The Use of Total Physical Response (TPR) Activities for Teaching Listening to Young Learners

Inti Enlishtina
English Education Department
UNTAG Semarang
Semarang, Indonesia
inti-englishtina@untagsmg.ac.id

Abstract: Although infants are not speaking, they are still active users of the language because they are physically responding to what has been said. As teachers of second and foreign-language learners, it is useful to consider the listening skills that are taught to children learning English as a first language. This article examines the use of Total Physical Response (TPR) activity as one of the activities for teaching listening to young learners. The article begins with the concept of Total Physical Response (TPR) activity, and continues with various ways of using this activity for teaching listening to young learners. In addition, the effectiveness of this activity is also discussed.

Keywords: Total Physical Response (TPR), teaching listening, young learners.

INTRODUCTION

In the concept of teaching, most people assume that children learn a foreign language in the same way that they learn their mother tongue. Basically, children are potential in acquiring and learning a foreign language, and even they learn it more quickly than those who are learning the foreign language after puberty (McLaughlin, 1978). On the contrary, children are less capable of absorbing or acquiring a foreign language optimally (Long, 1990).

Teachers of young learners know the importance of teaching children how to listen. It is useful for teachers of second- and foreign-language learners to consider the
listening skills that are taught to children learning English as a first language. One of the foundation listening readiness skills that get children ready to develop other skills is being able to follow simple instructions. When a five-year-old child who is not able to listen to and follow simple instructions, for example, is probably not going to be ready to learn academic content such as, days, weeks, numbers, colors, letter, sounds and shapes.

Teaching English, especially for children, should be enjoyable, interesting, repetitive, and understandable. Because of that reason, there should be appropriate methods for teaching English to them. One of the alternative methods that can be applied in the classroom is the so-called Total Physical Response. This method tries to introduce some language skills or components in an action in which a teacher serves three roles: an order taker, a model provider, and an action monitor in which learners serve as models and action performers until they feel ready to speak out.

English teachers who are concerned with teaching children should be aware of the nature of their psychology in addition to mastering all crucial components in teaching them. So far, English teachers have been experiencing difficulty in teaching children since they less sufficient especially in implementing appropriate teaching materials and methods. Thus, the selection of the two elements should be on the basis of learners’ age.

In order to conduct English teaching for young learners successfully, teaching materials and methods are well suited. For this reason, one method considered one of the efforts to English teaching for children, should be introduced. This method is known as Total Physical Response (TPR). Prior to discussing such a method in detail, this article starts with the concept of TPR.
The Use of Total Physical Response (TPR) Activities for Teaching Listening to Young Learners

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The concept of Total Physical Response (TPR) activity

Total Physical Response (TPR) method was found and developed by James J. Asher. In 1977, Asher studied the way young children acquire language. He compared very young children and students in college or university in developing language skills. He wanted to know how the former could be so good at developing language skills when the latter had so much difficulty. He observed that babies spent their first year of his life just listening to language. And he noticed that although babies aren’t speaking, they are still active users of the language by their physical responding to what has been said.

The concept of TPR is that learners physically respond to oral commands which are given. Learners are expected to respond non-verbally to commands before they are expected to speak. An oral command will usually be given by the teacher while she demonstrates it. The learners follow along with the commands and only speak when they are ready. When they first begin to speak, they repeat the commands given by the teacher.

This technique is giving freedom for learners especially young learners to feel comfortable and gain more self-confidence in learning language. Many young learners are too shy to speak in front of other people and become passive in classroom activities. By using this technique, it is expected that the learners can be active in classroom activities without responding orally. There are many different ways that TPR can be used with young learners. A variety of simple one-word commands, such as walk, jump, run, and stand can be used. And then, more complicated commands can be introduced gradually.
TPR attempts to center attention to encouraging learners to listen and respond to the spoken target language commands of their teachers. In other words, TPR is a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action; it attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activity.

**METHODOLOGY**

Design of the study used Case Study. Two English lecturers were chosen as the subject. Fourteen Observations, some interviews and some questionnaires were conducted to collect the data. The data were analyzed by using Miles and Huberman’ model of analysis (Flow Model). It is an on-going activity throughout the whole investigation. It is chosen because in this model, the data can be analyzed interactively and continuously until the data are saturated. The procedure of data analysis can be drawn as below:

![Flow Model of Data Analysis by Miles and Huberman (1984)]

Table 1. Flow Model of Data Analysis by Miles and Huberman (1984)

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of the study were interpreted specifically on four scopes to gain the conclusions. The scopes were Implementation of Authentic Assessment, Lecturers’ Achievement, Lecturers’ Problems, and Causes of Lecturers’ Problems.
Implementation of Authentic Assessment

Based on the research data, that can be found that two English lecturers have implemented the authentic assessment but they have not been able to implemented the authentic assessment to evaluate students’ speaking skill in class properly and smoothly yet.

English Lecturers’ Achievement

It can be found that they have just implemented the authentic assessment to evaluate the students’ speaking skill in the classroom but they have not been able to manage the time allotment, determine the characteristics of authentic assessment, define authentic assessment’s purposes, conduct authentic assessment’s steps, implement authentic assessment and score the students’ speaking skill in class completely yet.

English Lecturers’ Problems

From the data, Lecturers’ problems were found in managing the time allotment, preparing or designing the authentic assessment, implementing it, and scoring students’ skill.

Causes of English Lecturers’ Problems

From the data, that can be found that the causes of English Lecturers’ problems were insufficient allotment time, lack of understanding in designing authentic assessment, implementing it and scoring students’ skill. Two English lecturers were not able to implement the authentic assessment to evaluate students’ speaking skill completely yet.

Basically, Two English lecturers have implemented the authentic assessment but they have not been able to implement the authentic assessment properly and smoothly yet. They also have not been able to manage the time allotment, determine the characteristics of authentic assessment, define its purposes, design its steps, implement it and score the students’ skill. Some problems were found in managing the time allotment, preparing or designing the authentic assessment, implementing the authentic
assessment, and scoring students’ skills. Some causes of problems have been found in the study. They were insufficient allotment time that caused lecturers were not able to manage the time in the classroom properly, lack of understanding in designing authentic assessment that caused lecturers got difficulty to design authentic assessment, Lack of understanding in implementing authentic assessment that caused lecturers were not able to implement it in a small and big classes and implement it to heterogeneous students properly yet, and lack of understanding in scoring students’ skill that caused lecturers were not able to score many aspects in authentic assessment and implement self and peer-assessment yet because of its subjectivity among students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, two English lecturers were not able to design and implement authentic assessment to evaluate students’ speaking skill completely yet. They should prepare the time allotment properly before designing authentic assessment, implementing authentic assessment, and scoring students’ speaking skill. Second, They should look for many references from many sources or join workshop or conference that relating to authentic assessment implementation in order to they can understand the ways to prepare or design and implement the authentic assessment, score students’ skill and practice them in the classroom correctly and smoothly.

From this result of the study, suggestions can be given for lecturer how to plan and focus on units of meaningful learning, use varieties of meaningful learning and engaging assessment opportunities, provide students with a rubric of agreed-upon criteria relating to the course outcomes before undertaking assessment tasks, test student-constructed rubrics on a sample of student work initially to improve validity and reliability. It also can add lecture’s knowledge on how to assess the student’s speaking skill and a pragmatic aspect which is need added in rubric score. Therefore, for other researchers who consider conducting such authentic assessment in assessing speaking in order to be better and perfect. For the readers, can understand more about authentic
The Use of Total Physical Response (TPR) Activities for Teaching Listening to Young Learners

assessment especially in implementing the student’s speaking in teaching learning process.

REFERENCES


