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EXAMINING HOW TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE FACILITATES COLLABORATIVE SPEAKING IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method to facilitate collaborative speaking among 8th junior high school students. The research aims to investigate the way TPR is implemented to support students' speaking performance and to identify the types of TPR-based activities that encourage interactive and collaborative communication in the classroom. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design involving classroom observations and open-ended questionnaire with students. The findings reveal that the implementation of TPR helps 8th students become more active and confident in expressing ideas verbally. Additionally, integrating physical actions with speaking tasks fosters collaboration, reduces students' anxiety, and creates a more engaging learning environment. The study suggests that TPR offers meaningful support for developing speaking skills through communicative and cooperative classroom activities.

Keywords: *TPR, Collaborative Speaking, Eight-Grade Students, English Classroom*

INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, especially at the junior high school level, students often face difficulties in developing their speaking skills. Although speaking is one of the most essential skills in language learning, it is frequently neglected in classroom practice. Many students feel anxious, lack confidence, or are afraid of making mistakes when speaking in front of others. In addition, traditional teaching methods tend to focus on grammar and written exercises rather than interactive or communicative activities, which limits opportunities for students



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to practice speaking collaboratively. Language anxiety has become one of the significant concerns in foreign language teaching and learning over the last three decades. Recent studies have highlighted the impact of English speaking anxiety on students' performance in the classroom (Tien, 2018).

Speaking skill is a crucial component of English language learning at the junior high school level. Students are expected to communicate ideas, opinions, and simple information orally in various classroom contexts. However, many EFL learners still experience difficulties in speaking due to limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes. These challenges indicate a gap between the expected outcomes of English instruction and the reality in classroom practice. Therefore, teachers need to apply interactive and student-centered approaches that actively engage learners in meaningful communication. One approach that has gained attention is Total Physical Response (TPR), which integrates language learning with physical movement and collaborative activities.

Brown (2015) emphasized that effective language learning should be based on interactive approaches in which students actively participate rather than passively receiving information from the teacher. In speaking instruction, interaction is essential because language is fundamentally a tool for communication. Richards (2008) stated that listening and speaking are interrelated skills; listening serves as the foundation for speaking because students acquire language input through listening before producing spoken language. Therefore, effective speaking instruction should be supported by meaningful listening activities that encourage interaction among students. Ur (1996) also highlighted that teachers need to provide equal speaking opportunities for all students to maximize student talking time and participation. In junior high school classrooms, many students remain passive, reluctant to speak, and dependent on teacher instructions. Classroom interaction is often dominated by a small number of active students, while others stay silent (Helmie 2019). This situation shows limited opportunities for collaborative learning and slows the development of speaking competence and confidence. Traditional teacher-centred methods are insufficient to address these challenges, indicating an urgent need for methods that encourage active participation, peer interaction, and cooperative learning. Total Physical Response offers a promising solution by allowing students to learn language through physical actions and group-based activities. However, empirical research exploring how TPR specifically facilitates collaborative speaking in junior high school classrooms remains limited, highlighting a gap for further investigation.

Asher (1996) introduced Total Physical Response (TPR) as a method that emphasizes the connection between language and physical movement. This method is based on first language acquisition, where comprehension develops before production. In TPR, students respond to verbal commands through physical actions, making the learning process more natural and meaningful. By providing sufficient language input before requiring speech, TPR reduces anxiety and fear of making

mistakes. Furthermore, TPR can be developed into collaborative activities, where students take turns giving and responding to instructions, fostering social interaction, cooperation, and gradual development of speaking skills.

Previous studies have shown that TPR is effective in improving language skills. Mahmud (2018) found significant improvement in students' speaking skills through TPR in an experimental study. Nuha et al. (2023) reported enhancements in Arabic speaking among junior high school students using TPR in a classroom action research design. Kurniah et al. (2022) also demonstrated improvements in speaking and comprehension skills through TPR in quasi-experimental settings. Other studies, such as Khakim & Anwar (2020) and Heriyadi (2022), confirmed TPR's effectiveness in vocabulary mastery and overall speaking performance. Despite these findings, few studies have specifically examined TPR's role in facilitating collaborative speaking activities.

Based on the background above, the problems identified in this study include students' low participation in speaking activities, high levels of speaking anxiety, limited opportunities for collaborative speaking, and the lack of interactive teaching strategies that actively engage students in speaking practice. The aim of this study is to investigate how Total Physical Response (TPR) supports collaborative speaking among junior high school learners and to explore students' perceptions of the use of TPR in collaborative speaking activities (Helmie, Nurviyani, and Setiawan 2023). This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it contributes to existing literature on TPR in collaborative speaking contexts. Practically, the findings may help English teachers design more interactive, collaborative, and low-anxiety speaking activities that increase student participation in junior high school classrooms.

METHODS

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative research design to explore students' speaking skills through the implemented teaching technique. A qualitative approach was chosen to obtain an in-depth understanding of students' responses, participation, and learning experiences during the speaking activities.

Respondents

The respondents of this research were eighth-grade students of a junior high school (SMP). The participants were selected purposively based on their involvement in the speaking learning process. The students actively participated in classroom activities and provided data through observation and interviews.

Research Variables



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The main focus of this study was students' speaking skills, including aspects such as fluency, pronunciation, and confidence in speaking English. The teaching technique applied in the classroom served as the learning context observed in this research.

Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study included classroom observation sheets, interview guidelines, and documentation. Observations were conducted to record students' participation and speaking performance, while interviews were used to gather students' perceptions and experiences related to the learning process.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data from observations and interviews were categorized and interpreted to identify patterns and meaningful findings related to students' speaking skills.

The data analysis in this research followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

1.Data Reduction

Data reduction was conducted by selecting, focusing, and simplifying the data obtained from students' written responses and classroom observations. The researcher reduced irrelevant information and categorized students' answers based on several aspects, such as vocabulary understanding, learning motivation, comprehension of instructions, speaking confidence, and collaborative learning. This process aimed to organize the data into meaningful categories related to the research objectives.

2.Data Display

After the data were reduced, the data were displayed in the form of tables and descriptive explanations to make the findings easier to understand. The students' responses were presented in Table 1 to show patterns and tendencies in their perceptions toward the use of Total Physical Response (TPR) in collaborative speaking activities.

3.Conclusion Drawing and Verification

The final step involved drawing conclusions based on the displayed data. The researcher interpreted the patterns found in students' responses to determine how Total Physical Response facilitated collaborative speaking. The conclusions were continuously verified by rechecking the data to ensure their consistency and validity.



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RESULTS

The results of this study were obtained from classroom observations and written responses from students after the implementation of Total Physical Response (TPR) in collaborative speaking activities. Overall, the findings show that students responded positively to the use of TPR in English classes. Students reported that movement-based activities helped them understand and remember new vocabulary more easily. They also found the learning process more enjoyable compared to conventional teaching methods. Collaborative activities encouraged students to help each other when they did not understand instructions or tasks, which reduced anxiety during speaking practice. Furthermore, most students stated that they felt more confident and willing to speak English after participating in TPR activities.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that Total Physical Response (TPR) plays an important role in facilitating collaborative speaking among junior high school students. The use of physical movements helps students understand language input more effectively, which supports Asher's (1977) theory that comprehension precedes production in language learning. When students understand instructions through actions, they feel less pressure to speak, which reduces anxiety.

In addition, collaborative TPR activities encourage interaction and cooperation among peers. Students are more willing to participate in speaking tasks when they work in groups, supporting Brown's (2015) view that interaction is central to language learning. This positive response is also in line with previous studies that reported an increase in students' confidence and speaking participation through TPR-based instruction.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Total Physical Response effectively facilitates collaborative speaking among eighth-grade junior high school students. The integration of physical movements into speaking activities increases students' motivation, comprehension, confidence, and collaboration. TPR creates a supportive and engaging learning environment that encourages students to actively participate in speaking practice. Therefore, TPR can be considered an effective alternative method for teaching speaking in junior high school English classroom



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