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The Effect of Total Physical Response (TPR) on The Vocabulary Mastery of Seventh Grade Students at SMPN 1 Labuapi

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in enhancing the vocabulary mastery of seventh-grade students, especially in learning daily activity verbs and prepositional phrases. TPR, introduced by James Asher, is a teaching approach that integrates language with physical movement, helping students associate words with actions to make learning more engaging. This research used a quasi-experimental design involving two groups: an experimental group taught using TPR and a control group taught using conventional methods. In the control group, the teacher applied a traditional approach, including explanation of vocabulary, translation into Indonesian, and memorization exercises without physical movement. A total of 64 students participated, with 32 students in each group. The intervention was carried out over four meetings. Both groups were given a pre-test and post-test to measure vocabulary improvement, and the results were analyzed using an independent samples t-test. The findings revealed a significant improvement in the experimental group's vocabulary scores (mean score = 76.09) compared to the control group (mean score = 65.78), with a t-value of -3.325. Beyond academic performance, classroom observations indicated that TPR reduced students' anxiety and encouraged more active participation. These results suggest that TPR is not only effective in improving vocabulary mastery but also supports a more enjoyable and motivating learning environment for junior high school students.

Keywords: Total Physical Response, vocabulary mastery, junior high school, daily activity verbs, prepositional phrases

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INTRODUCTION

English is an important subject taught in junior high school. However, many students still find it difficult to learn. They often struggle with grammar, pronunciation, and especially vocabulary. These problems make students feel bored, less motivated, and sometimes even afraid to join English lessons (Khakim & Anwar, 2019). Other distractions, like using phones during class, also reduce their focus and interest in learning (Astuti et al., 2022). Because of this, teachers need to use creative and fun methods to help students enjoy learning and participate more actively in class.

Vocabulary plays a big role in helping students learn English. Without enough vocabulary, students will have a hard time understanding what they read or hear, and they will struggle to speak or write their ideas. A good vocabulary helps students communicate better and learn other English skills more easily. According to Harmer (2007), young teenagers actually have great potential to learn, especially when the lesson is fun and matches their interests. That's why teachers need to use the right strategies that make learning vocabulary easier, more interesting, and more meaningful.

One teaching method that can help students learn vocabulary better is the Total Physical Response (TPR) method. This method was introduced by James Asher in 1969. TPR teaches students new words through physical actions, like standing up, sitting down, or pointing at objects. When students move their bodies while learning, they can remember new words more easily. This method is especially good for beginner learners or younger students because it makes learning more fun and helps reduce stress (Alexon et al., 2022). Compared to traditional methods that focus only on reading or writing, TPR invites students to move, be active, and enjoy the lesson.

This study was carried out at SMPN 1 Labuapi, where the researcher had previously joined a teaching internship program. During that time, several problems were found in the English class. Students were not very interested in learning English; they often forgot vocabulary, and they had trouble spelling or using words correctly. There was also no specific method used to help them learn vocabulary more effectively. Because of that, the researcher decided to try using the TPR method in vocabulary lessons.

In this study, the focus is on two kinds of vocabulary: daily activity verbs (like "wake up", "go to school") and prepositional phrases (like "on the table", "under the chair"). These words are perfect for the TPR method because they can easily be shown through actions. For example, when the teacher says "stand up", the students stand up. This helps them connect the word with the action, making it easier to remember. TPR also helps students feel more relaxed and confident, especially when learning in a second language can sometimes be stressful.

Several researchers have studied the use of TPR in the classroom. For example, Khakim & Anwar (2019) found that TPR helped improve vocabulary among junior high school students. Previous studies by Sariyati (2013) and Nabila (2022) demonstrated the effectiveness of the TPR method in enhancing vocabulary learning, particularly at the elementary school level. However, few studies have explored its impact at the junior high school level, where students encounter different developmental and academic challenges. This research seeks to fill that gap by focusing on seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Labuapi and evaluating how TPR influences their ability to master specific vocabulary types such as daily activity verbs and prepositional phrases.

Based on initial classroom observations, it was found that approximately 85% of students struggled to use prepositional phrases accurately in both spoken and written English. Many students omitted prepositions entirely or placed them incorrectly in sentences like "the book is table" instead of "the book is on the table". These issues highlight the need for more interactive and memorable vocabulary instruction. The effectiveness of the TPR method can also be explained through Paivio's Dual Coding Theory (1986), which states that learning becomes more effective

when verbal information is paired with non-verbal elements such as visuals or physical actions. In TPR, students hear the word and simultaneously perform an action, creating stronger mental associations and enhancing memory retention. This theory supports the integration of physical movement in language learning, especially for concrete vocabulary like action verbs and spatial phrases.

To guide this research, the main question is: "Is there a significant effect of using Total Physical Response (TPR) on the vocabulary mastery of seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Labuapi?" By answering this question, the researcher hopes to show whether the TPR method is truly effective in helping students learn vocabulary. If proven successful, this method could be a useful tool for teachers to make vocabulary learning more active, fun, and meaningful.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research used a quantitative method with a quasi-experimental design, this type of design was chosen because the researcher did not have full control to randomly place students into different groups, as the classes were already determined by the school. The researcher compared two groups of students to find out whether the Total Physical Response (TPR) method could improve their vocabulary mastery. One group of students was taught using TPR, while the other group was taught using regular or traditional teaching methods. This type of design was chosen because the researcher did not have full control to randomly place students into different groups, as the classes were already determined by the school. Even though the groups were not randomly selected, this design still allowed a fair comparison between the two teaching methods.

Source of Data

The data for this research came from seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Labuapi in the academic year of 2024/2025. There were a total of 123 students in four classes. Out of those, two classes were chosen as the sample — class VII A and VII B — with 32 students in each class, making a total of 64 students. The researcher used purposive sampling, which means the classes were chosen on purpose based on certain considerations. In this case, the researcher had previously taught in those classes during a teaching internship and found that the students were active and cooperative. To make the test was good and accurate, it was checked by two experts in english education. On;y the questions with a validiy score above 0.75 were used. The test was also tried out on 20 students from a different class, and the result showed a reliability score of 0.85, which means the test was very reliable and consistent.

Data Collection

To collect the data, the researcher used two main techniques: vocabulary testing and classroom observation. The first step was to give a pre-test to both the experimental and control groups before any teaching began. This test was used to find out how much vocabulary the students already knew. Then, after several meetings of teaching using either TPR or traditional methods, a post-test was given to measure any improvement. Both tests focused on vocabulary related to daily activities (like "wake up," "take a shower," or "go to school") and prepositional phrases (like "on the table," "under the chair," and "in the bag"), because these types of words are well-

suited to physical movement and are easy to demonstrate through action. In addition to the tests, the researcher also observed the classroom, especially the experimental group, to see how students reacted to TPR-based teaching. The observations helped show how students engaged with the learning process, including their level of enthusiasm and how well they responded to instructions. For example, when learning the daily vocabulary like brush your teeth, the teacher would say the vocabulary and show the action. Then the students repeated the phrase while doing the same action

Research Instruments

Two main instruments were used in this study. The first was the oral vocabulary test, where the teacher gave simple English commands and students responded by doing the correct physical action. For example, if the teacher said "stand up" or "put your book on the table," students had to act out the instruction. This kind of test helped measure how well students understood and remembered the vocabulary through movement. Each student's performance was evaluated based on three criteria: vocabulary understanding, accuracy of their physical response, and confidence when participating. These aspects were scored from 1 to 5, and the results were converted into a percentage score. The second instrument was an observation checklist, which was used during the TPR lessons to document students' engagement, participation, and responsiveness. This checklist included items such as student attentiveness, ability to follow instructions, and willingness to be actively involved. These observations provided a more complete picture of the impact of TPR beyond just test scores.

Data Analysis

After all the data had been collected, the researcher analyzed the results to determine whether the TPR method had a real impact on vocabulary mastery. The first step was to calculate the average (mean) scores of both groups in the pre-test and post-test. Then, a normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk method was carried out to make sure that the data followed a normal distribution—this is important for choosing the right type of statistical test. After that, a homogeneity test using Levene's Test was performed to confirm that both groups had similar characteristics at the beginning. Once these conditions were met, the researcher used an independent samples t-test with SPSS version 26 to compare the post-test results of the two groups. This test helped show whether the difference in their scores was statistically significant. If the p-value was less than 0.05, it meant that the TPR method had a meaningful and positive effect on students' vocabulary learning. This final analysis helped answer the main research question and provided clear evidence about the effectiveness of TPR in improving vocabulary mastery among junior high school students.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The research aimed to evaluate how the Total Physical Response (TPR) method influenced the vocabulary mastery of seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Labuapi. The participants in the study included students from classes 7A and 7B, with a total of 64 students selected from a population of 123. The meeting was held four times,

including pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The first meeting was held on 22 April 2025, and the last on 10 May 2025.

In collecting the data, the researcher divided the pre-tests in the first meeting, followed by giving some vocabulary related to the daily activities, broken down into four steps. The process involved a pre-test during the initial meeting, vocabulary instruction using the TPR method in the second and third sessions, and a post-test in the final meeting.

The Score of pre-test and post-test of 7th grade students at SMPN 1 Labuapi

The pre-test and post-test were given to determine students' vocabulary mastery scores before the researchers gave the treatment. After the treatment, it can be seen in the tables below:

Table: 1. Pre-test and post-test scores of the Control Group

NO	NAME	PRE-TEST	POS-TEST
1.	AMAW	45	65
2.	AGA	35	60
3.	AP	55	75
4.	AP	40	75
5.	BAAA	60	85
6.	CEP	40	70
7.	CW	60	85
8.	DAD	25	45
9.	DSA	50	60
10.	DBA	35	65
11.	FRN	40	65
12.	HS	35	65
13.	HZ	25	45
14.	HAR	35	75
15.	IBA	30	75
16.	IO	50	80
17.	IHW	35	75
18.	KFF	40	75
19.	LIP	30	65
20.	M FAF	30	60
21.	M U	65	85
22.	MQ	35	50
23.	MIM	30	45
24.	MMA	35	65
25.	MAS	35	70
26.	MES	25	55
27.	MG	25	50
28.	MHA	35	60
29.	MK	30	50
30.	MRAG	40	60

31.	MA	50	75
32.	NSS	45	75

Table: 2. Pre-test and post-test scores of the Experiment Group

NO	NAMA	PRETEST	POSTTES
1.	AP	40	75
2.	AS	65	100
3.	APK	50	85
4.	AA	55	95
5.	AZ	20	60
6.	BNF	60	90
7.	DS	50	95
8.	DS	30	60
9.	DAR	35	70
10.	FH	30	70
11.	MAI	25	60
12.	MFAB	40	75
13.	MHR	45	75
14.	MQF	40	70
15.	MJS	50	85
16.	MH	30	60
17.	MIA	55	100
18.	MZMA	40	85
19.	MAG	35	70
20.	MRA	25	65
21.	MUA	40	80
22.	MAP	25	50
23.	MAA	30	65
24.	MAA	45	75
25.	MPHM	30	60
26.	MF	40	70
27.	MAA	50	90
28.	NM	35	75
29.	NW	40	85
30.	NMA	35	75
31.	OA	35	75
32.	PA	40	90

Normality Test

A normality test is carried out to determine whether the data obtained during the study were normally distributed. In this study, researchers conducted a normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test because the sample was less than 100. The requirements for normality testing using the Shapiro-Wilk are as follows:

1. The data is normally distributed if the significance level (Shapiro-Wilk)>0.05.
2. If the significance level (Shapiro-Wilk)< 0.05, then the data is not normally

distributed.

Table : 3. The test of normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest Control	.073	32	.200	.984	32	.910
Pretest Experiment	.170	32	.019	.963	32	.335
Postest Experiment	.159	32	.039	.960	32	.282
Postest Control	.157	32	.044	.940	32	.077

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on Table 3, the normality test results are shown. The significance levels (Shapiro-Wilk) were 0.910 for the pre-test of the control group, 0.077 for the post-test of the control group, 0.335 for the pre-test of the experimental group, and 0.282 for the post-test of the experimental group. These results indicate that the data were normally distributed, as all significance values were greater than 0.05.

The Homogeneity of the data:

The homogeneity test is used to check whether the data from the control and experimental groups have similar variation. This method is called Levene's Test to compare the differences.

Table : 4. The test of the Homogeneity variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Nilai	Based on Mean	.206	1	62	.652
	Based on Median	.114	1	62	.737
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.114	1	60.898	.737
	Based on trimmed mean	.189	1	62	.666

Based on Table 4, the test results shown, the significance value (Sig.) from Levene's Test was 0.652 for the test based on the mean, and all other methods (median and trimmed mean) also showed significance values greater than 0.05. Since all of these values exceeded the 0.05 threshold, it can be concluded that the data from both groups had homogeneous variances

Independent sample T test

Group Statistics

Table : 5. The Independent sample T test

	Kelas	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Nilai	Postest_Kelas Kontrol	32	65.78	11.853	2.095
	Postest Kelas Experimen	32	76.09	12.935	2.287

Table : 6. The independent samples test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
						Significance				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Nilai	Equal variances assumed	0,206	0,652	-3,325	62	0,001	0,001	-10,313	3,101	-16,512	-4,113
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,325	61,533	0,001	0,001	-10,313	3,101	-16,513	-4,112

Based on Tables 5 and 6, the t-test results indicated that the significance value (2-tailed) was 0.001, which was below 0.05. This demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the posttest scores of students in the experimental and control groups. The experimental group had an average posttest score of 76.09 with a standard deviation of 12.935, while the control group had an average of 65.78 with a standard deviation of 11.853. The mean difference between the two groups was 10.313, suggesting that the treatment given to the experimental group had effectively improved the students' learning outcomes.

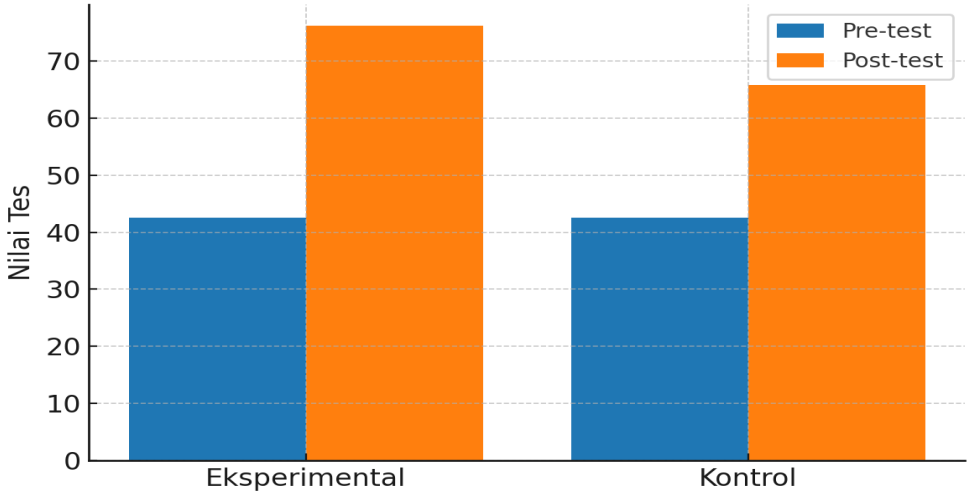

Figure 7. The comparison of pre-test and post-test scores

This result is similar to the study by Alexon et al. (2022), which found a 12-point increase in vocabulary scores for junior high school students after using TPR. Setiawan et al. (2022) also found that TPR helps students remember new words better because it combines spoken instructions with actions, making the learning experience more fun and memorable.

Overall, the results show that TPR works well not only for teaching action verbs but also for teaching prepositional phrases, because both can be shown through simple gestures or movements. The improvement in test scores and the more active classroom environment suggest that TPR is a good method to use regularly for teaching vocabulary in junior high schools.

Discussion

Based on the results of the data analysis, it was concluded that the Total Physical Response (TPR) method had a significant positive impact on the vocabulary mastery of seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Labuapi. This effect was evident from the substantial improvement in the post-test scores of the experimental group after receiving TPR-based instruction. The average pre-test score of the experimental group was 40.94, which increased to 76.09 in the post-test. In comparison, the control group—taught without the TPR method—improved from an average score of 39.38 to 65.78. The difference in the average post-test score gains between the two groups was 10.31 points, confirming that the TPR method effectively enhanced students' vocabulary learning outcomes.

Before conducting the t-test, this study ensured that the data met the assumptions for parametric analysis, specifically normality and homogeneity. The Shapiro-Wilk normality test revealed that all data had significance values above 0.05 (for example, pre-test experimental = 0.335; post-test experimental = 0.282; pre-test control = 0.910; post-test control = 0.077). This indicated that the data in both groups were normally distributed. Levene's homogeneity test also showed a significance value of 0.652

(based on the mean), greater than 0.05. This demonstrated that the data had homogeneous variances. Since both conditions were fulfilled, the t-test analysis was considered valid.

An independent t-test was conducted to determine whether the difference between the control and experimental groups was statistically significant. The test produced a significance value (2-tailed) of 0.001, well below the 0.05 threshold. This result led to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H_a), indicating a significant difference in vocabulary mastery between students taught using the TPR method and those taught with the conventional method, which included explanation of vocabulary, translation into Indonesian, and memorization exercises without physical movement. The t-value of -3.325, with a mean difference of -10.313, confirms that the observed score gap between the two groups was unlikely due to chance and was instead true and actual effect of the teaching method.

Furthermore, the significant improvement in scores within the experimental group demonstrated the effectiveness of TPR in enhancing vocabulary mastery, suggesting that an approach involving physical movement helped make students more active, engaged, and better able to grasp the meaning of vocabulary. The vocabulary taught in this study focused on daily activity verbs and prepositional phrases, such as "wake up," "brush teeth," "go to school," and "on the table," "under the chair." Such vocabulary was well-suited to be combined with physical movements, making the learning process more contextual and meaningful. This supported Asher's (1969) theory, which stated that TPR relied on the connection between language and physical movement to strengthen memory and understanding.

The findings of this study aligned with the theory of Total Physical Response (TPR). According to Asher, involving students in physical activities while learning helped them remember and understand new vocabulary better, particularly in the early stages of learning a foreign language. The data from this research confirmed this idea, as evidenced by the significant improvement in vocabulary scores of students taught using the TPR method. The noticeable increase in test results and students' enthusiasm during class showed that physical movement aided in memorizing words and increased students' interest and engagement. Teaching vocabulary related to everyday activities—such as "wake up," "go to school," or "under the chair"—proved to be more effective when combined with physical movements, making the learning experience more meaningful. This demonstrated that the TPR method worked well in real classroom settings and was consistent with the theory, especially for junior high school students.

Observations made during the learning process also supported the quantitative data. Students in the experimental group appeared more enthusiastic, quickly understood the teacher's instructions, and responded to commands accurately. Affective aspects such as self-confidence and engagement also increased,

as seen from students' willingness to perform and carry out the movements voluntarily. In contrast, students in the control group were more passive and less enthusiastic, as the learning took place using conventional methods like lectures and vocabulary note-taking.

Therefore, the results from both the quantitative analysis and classroom observations indicated that the TPR technique effectively enhanced seventh-grade students' vocabulary acquisition. This effectiveness was reflected in higher post-test scores and a more active, contextual, and enjoyable learning process for the students. Consequently, TPR was recommended as an effective method to learn vocabulary, especially for material related to daily activities and those that could be visualized.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings presented, it was concluded that the Total Physical Response (TPR) method had a significant effect on the vocabulary mastery of seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Labuapi. Based on the post-test results, in which the experimental group taught using TPR achieved an average score of 76.09, surpassing the control group's average of 65.78, which was taught through conventional techniques. The independent sample t-test revealed a significance value of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the difference between the two groups was statistically significant.

This supports the idea that TPR, which combines language with physical actions, helps students remember vocabulary better because it engages both the mind and body. According to Paivio's dual coding theory (1986), the use of both verbal and physical cues enhances memory retention, making TPR especially effective for daily activity verbs and prepositional phrases.

In addition to quantitative improvements, classroom observations revealed that students using the TPR method showed greater enthusiasm, engagement, and confidence in learning vocabulary. They were more responsive to instructions and demonstrated better comprehension of verbs and prepositional phrases used in daily activities. The physical movements integrated into the learning process helped reinforce word meaning and retention, making the learning experience more enjoyable and effective. The Total Physical Response method proved to be an effective instructional approach for enhancing vocabulary mastery among junior high school learners, particularly in relation to action-oriented vocabulary like daily verbs and prepositions.

However, this study had a limitations. One of the main limitations was the short duration of the intervention, which lasted only four meetings. A longer treatment period might have produced more detailed or long-term results.

SUGGESTION

Based on the results of this study, the researcher offers the following suggestions:

1. For English Teachers
   Teachers are encouraged to apply the TPR method, especially when teaching vocabulary related to daily activities and prepositions. This method can engage the learning process and help students retain new vocabulary more effectively through physical involvement.
2. For Students
   Students are encouraged to actively participate in physical-based learning activities such as TPR to enhance their vocabulary acquisition. Engaging both body and mind can help make vocabulary learning more memorable and reduce anxiety when learning English.
3. For Future Researchers
   It is suggested to conduct longitudinal studies to observe the long-term effects of TPR on vocabulary retention. Future research can also explore the role of moderating variables, such as students' learning styles, to see how different learners respond to TPR. In addition, replication studies in different school levels and environments can further validate the effectiveness of this method across contexts
4. For Schools
   Schools are advised to support innovative teaching methods like TPR by providing teacher training opportunities and facilitating learning environments that allow active and movement-based learn.

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