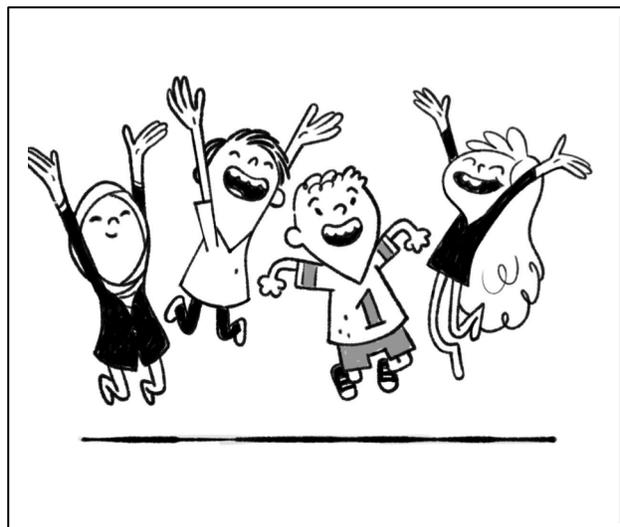


43 (N3) Total Physical Response (TPR): Learning Language through Action

In the 1960's, James Asher developed and studied a teaching method he named Total Physical Response. TPR helps students learn a new language through performing physical actions in response to commands. Asher's lessons, modeled after children's first language acquisition experiences, have been adapted for use with all ages. Asher's lessons followed seven basic steps (Asher, 1996):

- 1. Preparation.** The teacher prepares a short script, incorporating language appropriate to learners' level and often using props and actions that help communicate the language. Asher recommends that teachers introduce only a few new concepts at once and wait until these are mastered before adding more.
- 2. Demonstration.** Teacher and/or a few individuals demonstrate the actions for the series of commands. The teacher makes every effort to keep the lessons lighthearted and fun. The series is repeated several times with variations in the order of the commands.
- 3. Whole group demonstration.** Now the whole group participates in repetitions and variations of the sequence in order.
- 4. Written copy.** For students who are beginning to read and write in English, the teacher provides written text, which students copy and study.
- 5. Oral repetition and questions.** After listening comprehension has been completely internalized, students will begin to repeat the commands. These students are ready to begin to speak and to give the command to their peers to follow. They can practice repeating the series, ask and answer questions about it, and respond to the commands out of order.
- 6. Student demonstration.** Depending on language and reading levels, students recite or read the script and perform the actions in front of the class. (You might choose to have learners make a videotape for later viewing and practice.) The teacher checks carefully, and guides students toward correct pronunciation, grammatical usage, and comprehension.
- 7. Pair practice.** Students solidify their learning by practicing as pairs, taking turns in roles as readers/speakers and actors.



Effective adaptations of TPR are a valuable part of a language program, particularly at beginning-level stages. Students benefit from the opportunity to listen first before being expected to speak, from the engagement that physical activities provide, and from the spontaneity of the action-oriented lessons. Teachers can build TPR scripts from language and procedures students need -- anything from "sharpening your pencil" to "procedures in chemistry lab." Remember to make the activities fun by including fun and unexpected

commands (but still using key vocabulary), e.g., *Write the word on your hand.* or *Thumbs up!* or *Give your partner a high five.* Activities that can be adapted for TPR lessons include:

- pointing to pictures and other visuals on board or posters or in textbooks, board picture books or wordless books
- classroom routines and procedures such as coming to class prepared, checking homework
- manipulating letter, picture, or word cards
- map activities, science experiments
- math with—something missing here

Workout

Put your left hand in the air
Put it down

Put your right hand in the air Put it
down

Put both hands in the air
Put them down

Put your left foot in the air
Put it down

Put your right foot in the air
Put it down

Put both feet in the air!

How to Wash Your Hands

Turn on the water.
Wet your hands.
Turn off the water.
Put soap on your hands.
Rub your hands all over.
Sing a song for 30 seconds.
Stop rubbing.
Turn on the water.
Rinse your hands.
Turn off the water.
Shake your hands.
Get 1 towel.
Dry your hands.
Use your towel to open the door.
Throw the towel in the trash.

Watch a Soccer Game

It's time to go to the soccer game. Put on your jacket and hat.
Climb up the bleachers.
Sit down.
Our team just scored a goal. Stand up and yell, "GOAL!"
The other team is making a corner kick. Look scared.
It didn't go in. Sigh in relief.
You're hungry and thirsty. Go to the concession stand.
Point to the soda and popcorn.
Pay your money.
Go back to your seat.
Oh, no! The other team just made a goal. Cry.
Oh, no! A forward fell down. Look worried.
She's okay. Smile.
Our team scored again! Yea! Jump up and down!
One minute left.... Yea! We won! Clap!