TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE METHOD: HIGHLIGHTING AURAL COMPREHENSION IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Kakhorova Mukhabat Askaraliyevna
Uzbek and Foreign languages department, Tashkent Medical Academy
mukhabat.kakhorova@mail.ru

Abstract. This article explores the principles of the Total Physical Response method, its focus on listening comprehension, and the cognitive and psychological benefits it offers for language learners. Additionally, it discusses the modern applications of TPR in language classrooms, particularly for young learners and those learning a second language.

Key words: language learning, listening skills, learners’ progress, acquisition process, understanding.

The Total Physical Response (TPR) method created by psychologist Dr. James Asher and based on the idea that language learning which made more effective by linking verbal input with physical actions. This approach draws on the natural language acquisition process observed in children, who often learn to understand language before speaking, through physical responses to spoken commands. In TPR, learners respond to spoken instructions by performing corresponding physical actions, such as standing up, walking, or pointing to objects. This method emphasizes **aural comprehension** - the ability to understand spoken language - by allowing learners to associate meaning with actions before producing language themselves. As a result, TPR is especially effective for building listening skills, reducing anxiety, and creating a low-pressure environment for language learners.

This article explores the key principles of the TPR method, its benefits for aural comprehension, and its application in modern language learning contexts. These principles align with the way children learn their first language - through listening, observing, and responding to commands long before they begin to speak. In this way, TPR mirrors the natural language acquisition process, where infants spend months listening and responding non-verbally before uttering their first words. TPR integrates physical movement with language learning, based on the belief that actions reinforce memory and comprehension. When learners perform physical actions in response to verbal commands, they create strong

associations between the language and the movement. This dual engagement - aural and physical - activates multiple parts of the brain, making it easier for learners to retain new vocabulary and structures. The kinesthetic component of TPR is especially helpful for young learners, who often benefit from hands-on and interactive activities. TPR aims to reduce the anxiety often associated with language learning by creating a playful, low-pressure environment. In a traditional classroom setting, learners may feel nervous about speaking in front of others or making mistakes.

TPR places emphasis on the idea that listening is the foundation of language learning. In TPR lessons, instructors give simple verbal commands that learners must follow through physical actions. For example, the instructor might say, "Stand up," "Touch your nose," or "Pick up the book," and the learner responds by performing these actions. These commands gradually increase in complexity, and learners continue to build their listening comprehension without the pressure of speaking until they feel ready. By focusing on listening first, TPR helps learners become comfortable with the sounds, rhythm, and patterns of the language. One of the key benefits of TPR is its ability to build vocabulary through aural input. This helps reinforce the connection between the spoken word and its real-world application. For example, when a learner hears the word "jump" and physically jumps, they create a mental association between the action and the word, which enhances retention. As learners progress, instructors can introduce more complex commands that incorporate a wider range of vocabulary and sentence structures, such as, "Close the window and sit on the chair," or "Run to the door and pick up the pencil." By continually challenging learners with new aural input, TPR helps expand their vocabulary and improve comprehension over time.

One of the most challenging aspects of listening comprehension in any language is the need to process spoken language in real time. TPR helps learners develop this skill by requiring them to respond to commands immediately. This real-time processing not only improves listening skills but also prepares learners for authentic conversations, where they must understand and respond quickly to spoken language. TPR encourages learners to become active listeners, as they must stay engaged and ready to respond to the teacher’s next command. This heightened level of attention improves focus and helps learners develop the ability to quickly decode and comprehend language, even when presented with

new or unfamiliar phrases. The Total Physical Response method is not only effective for teaching listening comprehension but also offers significant cognitive and psychological benefits for learners.

Research has shown that physical movement can enhance cognitive function and memory retention. In the context of TPR, the kinesthetic component of the method helps learners internalize language more effectively. When learners perform physical actions in response to verbal commands, they engage both the motor and auditory regions of the brain. This multisensory approach strengthens the connections between words and their meanings, leading to better long-term retention of vocabulary and sentence structures.

According to Stephen Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis, learners acquire language more effectively when they are in a low-stress, low-anxiety environment. High levels of anxiety can create a mental barrier (the "affective filter") that blocks learners from processing language input and engaging fully with the material. By reducing the stress associated with language learning, TPR creates a positive, supportive environment where learners can experiment with the language without fear of making mistakes. This reduction in anxiety boosts learner confidence, making them more likely to engage with the language and take risks as they progress in their studies. While TPR is often associated with young learners, it can be equally effective for adults learning a second language. For beginner adult learners, TPR offers a gentle introduction to the target language by focusing on comprehension rather than production. Instructors can use TPR to teach basic vocabulary, such as commands related to everyday activities ("open the door," "sit down," "raise your hand"), which helps learners build a foundation of useful, practical language.

In more advanced language courses, TPR can be adapted to incorporate more complex language structures and abstract concepts. For example, instructors might give learners a series of commands that require them to follow a sequence of actions, such as, "Take the book off the shelf, read the first sentence, and then give the book to your partner." This type of activity challenges learners to process longer strings of language while maintaining the emphasis on listening comprehension. Additionally, language learning apps and platforms can incorporate TPR-inspired activities, where learners listen to commands and perform virtual actions by clicking, dragging, or tapping objects

on the screen. This digital adaptation of TPR brings the method into modern, tech-enhanced learning environments.

The Total Physical Response method is a powerful approach to language learning that places a strong emphasis on aural comprehension and kinesthetic learning. By combining verbal commands with physical responses, TPR helps learners develop their listening skills in an interactive, low-stress environment.

References:

1. Asher, J. "Learning another Language through Actions." 7th edition. Sky Oaks Productions, 2012.

2. Krashen, S. D. "Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition." Pergamon Press, 1982.

3. Kakhorova, M. A. (2024). Comprehensible input approach as an effective language teaching method. *World of Scientific news in Science*, *2*(3), 281-289.

4. Kakhorova, M. A. (2024). The use of qualitative and mixed methods investigating learners in their classrooms. *Academic research in educational sciences*, (1), 579-587.