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Total physical response (TPR): Acquisition of English as a second language among dyslexic primary school children

Neeraja Mohan

Department of English, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri, India

Abhirami J S

Department of English, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri, India

Arun S

Department of English, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri, India

Abstract---This paper aims at the effective utilization of TPR approaches in teaching English as a second language among children with dyslexia. This stress free simple teaching strategy is developed by James Asher. It emphasizes at bringing the dyslexics to the main stream of learning process. As T.P.R consists of different easy and fun activities it helps the student to understand the target language very effectively. It raises the pace and mood of the student. This method is very beneficial for kinaesthetic learners who need to be energetic in class. It involves the left and right brained learning. This approach is considered to be a fruitful method to help language learners to recall, accumulate, use and regain words in long term memory. To obtain a clear understanding on the efficacious of TPR teaching method among dyslexic students, a survey is conducted among teachers who teach dyslexic students. The questionnaire includes 10 questions. While analysing the survey, the responses from the teachers indicates that the students respond to the imperative drills and other activities very actively. So adopting TPR as a teaching strategy helps the children with dyslexia to learn English more effectively in a stress free environment.

Keywords---TPR approach, dyslexia, target language, kinaesthetic learner, visual learner, listening skill, introvert student, language acquisition.

Introduction

Learning English as a second language is not an easy process, especially to children with dyslexia. However, Total Physical Response (TPR) is an excellent strategy for learning the language through the effective blending of speech and motor activity and a best solution to overcome the major problems of dyslexics. This stress-free simple teaching strategy is established by James Asher, former professor of Psychology at San Jose State University. In 2007, Asher published an article with the title, "TPR: After 40 years, still a good idea". It emphasizes the everlasting effect of this teaching strategy. TPR can be applied over the students of all age groups. Here, Asher describes three major hypotheses after his keen observation on how the children learn their first language, L1. Initially language is learned mainly through listening; secondly the learning process is based on the involvement of right hemisphere of brain and thirdly the language learning in a stress free environment.

TPR is highly linked with the trace theory in psychology. For an instance, the children remember the colours of rainbow using the code 'VIBGYOR'. The students are encouraged to connect something which they learn with something else. TPR becomes the best assistant to enhance the memory power. The learning strategy quite resembles with the way in which a child acquire their mother tongue. Just like the children physically involve to the commands and instruction of their parents and caretakers, here also pupil responds to teacher's commands physically before they start to speak the second language. The learners construct a detailed cognitive map during their learning process. The main intention of TPR is to ensure communication proficiency at the initial stage of learning. The movements of body and gestures play a key role in teaching-learning process. Even though everything goes in a simple and easy way, but teachers should be well prepared and organized. Teachers are the directors of the play and students are the actors.

The kinaesthetic learners, those who study things through engaging in physical activities and the visual learners, those who catch the ideas through visual clues are greatly benefited from TPR. It boosts the student's confidence, basic speaking skills, learning competence etc. Listen, Watch, Imitate is the three letter formula for this teaching method. Unique feature of TPR method is grammar and vocabulary are selected according to the situations. Reading and writing is taught by teachers after grammar and vocabulary. Learners monitor and analyse their progress in learning the second language.

Action verbs are the core of TPR. It exposes the natural use of language. It can also be considered as a technique of teaching vocabulary. There must not be any stress in the class. It is very helpful for struggling students. It creates positive thinking among students. It can facilitate students with the meaning in real context. The main goal of TPR is to provide speaking fluency at a initial level. Developing near native like fluency is another objective. It makes use of action based drills in the imperative form. Syllabus consists of sentence based syllabus with grammatical and lexical criteria being given primary consideration while selecting the teaching items. While teaching the vocabulary, initial focus is given to meaning rather than form. The movement of body is a very strong medium for

the effective comprehension, coordination and keeping of macro details of linguistic output.

Dyslexia

According to Dyslexia Association of India (2016), almost 15% of all students enrolled in Indian schools are diagnosed as dyslexics, which are nearly 35 million children. So we can say that this is the most common learning disability. The word dyslexia origin in late 19th C coined in German form 'dys' means difficult and Greek 'lexis' means speech. Cambridge dictionary states that dyslexia is a condition affecting the brain that makes it difficult for someone to read and write. These pupils are able to read a word in a page accurately but they can't identify the same word if it comes in a next page. They also read a word with letters in a mixed up sequence. For an instance, they read the word 'saw' as 'was', altering the order in which they written. They also say words by substituting 'house' for 'horse', 'sunrise' for 'surprise', 'rite' for 'right',. When they read aloud they may ignore the punctuation marks, also they have trouble in reading mainly because of their inability to identify the speech sounds and learning about the relation between letters and words.

In 1957, linguist Noam Chomsky published a ground breaking book called "syntactic structures". It proposed a novel idea: All human beings may be born with an innate understanding of how language works. But dyslexia adversely affect the part of the brain which produce language. So pupils with dyslexia lack such ability to produce language. Dyslexics usually have normal intelligence and normal sight. So this learning disability will only identify once they start schooling. Some early signs include late talking, learning words slowly, difficulty in learning nursery rhymes etc. once the child starts schooling a well expert teacher can find out many symptoms including difficulty in identifying the proper word or writing answers to questions, issue in recalling the order of things, taking long time in reading or writing, skip the activities that involve reading.

Causes of dyslexia may vary. Sometimes this disability occur in families or it linked to certain genes that affect how the brain processes reading, as well as risk factors in environment. Other causes include the pupil have individual difference in part of brain that aids in reading process. Premature birth or low birth weight is another cause for dyslexia.

Types of Dyslexia

Experts categorized dyslexia into several groups in order to allow the educators to develop apt strategies specific to the need of dyslexic students and to assist them in an effective way. Phonological Dyslexia – it is the most common type of dyslexia. It refers to the difficulty in breaking down the sounds of language and to match those sounds with written symbols. It is also known as dysphonic dyslexia. The most people have the trouble with sounds in words.

Phonological dyslexia is associated with classic symptoms of dyslexia. Surface Dyslexia – deals with the trouble in recognising the common words by sight. It is also called visual dyslexia. It mainly happens because the brain finds it hard to

recollect the words look like. People with surface dyslexia may have problem with words that don't sound the way they are spelled. This may lead to the comprehension difficulties and take long time to read.

Rapid naming deficit – difficulty in rapidly naming letters, numbers and colours when they see them. It is related with trouble in processing speed. So, people with rapid naming deficit take long time to recognize the letters, numbers etc. Double deficit dyslexia – person with both phonological dyslexia and rapid naming deficit dyslexia is often referred as double deficit dyslexia. People who have trouble in identifying the sounds in words and who have trouble with naming speed.

Acquisition of English language through TPR

English is a global language that is spoken and realized by a wide variety of people at a global level. No other language fits this description greater than English language. This language derived from languages like German, French, Latin, and other European languages. English is the third most widely spoken language in the world. More than that it is the language of science, aviation, computer, tourism and it is the language of international communication. English is currently the language of internet. Nowadays million people use internet on a daily basis. So learning English is important in our day to day life.

On the other hand, the easiness of English language leads to become it a global language. The language and pronunciation is not that much complex when compared to other languages. Although the difficulty level of a language varies from person to person. Due to massive British colonialism, English language is not an alien or strange to any community.

Challenges encountered by Dyslexics in second language acquisition

Many schools prescribe the foreign language like English in their sixth or seventh standard. At high schools, it is mandatory to study English. The dyslexics face the same difficulties experienced by the second language learners. It consists of limited lexis, grammatical competence and lack of acquaintance with the cultural and social context of the text. So their problems are different from monolingual children in this matter. They also face the trouble in learning the decode written words correctly and fluently. When these children find difficulty in reading, they also have issues with the comprehension of the text. Because they can't look through the individual words correctly enough to form the meaning of the text.

The main problem faced by the dyslexics is that they can't recognize certain sounds or they are unable to relate the letters with the sounds. Some students with dyslexia might miss the chunks of information and they find hard to stay focused. Learning a second language requires the students to master both the written letters and their respective sound. This can be an ambiguous process for the dyslexic students. According to Caylak, students with low phonological awareness show an inability to comprehend the sounds of what they read any speech. Similarly, dyslexic students with short-term Phonological memory can't store the sound memory of second language they read in the left parietal cortex of brain (Caylak,2010).

Method of language acquisition used by dyslexic children TPR activities

Among several approaches to teaching and learning a foreign language, TPR (Total Physical Response Theory) is primarily used in the conventional settings (Asher, 1966). TPR approach is considered to be an effective method to help the language learners to remember, accumulate, use and regain words in long term memory (Asher, 1966). The major TPR activities include :

Demonstrate Vocabulary

The students imitates the action when the teacher utters a word and does the action. For an instance, if the teacher says the word, "write" and write the same word on the blackboard, the students learn the word, "write" and also they understand the meaning of the word, "write". This is the most expressive way of teaching. The teachers should make sure to write the vocabulary on the board. They should check whether the students imitate the activities while the tutor utters the word.

The instructor teaches new words to their students starting from the very basic actions like 'touch the nose', 'touch the head', 'touch the head' to daily actions. They also ask the students to do the pretentious actions like 'drink the coffee', 'paint the wall' etc. When the tutor tells the word and do the same action, the students enter into a game like activities and do the same.

Action songs for whole class

Children love music. Using music along with the actions aids to enhance the memory of dyslexics. Even adults remember the nursery rhymes they studied when they were kids. They are afresh in their memory. The teacher should teach the students the songs as a whole by adding music and gestures relating to it. Include the important words, that are interesting in the song and then express the accompanying gestures for the selected words.

Using mind maps



Mind maps are highly effective for dyslexic students to grab the ideas, words that are illustrated in visual and standard way. It is quite easy to be understood and perceived. In mind maps, the dyslexics students can see the ideas, "move" them

around, re-arrange them and organize them in several ways. It widely uses the images, colors shapes and symbols.

Story telling section



An excellent way to pick up the vocabulary into the content. It develops a good communication between children. As a part of the story telling section, the teachers can ask the students to create an unreal situation. Ask a student to pretend driving a car and at the same time ask another student to show their hands to stop the car.

Fun card game



Fun card game is used to describe the daily activities. For an instance, each corner of the classroom can be considered as park, theatre, beach, shop etc. Heart card indicates the beach. Diamond is depicted as shop. The spade and club represents the park and club respectively. So the students can take the card from the teacher and look the symbol they get and run to the corner. It has lot of fun.

Role Play



It mainly centers around the restaurants , gas station or super market etc.

Slide presentations



They provide a visual platform for teaching. The students can understand the topics vividly from the presentation in a very simple manner.

Imperative Drills

Imperative drills are the most important activity in TPR. It can be applied for the first 120 hours of instruction. It motivates the dyslexics to engage in physical actions and activities.

Conversational Dialogues

After the completion of first 120 hours of listening, conversational dialogues are used.

Role of instructional materials

There will not be any prescribed text book for TPR. In the starting level, lessons don't need any instructional materials. Teacher's voice, actions, gesture are the base of classroom activities. In the second level teacher can use basic classroom materials such as book, bench, desk, pen, blackboard, pencil and other objects in the room. Later when the course develops, teacher will use instructional materials such as pictures, slides, charts, realia, models to help the students in learning. TPR student kits are developed by Asher to teach specific situations such as supermarket, home, hospital, school etc. so students may use kit to construct situations for example 'put the blackboard in the classroom'.

Learner role

Primary role of the learner is to listen and then perform. Learner can listen to the teacher attentively and respond physically to teachers. Students can respond in groups or individually. Learners don't have much role over the content of their learning. They have only to follow the educator and perform in the class. Learners may direct to 'come front and sit on the chair' they are familiar with these situations in TPR training. So they are practiced to respond in such situations. Students monitor and evaluate their own progress. Learning is done in a stress free environment. Learners can learn and enjoy in TPR training. Learners can speak only if they are ready. Instructor will not force learner to do anything. Learning atmosphere plays a major role in TPR.

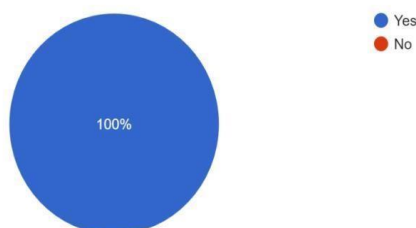
Teacher role

Teacher plays direct and active role in TPR. 'In TPR teacher is the director of stage play and students are the actors'. Teachers had a control over the syllabus. Teacher decides what to teach in class. Teacher should be well prepared and organized prior to the class. TPR classroom requires active participation of students, so teacher must have a detailed lesson plan. There is no space for spontaneity; otherwise classroom will be a mess. Every classroom interaction is directed by teacher. Teacher role is not limited to providing opportunities to learners. Teacher has the duty to provide best language exposure, so that the pupil can achieve the target language. Instructor should also develop students speaking ability in a natural pace. Teacher will provide feedback to learners in a parental way. So learners won't feel demotivated. As the class progress teacher can provide more feedback. Teachers' tolerance and patience in teaching is the key element of TPR training. At the beginning stage student may not be responding or they make lot of errors. So teacher begin with the wide tolerance and it will results in an effective teaching-learning method.

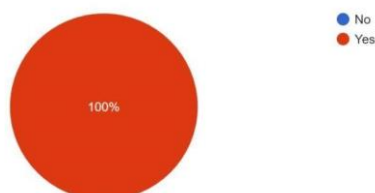
Research methodology

Survey method is used as research methodology. To obtain a clear understanding on the practicability of TPR teaching strategy among dyslexic students in classroom, a survey is conducted among teachers who teach dyslexic students. The questionnaire includes 10 questions.

1) Is teaching English as second language a difficult task?
4 responses

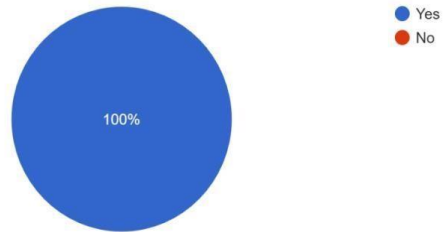


2) Is TPR a stress- free method?
4 responses



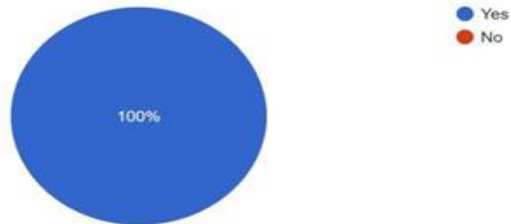
3) Do students have any improvement in language comprehension?

4 responses



4) Can students achieve basic rules of target language through TPR?

4 responses



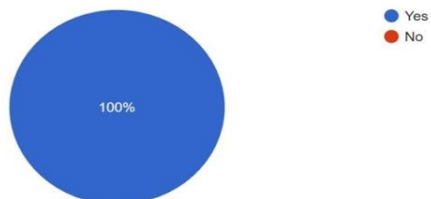
5) How these students respond to imperative drills and other activities in TPR?

4 responses



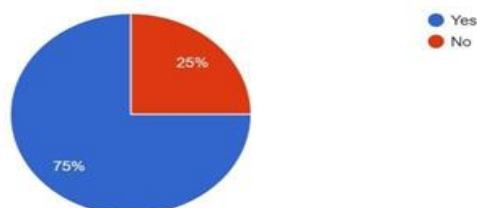
6) Does TPR help the dyslexic students to understand the topics easily compared to ordinary method of teaching?

4 responses



7) Are the students curious about learning a new strategy?

4 responses



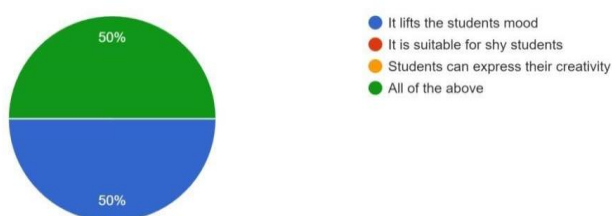
8) TPR is a best strategy for dyslexics. Do you agree with this?

4 responses



9) Which of the following is the advantage of TPR?

4 responses



10) Which of the following TPR activities find interesting and easily comprehensible?

4 responses



Analysis

A total of four teachers responded to our survey after implementing TPR method in classroom. Examining the data collected through the survey, it can be inferred that all teachers found teaching English as a second language a difficult task. They don't find it as a easy task. Then teachers were asked whether TPR a stress-free method or not. All the teachers say TPR as a stress-free method in classroom. This method reduces stress in students. It helps teaching learning process. It is also evident that dyslexic students have improvement in language comprehension after adapting TPR method in classroom. All teachers are satisfied with TPR method. It is also clear that all dyslexic students achieve basic rule of target language through TPR teaching method. All students learn basic rules through TPR. All students respond to imperative drills and other classroom activities in TPR. This method is a stress-free method so students show more participation in classroom activities.

TPR is an activity-oriented learning method so students' participation is necessary in this method. It is also clear that TPR helps the dyslexic students to understand the topic easily compared to ordinary method of teaching. All teachers agreed to this method. • A majority of 75% students was curious about learning this new strategy. 25% didn't show any curiousness in learning a new strategy. However, only 50% teachers strongly agree to TPR as a best strategy for dyslexics. Other 50% just agreed to the statement. This means they may find other teaching strategies also interesting. From the survey it can understood that TPR method lifts the student's mood. 50% teachers answered to this. Which means TPR method gives more importance to student's mood. Other 50% says TPR is suitable for shy students, it lifts students' mood and students can express their creativity. In general, TPR gave more importance to students' mood. Then teachers were asked to choose which TPR activities as more interesting and easily comprehensible. And four options were given fun card games, storytelling section, role play and mind maps. 100% answers were given to fun card games. This means dyslexic students are more interested in games than other learning activities. So learning through playing will be the right method for teaching dyslexic students.

Conclusion

TPR method is found to be very effective among the children with the dyslexia. It is a highly suitable teaching strategy which works among all groups. It refines the listening of the dyslexics. It plays a significant role in reducing the stress among these children. It enhances the comprehension skills and memory power. TPR method is a good assistant to bring the dyslexic students to the main stream of the society.

While analysing the survey, the responses from the teachers indicates that the students respond to the imperative drills and other activities very actively. Both the visual learners and kinaesthetic learners are highly benefited from TPR. Asher's article "TPR: After 40 years is still a good idea" highlights the everlasting effect of TPR at all times. Asher also points out that "no matter how complicated

the language is or how long the time interval is, TPR method can make the students understand very easily.

Surface dyslexia can be overcome the deficit through proper remediation. Dyslexic students should be provided with adequate time for them to learn. The students from their primary sections should get enough support, motivation and they should get the proper advice that they are not bad at studies and they can learn more like other students with new strategy like TPR. The teachers can encourage them to study well and appreciate them for small achievement. The subject's parents should be very supportive.

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