

EXPLORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TPR AND CLT METHODS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' ENGLISH ACQUISITION

Izza Aisyah Nurmahati¹, Rahma Alya², Milah Nur Fatin³, Anindya Cheryl Sulistiono⁴

Universitas Al-Khairiyah
Jl. Kh.Enggus Arja No.1, Citangkil, Cilegon,
Indonesia
hi.izzaaisyah@gmail.com
alyarahma960@gmail.com
milahnurfatin@gmail.com
padisarah48@gmail.com

Abstract

This review discusses how two teaching method Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Total Physical Response (TPR) can help young learners improve their English skills. CLT encourages students to communicate through interactive activities like games and partner tasks, which has been found to enhance their understanding of English. On the other hand, TPR involves using body movements to introduce new vocabulary, making the learning process more engaging and helping students remember words more effectively. Both strategies have proven to be helpful in the classroom, CLT supports speaking and comprehension, while TPR boosts vocabulary learning and student involvement. Although each method has its own advantages and limitations, both can be effective when adjusted to suit the needs of young learners.

Keywords: *young learners, teaching methods, English teaching*

INTRODUCTION

Choosing the most appropriate teaching method in elementary English education is an terdir essential, especially considering the diverse learning styles and developmental stages of young learners. CLT and TPR offer different approaches: one focuses on meaningful communication, while the other emphasizes physical movement and action. Both methods align with the idea that children learn best when learning is fun, interactive, and connected to real-life experiences. As stated by Damayanti (2019),

"Young learners benefit from activities that involve storytelling, role-play, and movement because these connect language with meaningful contexts and make learning more enjoyable." In this regard, comparing CLT and TPR can provide teachers with clearer insights into how they can address challenges in vocabulary mastery and language comprehension, especially in Indonesian classrooms where teaching methods often remain traditional.

Despite the proven benefits of both CLT and TPR in English language teaching, there remains limited comparative analysis focusing on how these methods function specifically in the context of young learners in Indonesian elementary schools. Most studies tend to examine one method in isolation, without considering how different approaches may serve different learning needs. Therefore, a deeper comparison between the two becomes necessary, especially to guide educators in selecting the most suitable strategy for their students. This literature review attempts to bridge that gap by exploring the effectiveness of CLT and TPR in helping young learners develop both vocabulary mastery and language comprehension through engaging and age-appropriate instruction.

METHOD

This study employed a literature review method by analyzing and comparing two empirical studies related to English teaching for young learners. The focus was on examining how the Total Physical Response (TPR) method and the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method were applied in elementary school settings, as well as their effectiveness in improving students' vocabulary mastery and English comprehension.

The review was based on two journal articles: Sariyati (2013), who investigated the use of TPR for first graders in Bandung, and Rizqiyah and Setiawan (2018), who explored the application of CLT for fifth graders in Bandung. Both studies used a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest control group.

The data analyzed in this review consisted of the reported participants, research designs, procedures, instruments, and findings from each journal. Specifically, Sariyati (2013) applied TPR to teach vocabulary such as numbers, colors, and classroom objects, while Rizqiyah and Setiawan (2018) used CLT to encourage communication through role-play, pair work, and games.

The findings from both studies were then compared by identifying similarities, differences, strengths, and limitations of each method. The analysis focused on the effectiveness of each approach in terms of student engagement, vocabulary retention, comprehension, and classroom challenges.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the two studies highlights that both the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method and the Total Physical Response (TPR) method contribute significantly to English language teaching, yet their focuses and applications differ. Rizqiyah and Setiawan (2018) examined the effect of CLT on fifth-grade students at SD

Kartika X-3 in Bandung, while Sariyati (2013) investigated TPR in vocabulary mastery among first graders in an Islamic elementary school in Bandung. These studies reflect how different approaches can be tailored to the developmental stages and language needs of learners.

The study by Rizqiyah and Setiawan (2018) applied a quantitative design with pretest and posttest control groups to measure the improvement of students' comprehension. CLT emphasizes interaction as both the medium and the goal of language learning, promoting activities such as role-play, pair work, and games. The findings demonstrated a notable improvement in English comprehension, as shown by the significant difference between the pre-test mean score (50.52) and the post-test mean score (68.64). This result indicates that CLT helps learners achieve communicative competence rather than focusing solely on grammar.

contrast, Sariyati (2013) combined a quasi-experimental design with qualitative classroom observations to evaluate the effectiveness of TPR. This method, which encourages students to respond physically to verbal instructions, mirrors the natural process of first language acquisition. The study revealed a considerable increase in vocabulary mastery, with the experiment group's post-test mean score (12.67) rising significantly from the pre-test (8.38). Additionally, field notes showed that learners were more motivated, enthusiastic, and actively engaged when taught through TPR, although some students became overactive and required careful classroom management.

In conclusion, the findings from both studies demonstrate that there is no single "best" method for all contexts. Instead, each method has strengths and challenges that make it effective for specific learner groups and objectives. CLT can enhance communicative competence in higher elementary grades, while TPR supports vocabulary acquisition and engagement for younger learners. Together, these insights suggest that teachers should consider combining or adapting both approaches to create more holistic and responsive English learning environments (Cameron, 2001; Rizqiyah & Setiawan, 2018; Sariyati, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Both of the two studies shows that the effectiveness of English teaching methods is highly depends on learners' developmental stage, targeted skills, and classroom dynamics. The study on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) with fifth graders at SD Kartika X-3 revealed that interaction-based learning actually improved students to understanding English more, as shown by the increase in mean scores from 50.52 (pre-test) to 68.64 (post-test). This finding connected with Richards and Rodgers (2001), who argue that CLT emphasizes communicative skills over mastering and memorizing grammar, will be most beneficial for students who are cognitively ready to engage in broader interactions. The researchers concluded that teachers should adopt at least one or more learning methods, especially CLT, and continue to develop their interactive teaching techniques, the goal being to encourage students to be more motivated and understand the material teachers present to them.

Meanwhile, a study on Total Physical Response (TPR) teaching to first-grade students in an Islamic elementary school showed that learning activities involving physical activity can generally develop students' vocabulary mastery, with the experimental group increasing from an average score of 8.38 (pre-test) to 12.67 (post-test). These results support the basic theory of TPR provided by Asher (1977), which states that language learning will feel more complete when students respond to commands physically. This can reduce anxiety and create a natural learning environment. Qualitative observations also showed that students showed that they felt enthusiastic, happy, and actively involved in the learning process. This learning process is in accordance with the view of Brown (2001) who stated that stress-free and pleasant conditions encourage acceptance and adaptation to a second language to be much more effective.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this topic is that the findings clearly show that teaching using the CLT and TPR methods has proven effective, but in different contexts. CLT is very suitable for older elementary school students with the aim of developing their comprehension skills, while TPR is much more effective for younger students to process and receive a large vocabulary in an interesting, fun, and low-stress way. This reinforces Larsen-Freeman's (2000) statement that teachers' teaching methods must be adapted to the age of the students, their cognitive development, and also the needs of communicating using English as a second language in order to maximize their learning outcomes.

REFERENCES

- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Rizqiyah, R., & Setiawan, S. (2018). *The effect of CLT on English comprehension for students at the fifth grade of SD Kartika X-3*. Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics
- Sariyati, I. (2013). *The effectiveness of TPR method in English vocabulary mastery of elementary school children*. Journal of English and Education
- Asher, J. J. (1977). *Learning another language through actions: The complete teacher's guidebook*. Los Gatos, CA: Sky Oaks Productions.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy (2nd ed.)*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching (2nd ed.)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching (2nd ed.)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press