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The Effect Total Physical Response Method on Students' Vocabulary Mastery at SDN 182 Bengkulu Utara

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh metode Total Physical Response (TPR) terhadap peningkatan penguasaan kosakata siswa kelas V di SDN 182 Bengkulu Utara. Penguasaan kosakata merupakan aspek penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, namun banyak siswa masih mengalami kesulitan dalam memahami dan mengingat kosakata baru. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain quasi-eksperimental yang terdiri atas kelompok eksperimen yang diajar menggunakan metode TPR dan kelompok kontrol yang diajar dengan metode konvensional. Sampel penelitian berjumlah 43 siswa yang dipilih melalui teknik total sampling. Instrumen penelitian berupa tes kosakata yang diberikan pada tahap pre-test dan post-test. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan pada kelompok eksperimen, dengan rata-rata nilai meningkat dari 54,66 menjadi 81,47, sedangkan kelompok kontrol hanya mengalami peningkatan dari 34,77 menjadi 47,22. Analisis statistik menunjukkan bahwa metode TPR memberikan pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap penguasaan kosakata siswa. Dengan demikian, metode Total Physical Response dinyatakan efektif dan dapat dijadikan sebagai alternatif dalam pengajaran kosakata kepada siswa sekolah dasar.

***Kata kunci**: Total Physical Response, penguasaan kosakata, siswa sekolah dasar, metode pembelajaran, vocabulary*

Abstract

This research aims to determine the effect of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method on improving the vocabulary mastery of fifth-grade students at SDN 182 Bengkulu Utara. Vocabulary mastery plays an essential role in English language learning, yet many young learners still face difficulties in understanding and retaining new vocabulary. This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design consisting of an experimental group taught with the TPR method and a control group taught with conventional learning methods. The sample consisted of 43 students selected through total sampling. The research instrument was a vocabulary test administered during the pre-test and post-test sessions. The findings revealed a significant improvement in the experimental group, with the average score increasing from 54.66 to 81.47, while the control group showed a smaller increase from 34.77 to 47.22. Statistical analysis indicated that the TPR method had a significant effect on students' vocabulary mastery. Therefore, the Total Physical Response method is considered effective and suitable as an alternative method for teaching vocabulary to elementary school students.

***Keywords**: Total Physical Response, vocabulary mastery, elementary school students, learning methods, vocabulary*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary mastery is a fundamental component of successful English language learning because it supports the development of other key skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Without sufficient vocabulary, students are unable to comprehend texts, express ideas, or participate confidently in communication tasks. Several studies emphasize that vocabulary serves as the foundation of language proficiency and strongly affects learners' overall performance in English (Nation, 2022; Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020). However, many elementary students in Indonesia continue to face challenges in expanding their vocabulary due to limited exposure to interactive learning and the dominance of traditional methods such as rote memorization and translation-based activities (Putra & Rahayu, 2023). As a result, students often

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struggle to retain new words, lack confidence in using English, and show low motivation in classroom activities.

To overcome these issues, English teachers are encouraged to adopt more engaging, meaningful, and student-centered instructional approaches. One method that has gained attention in the teaching of young learners is the Total Physical Response (TPR) method. TPR integrates physical movement with verbal input, enabling students to learn vocabulary through action-based activities that enhance memory retention and motivation. Research indicates that TPR is particularly effective for young learners because it reduces anxiety, supports comprehension, and promotes long-term vocabulary retention (Asmawati, 2022; Xie, 2021). Furthermore, several studies have shown that TPR-based instruction leads to significant improvement in vocabulary mastery among elementary school students and can create a more enjoyable learning environment (Kaipbergenova et al., 2021; Rahman & Yunus, 2022; Puspitasari, 2023)

Previous research also provides evidence supporting the effectiveness of the Total Physical Response method in teaching vocabulary to young learners. Afrianti and Rustipa (2023) found that vocabulary learning becomes more engaging, understandable, and enjoyable when students are actively involved in physical movements during the lesson. Their study, which used descriptive qualitative methods through observations, interviews, and documentation, revealed that students showed increased motivation and better comprehension when taught using TPR. The findings also indicated that learners achieved improved vocabulary performance, with average scores ranging from 70 to 80 after participating in TPR-based activities. These results reinforce the idea that TPR creates a supportive learning atmosphere, reduces students' difficulties in understanding new words, and effectively enhances vocabulary mastery in elementary school settings.

Further evidence of the effectiveness of the Total Physical Response method in enhancing students' vocabulary is shown by Awaltha As (2024). In her study at MTs Pergis Ganra Soppeng, the TPR method—integrating physical movement and gestures into the learning process—was examined through a quantitative pre-experimental design using a one-group pre-test and post-test model. The research involved 32 first-grade students selected through cluster random sampling. The findings demonstrated a significant improvement in students' vocabulary mastery after the implementation of TPR. This was supported by the t-test result of 42.26, which exceeded the t-table value of 2.04, indicating that the TPR method had a statistically significant positive effect on students' vocabulary learning. These results reinforce the view that TPR is an effective and impactful approach for improving vocabulary mastery among young learners.

In addition to previous findings, the effectiveness of the Total Physical Response method has also been supported by research conducted in Indonesian elementary school contexts. Khamroh, Giyartini, and Rahayu (2024) highlight that the rapid development of the modern world requires students to acquire strong language skills, including English, which is increasingly introduced at the elementary level through extracurricular activities. However, vocabulary learning often encounters obstacles, particularly when instructional methods are not aligned with students' learning needs. Their study examined the effectiveness of the TPR method in improving students' vocabulary mastery by comparing experimental and control classes. The results showed a noticeable difference in vocabulary achievement between the two groups, with a Cohen's d value of 0.57, indicating a moderate effect size. These findings confirm that TPR provides a meaningful contribution to vocabulary development and can serve as an effective method for supporting young learners' English language acquisition.

Although TPR has been widely researched, the implementation of this method in rural Indonesian elementary schools remains limited. Prior studies have mostly focused on urban contexts or higher grade levels, leaving a gap in understanding how TPR influences vocabulary acquisition among young learners in rural schools, particularly in Bengkulu Province (Sari & Lestari, 2023). At SDN 182 Bengkulu Utara, the use of TPR in vocabulary instruction has not been explored systematically, and teachers primarily rely on conventional methods that focus on

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memorization rather than meaningful use of language. Therefore, empirical evidence is needed to determine whether TPR can serve as an effective alternative approach for improving students' vocabulary mastery in this setting.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to investigate the effect of the Total Physical Response method on improving the vocabulary mastery of fifth-grade students at SDN 182 Bengkulu Utara. This research seeks to provide empirical findings on whether TPR can significantly enhance students' vocabulary acquisition compared to traditional instructional methods. The results are expected to contribute to the existing literature on vocabulary teaching for young learners and provide practical insights for English teachers in Indonesian elementary schools.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design and a non-equivalent control group model. The research subjects consisted of 43 fifth-grade students at SDN 182 Bengkulu Utara, who were selected using total sampling. The students were divided into two groups, namely the experimental group, which was taught using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, and the control group, which was taught using conventional learning methods. The learning material focused on vocabulary about "Parts of Our Body That Work Together," in accordance with the fifth-grade elementary school English curriculum.

The research instrument was a multiple-choice vocabulary test administered as a pre-test and post-test to measure students' vocabulary mastery. The research variables consisted of an independent variable, namely the Total Physical Response method, and a dependent variable, namely students' vocabulary mastery. Data were collected through test results administered to both groups before and after the treatment.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the mean values of the pre-test and post-test, as well as inferential statistics using t-tests to determine the significance of the difference in learning outcomes between the experimental group and the control group. This analysis technique is a common procedure in experimental research to assess improvements in learning outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

The data in this study were obtained through research activities conducted by the researcher from September 22, 2025 to October 22, 2025 at SDN 182 Bengkulu Utara. This research was carried out in two classes, namely class VA and class VB. The total number of students involved in this study was 43, consisting of 21 students in class VA and 22 students in class VB. This study aims to present data on the effect of the Total Physical Response method in improving students' English vocabulary mastery at SDN 182 Bengkulu Utara. The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling, which refers to the selection of samples based on specific purposes. In this case, class VA was assigned as the experimental class that used the Total Physical Response method, while class VB served as the control class that did not use the method. The instrument for collecting data in this study was a multiple-choice test, which was used to measure students' English vocabulary mastery.

The first step taken by the researcher was to request permission from the principal of SDN 182 Bengkulu Utara on September 20, 2025. This request aimed to obtain approval to conduct research within the school environment. With the permission obtained, the research activities were carried out in accordance with the previously designed procedures in the experimental and control classes.

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This study was conducted from September 22 to October 22, 2025, and involved four meetings. The experimental group was treated using the Total Physical Response method. Each meeting focused on the topic "Parts of Our Body", which aimed to improve students' English vocabulary mastery. The first meeting was held on September 26, 2025, and introduced the material Parts of Our Body (Vocabulary). The second meeting, conducted on October 5, 2025, continued with the same topic by emphasizing nouns (names of body parts). The third meeting, held on October 12, 2025, focused on adjectives related to body parts, while the fourth meeting, conducted on October 19, 2025, discussed verbs related to body movements.

Before the treatment was given, students in the experimental class first took a pre-test on September 26, 2025 to measure their initial ability in mastering English vocabulary. During each treatment session, students received learning materials through the Total Physical Response method with the topic "Parts of Our Body." Learning activities included listening to the teacher's instructions, performing physical movements according to commands, simple discussions, and vocabulary exercises, which aimed to make students more active and help them understand the meaning of vocabulary through physical activities. After the four meetings were completed, students took a post-test on October 22, 2025 to measure their improvement in English vocabulary mastery after being taught using the Total Physical Response method.

a. Experiment Class

Group	Average
Pre-Test	54,66
Post-Test	81,47

In the experimental class, students participated in four treatment sessions using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method with the topic Our Body Parts. Before the treatment sessions began, an initial test was conducted on September 26, 2025, to measure students' initial vocabulary mastery

During the treatment sessions, students received learning materials through physical responses to the teacher's commands. Learning activities included listening to instructions, performing body movements, practicing simple sentences, and completing vocabulary exercises. This method encouraged students to be more active and engaged, allowing them to understand and remember vocabulary more easily through direct physical involvement. The combination of listening, seeing, and doing helped strengthen their vocabulary retention.

After four treatment sessions were completed, the results showed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary mastery, with the average score increasing from 54.66 on the pre-treatment test to 81.47 on the post-treatment test. This improvement indicates that the use of the TPR method effectively improves students' understanding and memory of English vocabulary.

b. Control Class

Group	Average
Pre-test	34,77
Post-test	47,22

In the control class, students were taught using conventional teaching methods without the application of the Total Physical Response (TPR) technique. During the learning sessions, students received explanations from the teacher, listened to vocabulary descriptions, and completed written exercises. The learning activities focused mainly on textbook-based instruction, repetition, and translation, with limited physical engagement. pre-test was administered before the treatment to measure students' initial vocabulary mastery, where the average score was 34.77. After the same number of meetings as the experimental class, a post-test was administered. The average score increased to 47.22.

Although the control class showed improvement, the gain was lower compared to the experimental class. This suggests that conventional methods still support vocabulary learning,

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but without physical involvement, students' engagement and retention were not as strong as those in the TPR-based class.

B. Discussion

Based on the data analysis of fifth-grade students at SDN 182 Bengkulu Utara, the results showed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary mastery after being taught using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method. The post-test results indicated a noticeable increase in students' vocabulary ability after participating in learning activities through the TPR method. This finding proves that a teaching strategy involving physical movements can create an active and enjoyable learning atmosphere while improving vocabulary mastery effectively. At the beginning of the study, a pre-test was administered to both the experimental and control classes. The average pre-test score of the experimental class was 54.66, while the control class obtained an average score of 34.77. This difference indicates that both classes had relatively similar initial abilities, although the experimental class scored slightly higher. After being given treatment using the TPR method for four meetings, the average post-test score of the experimental class increased to 81.47. In contrast, the average score of the control class, which was taught using conventional methods, only increased to 47.22. This means the improvement in the experimental class reached 27.08 points, while the control class improved by only 12.95 points. These results demonstrate that the use of the TPR method is highly effective in enhancing students' vocabulary mastery.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that the use of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method can significantly improve students' vocabulary mastery in English learning at SDN 182 Bengkulu Utara. Through the involvement of directed physical movements, students become more active, focused, and easily understand the meaning of the vocabulary being taught. Learning also feels more enjoyable, thereby increasing students' motivation and courage to use vocabulary in appropriate contexts. The change in scores before and after the treatment illustrates that TPR makes the process of remembering and using words more effective than the teaching methods commonly used by teachers. Thus, the TPR method can be used as an appropriate learning alternative to improve elementary school students' vocabulary mastery.

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