

TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE (TPR)

An effective language learning method at beginner/intermediate levels

**This document contains some raw materials and
suggestions for TPR activities. They can be freely adapted
to fit local circumstances and specific needs.**

**Drop me a line to say what you think or tell about your
experiences. Thank you.**

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INTRODUCTION

Total Physical Response (TPR) is the name given to a learning strategy which has been developed and promoted by Professor James Asher of San José State University in California. It is now being practised successfully by many teachers all over the world. Its scope, however, seems limited: it is not known to be used beyond beginner level.

The basic technique of TPR is simple. Learners act out commands given by the teacher or their fellow pupils (at a later stage). These commands, or series of commands, are simple at the beginning (*stand up, sit down*) but after some time they may become more complex (*I want the boys to stand in a circle please*). A TPR sequence can be a chain of actions relating to a compound task (*take pen and paper, sit down, begin at the top of your paper, write down: Dear ...*) or even contain a story-line.

Learning to understand and respond to language physically is something all - normally gifted - learners can do well. As a result they feel successful as a student and they experience the enjoyment of easy learning (in the first year or so). They are usually surprised about the speed with which they learn to understand English.

Learners are totally involved in TPR activities because they are allowed to concentrate on one thing only: they act out what they've heard. There is no pressure on them to speak the foreign language yet. This is with good reason. Before any learner can start to speak a foreign language spontaneously and creatively he or she must feel the inner readiness to do so. When learners are ready they feel that the words of the language - sound and meaning integrated and combined into larger utterances - spring from *within* themselves. This inner readiness will develop gradually but inevitably with prolonged exposure to the sound of understood language and an active involvement in its meaning. TPR has proved to be an effective learning strategy in this respect.

Total Physical Response can be an integral part of any English lesson, especially at beginner level. During the first few weeks of an English starter course at school TPR may even be the main activity that the learners are involved in. A 'bookless' period impresses upon the learners the notion that language is basically meaningful sound (rather than words on paper).

In this booklet you will find examples of basic procedures and some TPR sequences of various kinds. After reading this document you may want to create some materials yourself.

Good luck.

STARTING WITH TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE

In the following units pupils learn language which is relating to people and things nearest to them when they are at school: the classroom and the objects in it, numbers and colours, themselves and their fellow pupils (their body parts, their clothes).

UNIT A

Preparation

Write the words of the sets below on little cards for easy handling and varying the order of the commands.

Basic procedure

- 1 Sit in front of the classroom. Place two chairs on either side of.
- 2 Ask four pupils to come up to the front of the class and have them sit on either side of you, facing the group.

Say 'stand' and immediately stand up as you motion the pupils on your sides to do the same. Then say 'sit' and sit down and motion the pupils to do the same. Repeat this a couple of times.

Then say 'stand' to the whole group and motion them to stand; then say 'sit' and modelling the action have the group do the same. Repeat this a couple of times.

Switch to your group of four and repeat the procedure without modelling the action yourself.

Then repeat this procedure with the whole group. Say 'very good, children, you can understand English now.'

Do set A1 in the same manner, varying and repeating the commands and switching from the group of four to the whole group.

A1 Words head, back, face, chest
 to sit, to stand, to touch

Touch your head.

Sit.

Touch your back.

Stand.

Touch your chest.

Sit.

Touch your head.

Touch your back.

Stand.

Touch your face.

Touch your face.

...

Note. The teacher goes on as long as it takes to get quick and unhesitating responses from the pupils with all items. The action must be lively.

A2 New words arm, leg, elbow, knee, foot, toe, shoulder
left, right

Touch your chest.

Touch your left arm.

Touch your left hand.

Touch your right elbow.

Touch your right foot.

Touch your left shoulder.

Touch your back.

Touch your right leg.

Touch your left knee.

Touch your right shoulder.

Touch your chest.

Touch your right arm.

Touch your left elbow.

Touch your ...

UNIT B

B1 Revision of the words in unit A

Touch your head.

Touch your right leg.

Touch your chest.

Touch your left elbow.

Touch your right shoulder.

Touch your left foot.

Touch your right knee.

Touch your back.

Touch your ..

B2 New words finger, thumb, nose, hair, chin, mouth, ear, eye
put, open, close

Open your mouth.

Close your mouth.

Put a finger on your mouth.
Put a finger on your nose.
Put your hand on your hair.
Put your left thumb on your chin.
Close your left eye.
Open your left eye.
Close your right eye.
Open your right eye.
Put a thumb on your left ear.
Put a thumb on your right ear.
Put your hands on your face.
Put your hands on your head.
Put two fingers on your chin.
Close your eyes.
Open your eyes.
...

B3 New words neck, cheek, lip, tongue, tooth/teeth, eyebrow, forehead
to show

Show me your teeth.
Show me your tongue.
Put a finger on your tongue.
Put a finger on one tooth.
Put your hands on your cheeks.
Touch your forehead.
Touch your left eyebrow.
Touch your right eyebrow.
Put a finger on your lips.
Show me your teeth.
Touch your left eyebrow.
Put a hand on your neck.
Put a finger on your right cheek.
Touch your tongue.
Put your right hand on your forehead.
...

UNIT C

C1 Revision of the words from units A and B

Do it! - A game

The teacher gives commands without modelling the action himself/herself. The pupils respond to the commands. Anyone making a mistake is 'out'. The teacher starts with simple commands, but these will get more complicated as the game continues.

Touch your nose.
Touch your right ear.
Touch your chest.
Touch your left eyebrow.
Put a finger on your lips.
Touch your right ear.
Put your right hand on your forehead.
...

C2 New words blue, yellow, green, orange, brown, grey, purple, black, white
 card
 to pick up

Preparation

A number of small coloured cards, one of more cards on every pupil's desk, a set of cards on a central desk.

Procedure

1 The teacher picks up cards one by one and says what colour they are.

A blue card.
An orange card.
A yellow card.
A red card.
A brown card.
A grey card.
A purple card.
A black card.
A white card.
A green card
Red.
Blue.
Purple.
...

2 The teacher gives commands to the class.

Who's got a red card? Show it to me.
Who's got a blue card? Show it to me.
Who's got a yellow card? Show it to me.
...

3 The teacher invites individual pupils to come out to the central desk.

Devi, pick up a purple card and show it to the class.
Show the class a black card.
Show the class a green card.

Show the class a grey card.

Ridwan, ...

C3 New words jump, run, hop, stop
 on the spot

Preparation

Every pupil holds a coloured card, there are five of six different colours.

Procedure

1 The pupils stand in a circle.

2 The teacher gives commands and models the action. After a while he/she stops modelling.

Pupils with blue cards, jump up and down. ... Stop.

Pupils with red cards, run on the spot. ... Stop.

Pupils with yellow cards, hop one one leg. ... Stop.

Pupils with brown cards, walk on the spot. ... Stop.

Pupils with orange cards, hop on your left foot. ... Stop.

Blue cards, run on the spot. ... Don't stop.

White cards, jump up and dopwn. ... Don't stop.

Brown cards, walk on the spot. ... Don't stop.

Blue cards, stop running on the spot.

Orange cards, hop on right leg. ... Don't stop.

Brown cards, stop walking on the spot.

UNIT D

D1 Revision of the words from units A, B and C

D2 New words window, door, wall, ceiling, floor, chair, desk/table, blackboard, bookcase
 to walk

Point to the blackboard.

Walk to the door.

Point to the window.

Walk back to your chair.

Touch your desk.

Point to a wall.

Point to the ceiling.

Point to the bookcase.

Touch the floor.

Walk to the window.

Open the window.

Close the window.

Walk to the door.

Point to the ceiling.

Touch your chair.
Touch your desk.
Touch a wall.
Touch the blackboard.
Touch the floor.

...

NOTE. Some commands had better be carried by just one pupil. Phrases to select a pupil:

Just you, Peter. Open the window.
You on your won, Bill. Point to a wall.

D3 New words chalk, coloured chalk, eraser, paper, pen, pencil, book, exercise book
to take, to come, to sit, to hold up

Preparation

The above items are on a central desk or table and (a number of them) on the pupils' desks (i.e. the items normally present there).

Procedure

1 The teacher identifies the objects by simply picking them up from the desk and saying their names.

A piece of chalk. White chalk.
Coloured chalks.
An eraser.
A sheet of paper.
A pen.
A pencil.
A book.
An exercise book
Again. A piece of chalk.
Coloured chalk.
...

2 The teacher gives the class commands relating to the items on the pupils's desks.

Hold up your pens.
Put down your pens.
Hold up your pencils.
Put them down.
Hold up your books.
Put them down.
Show me your erasers.
Show me your exercise books.
Show me your books.
...

INTEGRATING TPR IN THE ENGLISH COURSE

TPR can be integrated in the English course in use at school by selecting vocabulary from the textbook that can be acted out and arranging these words and structures in TPR sets. These sets can be used in the presentation stage of each lesson or lesson activity.

Even the cover of a student's book might be used to do a TPR activity with the pupils sitting comfortably at their desks:

Point to the television set.

Point to the ice creams.

Where is the information desk?

Count all the people in the page. How many are there?

Show me the monkey.

Give your neighbour an injection in the left arm.

Shake hands with your neighbour.

Count all the animals on the page. How many are there?

Show me how you eat a sandwich.

Shout: 'Goal!'

Blow air from your lungs.

Revision of vocabulary is essential. It will take only five to ten minutes per lesson period to do so. TPR revision sets may look like the following two which are sets of randomly arranged actions.

1

Put one hand on your arm.

Put your hand on the back of your chair.

Put your hand on your back.

Touch one ear.

Give that pencil (or book) to me.

Look happy.

Put one hand on your leg.

Take a match out of a box of matches.

Ask a question.

Read a book.

Look sad.

Do you sit at desk or a table.

2

Blow air from your lungs.

Show me one hand. And the other.

What day is today?

Go to the door.

Carry a heavy bag. And a light one.

Say: 'How are you today?'
Take your book and open it.
Walk to the door.

TPR SEQUENCES AT POST-BEGINNER LEVEL

The following TPR sequences can be acted out but there are more ways to use them. Take the first sequence: Going out for a walk. Writing is one of things you can do: I stood up from my chair and turned off the radio because I wanted to go out for a walk (and so on). Pupils may find it interesting to write and act out a dialogue between a policeman and somebody who must account for his actions on a certain night. The detailed actions in the sequence may be used freely and details can easily be added by the 'suspect'. Sequences like these can be used in many different communicative ways - it is a matter of creativity.

Going out for a walk	Writing a letter
<p>(You are listening to the radio.) Stand up from your chair. Go to the radio. Turn it off. Go to the window. Look outside. Sit down again. Pick up your shoes. Put them in front of you. Pull up your socks. Put your shoes on. Stand up. Walk to the door. Open it. Go outside. Close the door behind you. Take out your key. Put it in the keyhole. Lock the door. Look up at the sky. Walk away.</p>	<p>Pick up your pen. Begin at the top of the paper: <i>Dear...</i> Write your letter. Look up from your paper. Look sad. Put down your pen. Rub your eyes. Pick up your pen. Go on writing. Stop writing. Put down your pen. Put one hand under your chin. Think. Look happy. Go on writing. Look up at the clock behind you. Finish your letter. Fold the letter. Take an envelope. Put the letter inside. Lick the flap, stick it down. Write the address on the envelope. Pick up a stamp, lick it, stick it on. Stand up. Run to the letterbox outside. Hurry up! Hurry up!</p>

A TPR SONG

Children enjoy singing. There are lots of action songs. The pupils sing and act out the words of the song. 'This is the way ...' is an example of an action song.

This is the way you wash your face
wash your face, wash your face.
This is the way you wash your face
All on a Saturday morning.

This is the way you wash your hands
wash your hands, wash your hands
This is the way you wash your hands
All on a Sunday morning.

This is the way you brush your teeth (...)
All on a Monday morning

This is the way you brush your hair (...)
All on a Tuesday morning.

This is the way you clean your shoes (...)
All on a Wednesday morning.

This is the way you eat your food
All on a Thursday morning.

This is the way you drink your tea (...)
All on a Friday morning.

You may know other songs which are full of actions and can be used in the same way.

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