



Using Total Physical Response in Teaching Vocabulary for EFL Adult Learners

Author
Email
Orcid

Nikqadam Nikzad
English Department
Faculty of literature and humanities, Badakhshan University
Nikqadam.nikzad55@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-8283-5313>

Author
Email
Orcid

Mirza Mohammad Borhan
English Department
Faculty of literature and humanities, Badakhshan University
Mirza.borhan@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4418-5871>

Abstract

This study explores the using of total physical response method in teaching of vocabulary for EFL adult learners. This method combines language learning with physical actions and movements of teacher and learners. In this method the teacher teaches content of the lesson by different commands and the learners' response to the commands of teacher by varieties of actions. The aim of this research is to enhance student's engagement, retention of new vocabulary and teach better vocabulary for EFL adult learners. This research uses qualitative research to evaluate the effectiveness and using of total physical response method in learning and improving of vocabulary of EFL adult learner. The findings show that this method significantly increases student's enthusiasm, participation, and understanding of vocabulary, as it links physical actions to vocabulary meaning, facilitating better memory recall.

Key words: *activities, vocabulary, teacher, learners, and method.*

استفاده از روش پاسخ فزیکی کامل در تدریس واژگان برای زبان آموزان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی

نامزد پوهنیار نیکقدم نیکزاد

دیارتمت انگلیسی، پوهنخی ادبیات و علوم بشری، پوهنتون بدخشان

nikqadam.nikzad55@gmail.com

<https://orchid.org/0009-0001-8283-5313>

نویسنده

نشانی بر قی*

نشانی ارکاید

پوهنمل میرزا محمد برhan

دیارتمت انگلیسی، پوهنخی ادبیات و علوم بشری، پوهنتون بدخشان

mirza.borhan@gmail.com

<https://orchid.org/0000-0003-4418-5871>

نویسنده*

نشانی بر قی

نشانی ارکاید

چکیده

این تحقیق به بررسی استفاده از روش پاسخ فزیکی کامل در آموزش واژگان به زبان آموزان بزرگسال انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی می‌پردازد. این روش، یادگیری زبان را با حرکات و فعالیت‌های فیزیکی معلم و زبان آموزان تلفیق می‌کند. در این روش، معلم محتوای درس را از طریق دستورات مختلف آموزش می‌دهد و زبان آموزان با انجام اقدامات متنوع به دستورات معلم پاسخ می‌دهند. هدف این تحقیق، افزایش مشارکت و نگهداری واژگان جدید در ذهن و همچنین آموزش بهتر واژگان به زبان آموزان بزرگسال انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی است. این تحقیق از تحقیق کیفی برای ارزیابی اثربخشی و کاربرد روش پاسخ جسمی کامل در یادگیری و بهبود واژگان زبان آموزان بزرگسال استفاده می‌کند. یافته‌ها نشان می‌دهد که این روش به طور قابل توجهی موجب افزایش اشتیاق، مشارکت و درک واژگان در زبان آموزان می‌شود، چرا که با پیوند دادن حرکات فیزیکی به معانی واژگان، یادآوری بهتر آن‌ها را تسهیل می‌کند.

کلید واژه‌ها: فعالیت‌ها، واژگان، معلم، زبان آموزان، روش تدریس.

Introduction

Teaching English vocabulary to adult learners needs to be practical and meaningful. Adults learn best when new words connect to their daily lives, jobs, or interests. Teachers should use pictures, real-life examples, and fun activities; like, acting out words or playing games. Since many adults study English for work or school, lessons should focus on useful, common words and phrases. Tools like flashcards, word games on phones, and regular review help students remember vocabulary. It's also important to create a comfortable classroom where adults aren't afraid to make mistakes. Good teachers encourage students to think about their learning by keeping vocabulary notebooks or checking their own progress. The best way to teach adults is to make lessons relevant, interactive, and focused on their needs. Teachers can use varieties of teaching method in teaching vocabulary for adult learners, but the most important issue is that they have to choose the best method among others to teach better and efficiently for their learners. Total Physical Response (TPR) works especially well for teaching vocabulary connected to actions and directions. For adult learners, this can cover words and phrases used in daily routines, job-related instructions, and basic survival English (Beown, 2014).

Total physical response is a kind of teaching method that the teacher in this method use from physical actions and movements to convey and transmit the meaning of words to the students. This method was created by a language educator James Asher. (Richard & Rodgers, 1999). This method emphasizes more on using of physical movements to reinforce learners understanding of new words. It is so enjoyable, interesting and motivational for adult learners. Richard and Rogers (1986, p 87) said that, the total physical response method is built around the coordination of speech and action: defined as language teaching method that attempts to teach language through physical activity. The main purpose of total physical response method is to reduce the stress of students and to entertain them during the foreign language education process. This method is more effective to use with adult learners. It is important that this method is used especially for adult learners. They learn better when they see and learn by doing, so movement is the basis for their learning. These learners can physically react to commands given. It is expected that students who actively learn and use their physical intelligence will show more success. It is a method in which both right and left parts of the brain work actively at the same time. There is not much material to use in the classroom. the

important issue in this method is the competence of the teacher and the ability to use body language. TPR is particularly effective for teaching lexical items related to actions and directions. For adult learners, this includes vocabulary for everyday activities, workplace instructions, and survival English. (Harmer, 2015)

Problem Statement

Teaching vocabulary to adult learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) can be challenging. Many traditional methods focus on reading and writing, which may not engage adult learners effectively. Adults often have different learning styles compared to younger students, and they may find it hard to remember new words if they only study them from books. The main problem is that to solve the problems of EFL adult learners in learning of vocabulary by an effective teaching method.

Research Questions

Main question: Is Total physical response method effective in teaching vocabulary for adult learners of EFL?

Sub questions

1. Does Total physical response method have any advantages?
2. Does Total physical response method effect on learning vocabulary of EFL adult learners?

Research Significance/ Importance

Using of the Total Physical Response method in teaching vocabulary to adults of EFL learners is significant because it addresses practical teaching challenges, enhances understanding of learner engagement, and contributes to the broader field of language education. Another significance of this research is that, it may solve the problems of adult learners of EFL in learning and memorizing of words. This research may pave the way to other researcher to do more research about teaching vocabulary for adult learners.

Research Objectives

Main objectives: To help adult English learners remember and understand new words better by using movements and actions during reading.

Sub objectives:

1. Help shy adult's learners to feel comfortable by learning through actions instead of just speaking.
2. Help adult learners use new words in real life without overthinking.
3. Build confidence by allowing adult learners show what words mean with their bodies.

Literature Review

The teaching of vocabulary is a critical component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, particularly for adult learners who often seek practical language skills for professional and personal development. Traditional methods of vocabulary instruction frequently rely on rote memorization and passive learning techniques, which may not effectively engage adult learners.

TPR is deal with the idea that language acquisition is enhanced when learners are actively engaged in physical activity that corresponds to verbal input. Asher (1969) posited that the brain processes language more effectively when learners can associate words with actions. This kinesthetic approach aligns with theories of multiple intelligences.

Individuals have different learning favorites and powers. TPR targets kinesthetic learners, who benefit from hands-on experiences, while also catering to auditory and visual learners through the incorporation of verbal commands and visual cues (Gardner, 1983).

Korkmaz (2016) suggested that adult EFL learners who involved in TPR tasks showed important improvement in vocabulary retention compared to those who received traditional instruction. Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of TPR in increasing vocabulary acquisition among various learner demographics. The interactive nature of TPR not only aids in memorization but also increase understanding by providing contextualized learning experiences. Similarly, a meta-analysis by Gholami et al. (2019) highlighted that TPR significantly improves vocabulary retention rates across different age groups and proficiency levels. The findings suggest that the physical involvement in learning facilitates deeper cognitive processing, leading to better recall of vocabulary items.

Engagement is a vital factor in language learning, particularly for adult learners who may face difficulties such as concern or lack of motivation. TPR has been shown to foster a more active and engaging classroom environment. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), active participation in learning activities rises motivation and decreases anxiety. In their research, Wang and Liu (2020) noted that adult learners participating in TPR reported higher levels of enjoyment and motivation during vocabulary lessons compared to traditional methods. Furthermore, TPR's collaborative nature encourages peer interaction, which is essential for adult learners who often benefit from social learning opportunities. As highlighted by Dörnyei (2001), creating a positive classroom

atmosphere can significantly enhance learners' willingness to engage with the language.

The long-term retention of vocabulary learned through TPR has been a focal point of research. A study by Rixon (2018) indicated that adult learners who employed TPR techniques retained vocabulary for longer periods compared to those who relied on memorization techniques. The physical actions associated with vocabulary items create stronger neural connections, facilitating retrieval during communication.

Research Methodology

This research is a kind of qualitative research and the data collected from many books and online libraries such as: Lebgin, semantic scholar, google scholar, z-library and many articles. The purpose of this research is to gather, analyze and interpret information from existing scholarly sources. Each sources were carefully reviewed to identify advantages of using Total Physical Response with adults' learners. In the context of this research, the focus is on exploring how the Total Physical Response method can be used effectively in teaching vocabulary to adult learners of English as a Foreign Language.

Results & Discussion

Vocabulary: Vocabulary is the word of a language that the speakers of the language use them for transmitting messages in their communication to each other. Learning vocabulary is very important part of learning a language. When you know more words it's mean you understand the speeches of the speakers more and have good communication with them. Vocabulary are nouns, pronouns, adjectives, preposition, conjunction, adverb, and interjection (Richard & Rodgers, 1999).

Vocabulary refers to a set of words known and used by an individual in particular language, which involve productive and receptive knowledge (Nation, 2013).

Total physical response: The Total Physical Response (TPR) method, developed by Dr. James Asher, is a new language teaching approach that emphasizes the combination of physical movement with language learning. This method is particularly effective in the context of teaching vocabulary to adult learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. By engaging learners in physical activities that relate to vocabulary items, TPR facilitates deeper cognitive processing and enhances retention. This topic explores the application of TPR in EFL classrooms for adults, examining its

benefits, challenges, and practical strategies for implementation (Richard & Rodgers, 1999).

Incorporating TPR into vocabulary instruction not only accommodates to various learning styles but also creates an interactive learning environment. Adult learners often bring their own experiences and motivations to the classroom; thus, TPR can be adapted to include culturally relevant gestures and actions that resonate with learners' backgrounds. Furthermore, this method encourages active participation, reduces anxiety accompanying with language learning, and fosters a sense of community among learners (Richard & Rodgers, 1999).

This exploration will also address potential challenges such as varying levels of physical ability among adult learners and the need for careful planning to ensure that activities are appropriate and engaging. Ultimately, the use of TPR in teaching vocabulary to adult EFL learners has the potential to transform traditional language instruction into a more holistic and effective learning experience. Through this investigation, we aim to highlight the significance of integrating physical responses in vocabulary acquisition and its implications for enhancing language proficiency among adult learners.

Roles of teacher in using of (TPR) method in teaching vocabulary for adult EFL learners: It is clear that every teacher plays significant roles in teaching vocabulary for adult learners and these roles cause that the adult learners grasp and understand the vocabulary easily and perfectly. Here are some roles of teacher in using of the above method in teaching vocabulary for adult learners:

Facilitator: the teacher provides learning process and tell the words and vocabulary by actions. This caused that it creates a supportive environment that the learners feel comfortable and have less anxiety. In total physical response, the teacher brings facilities in learning by creating interactive environment that the students can learn faster and better (Asher, 1969).

Enabler: the teacher motivates and encourage the adult learners to take participate in practices and the task that the teacher implements them in classroom. The teacher provides sufficient support and ask the students to respond to the commands of the teacher physically. The teacher helps students understand by using actions, examples, gestures to make learning new words easier for adult learners (Larsen-f Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

Motivator: when the teacher tries to keep the learners motivated, it is essential in teaching. The teacher must try his/her best to use different games in teaching vocabulary by using the total physical

response method for adult EFL learners and grasp the attention of them to learning vocabulary. When adult learners feel self-conscious, the teacher can act as motivator by fostering a low-stress, engaging atmosphere that encourages effect participation (krashen & Terrel, 1983).

Feedback provider: when the EFL adult learners make mistakes in pronunciation of vocabularies, they need to comment and the feedback of the teacher. It causes that the learners know their mistakes and correct them by the comment of the teacher. The teacher also can give comment and feedback to the learners about how to memorize and understand the meaning of vocabulary in easy ways. Immediate and useful feedback is vital in Total Physical Response Method. The teacher can correct the answers of learners by positive reinforcement. This reinforcement helps learner in best way and they can learn vocabulary faster (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Roles of adult EFL learners in TPR

Learners in Total Physical Response have the primary roles of listener and performer. They listen politely and respond physically to commands given by the teacher. Learners are required to respond both individually and together. Learners have little influence over the content of learning, since content is determined by the teacher, who must follow the imperative-based format for lessons (Asher, 2000).

Here are another roles of adult learners:

Active participants: Adult EFL learners take participate actively in learning of vocabulary. When the teacher says a words and use total physical response method in his/her teaching, the students must take participation in the lesson and respond to the commands of the teacher by body language or tell it orally (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Researchers: The EFL adult learners are as a researcher. They try their best to find a new action or movement to tell the meaning of the words that the teacher gave to them or they may be trying their best to think and find the meaning of a words or vocabulary without the teacher tell the meaning (Brookfield, 2015).

Imitator and Performer of actions: when the teacher writes the words on the board and ask the adult learners to tell the meaning of the words by action, then the students imitate and perform many actions to convey the meaning of words to the teacher. The actions by the students maybe be different. It must not be too important for the teacher. The most important issue is that the students can understand the vocabularies (Freeman & Anderson, 2016).

Total physical response games in teaching vocabulary of EFL adult learners

Can/can't for challenge me: the adult learners challenge each other. One student says a words and perform an action without telling the meaning of the words and challenge the other students and ask them, can you tell the meaning of the words? Some of the students maybe know the meaning but maybe the other not. The students who perform an action must try to perform more action because of the other students know the meaning perfectly. (Krashen, 1982).

Card game: the teacher can use from cards in his/her teaching of vocabulary for adult learners because it is more enjoyable and interesting for them. For instance, the teacher firstly set the groups and can write letters on the card then put them in front of the individual students. So, students can ask words with the letters from the card and perform an action then the other groups guess the meaning. If one members of the group know the meaning that group can ask a new word from the students that he ask the words before, if the members of that group cannot understand, that group has not any chance to ask a words (Krashen, 1982).

Conclusion

The using of total physical response in teaching of vocabulary for EFL adult learners is so effective and enjoyable. It encourages adult learners to take participate effectively in the actions in response to the commands of the teacher in the task of vocabulary learning. The data show that this method in teaching of vocabulary for EFL adult learner is so favorable and the adult learners show more interest to the lessons by it.

The Total Physical Response (TPR) method has been shown to be a highly effective way to teach vocabulary to Adults English Learners as a Foreign Language (EFL). Research studies have demonstrated that TPR not only helps learners acquire new words but also improves their ability to remember and recall those words later. This makes TPR a very useful tool in the process of learning a new language. One of the main benefits of TPR is that it actively involves learners by using physical movement. This approach appeals to different types of learners, such as those who learn best by seeing, hearing, or doing. By incorporating movement into lessons, TPR creates a lively and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. This is especially helpful for adult learners, who may often feel concerned in traditional classroom settings. When students are encouraged to move and participate, they tend to feel more confident and willing to engage in the learning process. TPR has been shown to positively

impact vocabulary learning because it helps students understand words in context. When learners connect actions with words, they can better grasp the meanings of those words and remember them more easily. This hands-on practice allows adult learners to internalize vocabulary more effectively, which leads to improvements in their overall language skills. In summary, the Total Physical Response method not only enhances the experience of learning new vocabulary for adult EFL learners but also plays a crucial role in their overall development in the English language. This method cause that they learn and memorize vocabulary fast and effectively. it also so fit for those kind of EFL adult learners that they have anxiety and so shyness. For the teacher in teaching of vocabulary for EFL adult learners is so effective because the teacher can easily grasp the attention of the learners and reinforce them positively by commands and action in his teaching. This positive reinforcement caused they take participation in the task and lessons of the teacher.

Recommendations

1. The teacher can use from total physical response method in their teaching of vocabulary for EFL adult learners
2. The teacher can use from this method to reinforce the students positively to respond to the commands of him/her by actions.
3. Teacher can use form varieties of games in his/her teaching of vocabulary by which applying this method.
4. The other researchers can do real classroom studies to test Total Physical Response with adult learners.
5. Features researchers are encouraged to investigate how factors such as age, educational background, motivation and learning style influence the success of Total Physical Response among adult learners.

References

Asher, J. (2000). *Learning Another Language Through Actions* (seven ed.). Sky Oaks Productions, LOS Gatos, CA.

Beown, H. (2014). *principles of language learning and teaching* (6th ed.). Englewood, New Jersey, USA: Prentice Hall. Retrieved 1980

Brookfield, S. (2015). *The Skillful Teacher On Technique, Trust, and Responsiveness in the Classroom* (third ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Freeman, D. L., & Anderson, M. (2016). *technique and principles in language teaching* (Third ed.). New York.

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (First Edition ed.). Baick Books.

Harmer, J. (2015). *The practice of English Langauge Teaching* (5th ed.). Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited. Retrieved 2015

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Pergamon Press.

Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. L. (2014). *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and practice* (First Edition ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Nation, I. (2013). *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language* (Second Edition ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Richard, J. J., & Rodgers, T. (1999). *Approach and Methods in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.