be investigated for further research. This research serves the use of Total Physical Response (TPR) method in teaching vocabulary which emphasizes the teacher's perspective on its application.

**Keywords:** Total Physical Response; Teachers' perspective; Teaching English Vocabulary

## 1. Introduction

Vocabulary is crucial as it forms the foundation of language which are the fundamental elements we use to articulate our thoughts, convey information, comprehend others, and develop personal connections (Rasulova, 2023). Vocabulary plays an important role in communication. Moreover, someone's proficiency in speaking English is greatly influenced by the extent and quality of their vocabulary. The more words they comprehend, the easier it will be for them to receive and communicate information (Viviane Hounhanou, 2020). Therefore, learning vocabulary is very important to communicate fluently.

Learning vocabulary as a foreign language may seem easy, but for some students, it can be a challenge. Based on Kahar & Baa (2021), seventh grade school students often have difficulty understanding the meaning of a word because their vocabulary is relatively inadequate. In line to that, Matruity & Que (2021) conveyed that secondary school students have difficulties in recognizing words, remembering words, understanding the meaning of English words, pronouncing words correctly, and writing words correctly. Matruity & Que also stated the students assumed that English is difficult; for that reason, they often avoid English in the teaching-learning process by playing and chatting with friends, going often to the toilet, and some are sleepy in the classroom. This situation happened all the time during the teaching learning process due to their low interest in english.



Students' low interest in English is caused by, as it is mentioned by Zainollah et al. (2024), difficulty in understanding English vocabulary as vocabulary plays crucial role in listening, speaking, writing and reading. This situation fueled by their low motivation in learning English and unattractive teaching method applied by the teacher. There should be appropriate tricks and treats to make student interested in learning, pay attention to the lesson and in fully participated in English teaching-learning process (Sumihatul Ummah, 2017). Teacher's selection of the right teaching method gives great impact to the learning process in the classroom. If the method is right the class will be fun and interactive. To make it fun, teacher can involve the student in the learning process through physical activity. Mariyam & Musfiroh, (2019) stated that Physical activities can reduce children's anxiety, which reduces the affective filter that facilitates language learning.

Teachers can utilize the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, which was created by Asher. TPR consists of having learners listen to a command spoken in a foreign language and promptly react with the corresponding physical action (Asher, 1969). TPR method allows learners to do physical activities while learning. According to Nuraeni, (2019) During TPR activities, the students respond physically to demonstrate their understanding when the teacher gives commands.

By using this method, learners can remember vocabulary easily because it is combined with fun physical activities. Engaging with language through physical interaction involves making mental connections that stimulate memory and enhance recall. Therefore, by repeatedly associating meaningful movements with listening to and/or reading words, students enhance their capacity to remember specific words and definitions (Maxsetbaevna, 2021). Physical activity applied in learning makes young learners less bored and can reduce stress. The TPR method has a major impact on reducing stress in these learners, improving their understanding skills and boosting their memory (Mohan et al., 2022).

Being in the spotlight, these previous studies revealed the results of investigations in the area of Total Physical Response (TPR). The effectiveness of TPR was conducted by Khakim & Anwar, (2020). The aim of this research was to examine how effective TPR in enhancing the acquisition of Indonesian vocabulary by students in a private Islamic junior high school. A quasi-experimental research design was utilized by the researchers, with a population of 129 seventh-grade students from a private junior high school in Indonesia being selected. The researchers employed a vocabulary test to gather data. The results showed that the application of total physical response effectively improved the vocabulary skills of students in private Islamic junior high schools in Indonesia.

The purpose of the study conducted by Safira et al., (2022) aimed to determine the impact of the TPR approach on students' vocabulary acquisition, comparing their performance before and after its implementation. Thirty-two (32) seventh grade students were involved in this study. Data was collected through a preliminary test and a final test that included multiple choice, matching, and translation components. The findings indicated that implementing TPR resulted in higher levels of satisfaction among students throughout the educational process. They found it easier to memorize and no longer considered learning English vocabulary as challenging. In addition, TPR effectively improved the vocabulary of seventh grade students.

Research on the efficiency of TPR for vocabulary acquisition was conducted by Saputra & Sahid, (2023). The purpose of this study was to assess how students perceive the use of Total Physical Response (TPR) method in improving English vocabulary learning and its impact on students' English vocabulary skills. Pre-Test and Post-Test were used to collect quantitative data, while qualitative data supported the quantitative findings. The study revealed that the Total Physical Response (TPR) method is very effective in improving students' English vocabulary. The students stated that the TPR method was more effective and enjoyable compared to traditional methods, and they experienced significant progress in mastering English vocabulary.

Farisatma, (2023) carried out a study on the effectiveness of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in improving vocabulary. This research examined the extent to which the TPR approach assists students in enhancing their vocabulary skills. The study utilized a quantitative methodological framework with a quasi-experimental design, involving both control and experimental groups during the pre-test and post-test evaluations. A group of forty-two students was intentionally selected and split into two groups, each containing twenty-one students. Both the experimental and control groups underwent assessments for vocabulary through pre-tests and post-tests. The results revealed that the TPR method positively influenced the students' mastery of vocabulary.

Many studies have supported that the Total Physical Response (TPR) method is an effective method for improving vocabulary, but research focusing on the application of it and its benefits seeing from the lens of teachers' perspective is still unexplored. It is crucial to investigate teachers' perspectives as they play a crucial role in the successful implementation of TPR. Their perspective on how students respond to TPR influences their motivation to continue using it. The purpose of this research is to provide insights regarding the use of Total Physical Response (TPR) in improving vocabulary from the teachers' perspective. Is the Total Physical Response (TPR) method effective in increasing vocabulary acquisition? and what challenges do teachers face in its implementation?

## 2.Method

The quantitative design was chosen for this research because it allows to collect data objectively and measurably using survey that was given to teachers in secondary schools. The instrument utilized for data collection was a closed-

ended questionnaire developed using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire contained 20 questions divided into 5 sections consisting of teacher's perspectives, usefulness, advantage, disadvantage, and obstacle. The objective of employing a quantitative design is to statistically analyze the pattern of teachers' perceptions, thereby obtaining a clear overview of teachers' perspectives on the application of the TPR method to students' vocabulary learning. The instrument validation was carried out by expert in research and expert in learning methodology to ensure that developed instrument aligned with the research objective.

This research involved English teachers in Pekalongan regency to obtain data regarding their perspectives in using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method. The survey was designed to know teachers' views on the effectiveness of the TPR method in improving students' vocabulary skills, as well as the challenges faced in its implementation in the classroom.

Data collection was carried out by sending questionnaire to English Teachers' Association in Pekalongan Regency through the head of English Teachers' Association. This was done to help collect data from English teachers in Pekalongan Regency. Thirty (30) active members of the English Teachers Association filled out the questionnaire. Teachers were asked to fill in the questions provided honestly regarding their views based on their experiences using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method to teach vocabulary.

After collecting the data, then it was analyzed by calculating the percentage of each question in the questionnaire. The data was presented in the form of a table followed by an explanation of the result obtained from the data in the table. Expert opinion and relevant previous research were discussed to support the result of the data obtained.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

#### Findings

This research obtained the data from closed-ended questionnaire delivered virtually to 30 active members of English Teachers' Association in Pekalongan Regency through the head of English Teachers' Association. This questionnaire was designed focusing on 5 main topics; and it was about to take into account. Teachers' perspectives, usefulness, advantages, disadvantages, and obstacles were the specifics areas in the questionnaire to be discussed. Here is the result:

Table 1: Teachers' perspectives

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Teachers need preparation for vocabulary material when using TPR method.	60%	30%	3,3%	3,3%	3,3%
2.	Teachers must be creative because TPR require physical activity that are appropriate to the vocabulary.	66,7%	30%	-	-	3,3%
3.	Teachers actively participate in teaching vocabulary using TPR method.	46,7%	43,3%	6,7%	-	3,3%
4.	TPR helps me a lot in teaching vocabulary.	53,3%	40%	3,3%	-	3,3%

Table 1 discusses about teachers' perspective on using Total Physical Response (TPR) for teaching vocabulary. 60% of the respondent strongly agree that TPR needs teacher preparation, while 3,3% stated strongly disagree. In relation to the teachers' creativity in applying TPR 66,7% respondents stated that they strongly agree the teacher must be creative in applying TPR. 30% said agree and rest 3,3% claimed that they strongly disagree the teacher needs to be creative in applying TPR. When it comes to teachers' participation in using TPR for teaching vocabulary, 46,7% respondents stated strongly agree and 3,3% stated strongly disagree. It is assumed that TPR is very useful to help teacher in teaching vocabulary. It is proved by the respondent option to 53,3% strongly agree, 40% agree, 3,3% neutral, and 3,3% strongly disagree.

Table 2: Usefulness

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5.	TPR is an effective method for teaching new vocabulary.	50%	43,3%	3,3%	-	3,3%
6.	TPR enables students to recall vocabulary easily.	46,7%	50%	-	-	3,3%
7.	TPR enhances students' understanding of English vocabulary.	43,3%	46,7%	6,7%	-	3,3%
8.	TPR helps students retain vocabulary more effectively.	50%	43,3%	3,3%	-	3,3%

Table 2 contains usefulness of Total Physical Response (TPR) method. In teaching new vocabulary, 50% respondent stated strongly agree that TPR is an effective method and 3,3% respondent stated strongly disagree. Concerning TPR enables students to recall vocabulary easily, 46,7% respondent said strongly agree. 50% stated agree and rest 3,3% argued that they strongly disagree the TPR can recall vocabulary easily. In the context of enhancing students' understanding of English vocabulary, 43,3% respondent declared strongly agree that TPR can enhances students' understanding of English vocabulary, while 3,3% stated that they strongly disagree. There is assumption that TPR helps students retain vocabulary more effectively. It is shown by the respondent option to 50% strongly agree, 43,3% agree, 3,3% neutral and 3,3% strongly disagree.

Table 3: Advantages

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9.	TPR can be integrated easily with other teaching methods.	30%	56,7%	6,7%	3,3%	3,3%
10.	TPR removes boredom in vocabulary learning .	40%	40%	13,3%	3,3%	3,3%
11.	Students actively participate in lessons when TPR is used.	50%	46,7%	-	-	3,3%
12.	Students are getting more engaged in learning vocabulary.	53,3%	43,3%	-	-	3,3%

Table 3 provides the advantages teaching vocabulary using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method. The TPR method can be integrated by the majority of respondents more easily than other methods in teaching vocabulary. It is confirmed by the result of 30% strongly agree, 56,7% agree, 6,7% neutral, 3,3% disagree and 3,3% strongly disagree. In terms of TPR removes boredom in vocabulary learning, 40% respondent stated strongly agree that teachers can remove boredom in applying TPR. while 3,3% stated strongly disagree. When addressing students' participation, 50% respondent said that they strongly agree the students actively participate when TPR is used. 3,3% respondent stated strongly disagree. In connection with that, students are getting more engaged in learning vocabulary. It is verified by the respondent option to 53,3% strongly agree, 43,3% agree, and 3,3% strongly disagree.

Table 4: Disadvantages

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13.	TPR is time-consuming compared to other teaching methods.	3,3%	26,7%	23,3%	26,7%	20%
14.	TPR is less effective for advanced vocabulary.	10%	26,7%	13,3%	40%	10%
15.	Students might find TPR repetitive over time.	10%	36,7%	16,7%	33,3%	3,3%
16.	TPR is tiring because it uses physical activity.	6,7%	30%	13,3%	23,3%	26,7%

Table 4 discusses about the disadvantages of Total Physical Response (TPR) method. 3,3% stated strongly agree that the TPR method is time-consuming than other methods, while 26,7% agree, 23,3% neutral, 26,7% disagree and 20% strongly disagree. Regarding TPR is less effective for advanced vocabulary 10% respondent argued strongly agree, 26,7% agree, 13,3% neutral, 40% disagree, and 10% strongly disagree. In terms of TPR is repetitive over time, 10% respondent stated strongly agree that students might find TPR repetitive overtime. While 36,7% agree, 16,7% neutral, 33,3% disagree, and 3,3% strongly disagree. Concerning TPR uses physical activity, 6,7% respondents stated strongly agree that TPR is tiring and 26,7% strongly disagree.

Table 5: Obstacles

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17.	A large class is difficult to manage when	-	33,3%	26,7%	26,7%	13,3%

using the TPR method.						
18.	Keeping students focused is difficult when using TPR to teach vocabulary.	-	23,3%	16,7%	40%	20%
19.	Students may feel self-conscious or embarrassed performing actions in TPR.	-	43,3%	20%	26,7%	10%
20.	TPR needs wider classroom space for teaching vocabulary.	3,3%	26,7%	16,7%	43,3%	10%

Table 5 presents the obstacles faced by teacher in teaching vocabulary using Total Physical Response. 33.3% respondent agree that large classes are difficult to manage, but 26,7% respondent disagree and 13,3% strongly disagree, some are neutral 26.7%. Pertaining to keep students' focus, 23,3% stated agree that keeping students' focus is difficult when using TPR. While 40% claimed that they disagree keeping students' focus is difficult when using TPR in teaching vocabulary. When it comes to students' performance, 43,3% respondent agree that student may feel self-conscious or embarrassed performing action in TPR and 10% stated strongly disagree. In teaching vocabulary using TPR, 3,3% respondents stated strongly agree that TPR needs wider classroom but 43,3% said disagree.

## Discussion

This study reveals teachers' perspectives in using TPR method to teach vocabulary. Teachers are important as a profession where they teach in the classroom and deliver important knowledge and skills to students (OZEN & YILDIRIM, 2022), so it is important to know from the teacher's perspective about the usefulness, advantages, disadvantages and obstacle faced by the teacher.

The results from questionnaire have the same results as research conducted by Putri & Suhendi, (2023), teachers need preparation to teach vocabulary and prepare the learning achievements that must be achieved by students using the TPR method (60%). Teachers also have to be creative in preparing vocabulary material that can be combined with singing and movement (66,7%). Because teachers are role models, teachers must actively participate in class for teaching vocabulary using the TPR method (46,7%). TPR method helps teachers to teach vocabulary to students (53,3%). In line to that, research by Trung Cang et al., (2021) show that students' ability to learn vocabulary using the TPR method is better than students using other methods.

The usefulness of TPR method seeing from teacher's perspective is effective for teaching vocabulary (50%). That is consistent with student perspective research by Dzurotul Ilmi & Anwar, (2022), all students agree that they gain new vocabulary when using the TPR method. Students can recall vocabulary easily (46,7%) because the TPR method enhances long-term retention for students when they actively participate and incorporate physical movements while learning vocabulary. Farisatma, (2023) stated that students enhance their understanding in vocabulary (43,3%) because they can understand quickly using the TPR method in learning vocabulary and find it easy to learn vocabulary, so that it is more effective to retain vocabulary (50%)

Trung Cang et al., (2021) carried out a study comparing the TPR method with different method for teaching vocabulary, the result showed that teaching vocabulary using the TPR method was more effective for students. This research is in line with the teacher's perspective that teachers can integrate the TPR method more easily than other methods in teaching vocabulary (56,7%). Students actively participate in vocabulary learning using the TPR method (50%), so students who are active in learning can remove boredom when learning vocabulary (40%) (Rokhayani, 2017). Students feel motivated and excited when teachers teach vocabulary, thus making students are getting more engaged in learning when using the TPR method (53,3%) (Jazila & Megawati, 2024).

The disadvantages of using TPR in teaching vocabulary, teachers have different perspectives. (26,7%) teachers have perspective that the TPR method is time-consuming. It is in line from statement stated by Ghani & Ghous, (2014) that the TPR method requires time to implement, but it is effective for students' slow language comprehension. In teaching vocabulary, advanced vocabulary is less effective to apply using TPR (26,7%). The TPR method is good for teachers giving instructions for students to do, but difficult for complex language (Eka, E., & Setiawan, 2018). Werdiningsih & Mardiyah, (2019) stated that total physical response involves repetition which may be monotonous, but it helps in effective memory retention. It matches with teachers' perspectives that students may find the TPR method repetitive in teaching vocabulary (36,7%). Teachers actively participate in vocabulary teaching using the TPR method to demonstrate the movements they instruct (Putri & Suhendi, 2023). Although they have to actively participate in using the TPR method, (26,7%) of teachers do not feel tired.

The last section discusses the obstacles faced by teachers when teaching vocabulary using TPR Method. Teachers do not feel that large class is difficult to manage when using the TPR method (26,7%). The TPR method can be utilized in both small and large classrooms, and the number of students is irrelevant as long as the instructor is prepared to guide (Mahmud, 2018). Keeping students focused is not difficult for teachers using the TPR method (40%) because it uses active physical activity in learning. Students love learning vocabulary using the TPR method which keeps students focused on learning (Dzurotul Ilmi & Anwar, 2022). Teachers have the perspective that students may be self-conscious or embarrassed to perform when using the TPR method (43,3%). In applying the TPR method, not all students want to move when they are given instructions by the teacher. This is because every child has a different characteristic, some are



shy and reluctant (Putri & Suhendi, 2023). TPR method does not need wider classes (43,3%). It can be applied in a variety of class sizes, but wider classes create meaningful interactions to maximize vocabulary teaching (Baiq Sumarni et al., 2022).

#### 4. Conclusion

Total Physical Response (TPR) effectively helps in promoting students' English vocabulary in secondary schools across Pekalongan Regency. Teachers have the perspective that in using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in teaching English vocabulary they need to prepare, be creative, and actively participate in the classroom. Based on the results of the usefulness and advantages, TPR method can improve students' English vocabulary and make students more interested in learning. It is supposed that Total Physical Response (TPR) method helps teacher in teaching vocabulary. Besides that, teachers feel the disadvantages and obstacles of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method. Teachers have the perspective that students may find the TPR method repetitive over time and students feel self-conscious or embarrassed to perform when the TPR method is used. However, these results cannot be generalized because each teacher has a different perspective on the disadvantages and obstacles they face. An exploration of how to overcome the challenges faced by teachers in teaching vocabulary using the TPR method has the potential to be investigated for further research. In-depth research on this matter can help teachers overcome challenges when using TPR.

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