

Teaching Vocabulary Using Visual Media and TPR for Early Childhood Learners

Arvan Permana Habib¹, Fahriany Fahriany^{2*}

^{1,2}UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta

*Corresponding author, e-mail: fahriany@uinjkt.ac.id

Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate how visual media and TPR instructions helped very young learners learn English vocabularies. Young learners are typically the students who are generally enrolled in kindergarten and elementary schools, typically range from five or six to around 12 years old. In educational field, knowledge and understanding of ways are needed to improve the effectiveness of the educational practices for young learners. The research was a qualitative research utilizing narrative inquiry. The subjects in this research were a K-1 kindergartener pupil and a second grade pupil of elementary school. The data was taken by creating field notes. The students created meaning of vocabularies by identifying the visual media. The students sometimes would ask directly what it means. With TPR instructions, the subjects' knowledge developed their knowledge demonstrated by the subjects' ability to follow the action that involved the vocabularies that were discussed.

Keywords: Very young learners; Vocabulary; Visual media; TPR.

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki bagaimana media visual dan instruksi TPR membantu pelajar yang sangat muda mempelajari kosakata bahasa Inggris. Pelajar muda biasanya adalah siswa yang umumnya terdaftar di taman kanak-kanak dan sekolah dasar, biasanya berusia antara lima atau enam hingga sekitar 12 tahun. Dalam bidang pendidikan, pengetahuan dan pemahaman tentang cara-cara diperlukan untuk meningkatkan efektivitas praktik pendidikan bagi pelajar muda. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif yang menggunakan penyelidikan naratif. Subjek dalam penelitian ini adalah murid taman kanak-kanak K-1 dan murid kelas dua sekolah dasar. Data diambil dengan membuat catatan lapangan. Siswa menciptakan makna kosakata dengan mengidentifikasi media visual. Siswa terkadang bertanya langsung apa artinya. Dengan instruksi TPR, pengetahuan subjek mengembangkan pengetahuan mereka yang ditunjukkan oleh kemampuan subjek untuk mengikuti tindakan yang melibatkan kosakata yang dibahas.

Kata Kunci: Anak Usia Dini; Media visual; TPR; Vocabulary.

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Introduction

Young learners are students who are generally enrolled in kindergarten and elementary schools and they typically range from five or six to around 12 years old. Children younger than 12 years old possess a different set of traits, as do others who are older. Different perspectives from various specialists on what is meant by young learners and experts disagreed, however they made similar points to other responses. Commonly, the prevalent understanding is that young learners are the people who learn a foreign language before turning 12. Cameron (Nurhaliza, 2021) defines young learners as pupils between five and twelve years old. Further viewpoints come from Nunan (2016) who asserted that young learners are children whose age ranges from five to fifteen years. In addition, as Scott (in Saravi et al., 2023) uttered young learners are the

students aged from five until just over ten or eleven years old. In educational field, knowledge and understanding of ways are needed to improve the effectiveness of the educational practices for young learners (Halliwell in Zebo & Nigina, 2023). Educators need to know as much about the student who then enables an experience that is both educational and supportive. A teacher needs to know the physical, emotional, conceptual and educational characteristics of young learners. Furthermore educators need to understand facts and views on how young learners think, and thus learn, especially with the acknowledged benefits of learning English in the primary level (Husna et al., 2025).

Harmer (in Izati, 2024) argued that young learners have peculiarities of their own and the ways in which they learn are different from adolescents, adults, or even older children. Furthermore, he stressed the importance of teachers understanding their students' cognitive processes and behaviors. This means teachers need to know that each child is special in their own right and also makes it important for teachers are deal with young learners to consider the qualities in children. Young learners have a very strong sense of justice, so it is necessary for teachers not to favor some children over others and to give all students the same opportunities (Scott in Saravi et al., 2023). Teachers will also need to be aware of the subject interest of their students and what should be used with which to motivate the children (Harmer in Izati, 2024).

The distinctive characteristics of young learners separated from adults were presented by McKay in Oktavia et al. (2022). Young children grow in their own cognitive, social- emotional and physical capabilities. Some of these developmental factors need to be considered since they can either increase or decrease an individual's capacity and attitude to focus on a particular performance. When students learn a new language, they begin to learn to read it in their first language while adults are different from being a young learner simply because adults usually have extensive complete language advanced literacy expertise. It is important to realize that young learners are easily exposed to failure and criticism, thus teachers might be very careful. Young learners have great learning abilities, however, they can be easily bored as their attention span is limited.

As the above mentioned idea indicates, it is clear that children are able to learn a second language with relative ease and naturalness and end up speaking it perfectly. The child will obtain native like fluency, particularly in pronunciation of the new language. In principle, younger people are holistic learners (Phillips in Prayoga, 2022). Further, teaching young learners is not the same as teaching older students (Aslamiah, 2022). Only because acquisition of English starts at an earlier age it does not mean this will provide significantly higher levels of proficiency, unless teacher education and second language teaching methods are adjusted to meet the unique challenges faced by the young learners. Along with much of the information and skills that all teachers need, specifically those who are teacher to young learners must have knowledge about cognitive processes (basic language learning facts) and structure in addition. Oral instruction could serve as the primary mode of learning for small children, necessitating teachers to have spoken fluency and expertise in English in order to effectively teaching entire lessons orally. Teachers need to have the ability to identify children's interest and integrate this in language instruction efficiently (Yaacob et al., 2021).

English language is learnt and taught with focus on vocabulary which is a basic element that teachers work at initial stages. Moreover, Nunan (2016) also claimed that in the early stages of learning another language pupils have better focus on building vocabulary than mastering grammar. Fachriyani & Syafe'i (2018) stated that students may find it difficult to convey their ideas or communicate clearly if they do not study vocabulary. Brown in Avezova (2022) asserted that the skills and intuitions needed to educate young learners effectively are quite different for those needed in teaching adults. With children however, this is not what they are likely to do as teaching vocabulary has different challenges — kid has short attention span and so may quickly get bored with the material or forgot it easily. During the learning process, it is necessary to employ a good methodology which will ultimately enable students to achieve vocabulary proficiency.

The media are experienced through the sense of sight are termed visual media. In order to learn properly, visual media is needed since human memory and clear understanding of a topic needs to be supported by visual media. Visual media encompasses all the visual forms but physical, such as, photographs, models or other objects and graphics as well as interactive multimedia devices. The key feature of visual media is how it shows what will be seen in meaning, adding new elements to the limited amount of materials that can be delivered at any given space (Goldfarb in Dinh & De Phung, 2023; Sofian & Anggraeni, 2021). According to Celce-Murcia and Hilles (in Tairova, 2023), pictures are visual aids that can be used to better encourage and maintain motivation in English language learning, as well as for creating new language skills. They also can be used in a variety of formats for teaching and practice. Pictures are also able to give vision to past eras or predict the future. After seeing the picture, learners identified that it would trigger a thought for themselves to interpret them (Rahman et al., 2024).

TPR is just a common to be discussed for understanding English teaching technique. TPR (total physical response) is an approach to language teaching that involves commands, voice and actions. The process is similar to a teacher giving a command and the students copying it. They will do as they are told

— for example, if the teacher says to open the door, they will open it. For spoken (but still student output) TPR could involve a command, followed by students' gesturing a response before they answer in words. Although his TPR language learning method remains popular, it cannot be successful unless the students and their teachers all understand what is being taught. Listening and performing for TPR will promote the student's active role in going through both a listener mode and they also have to transition themselves to performer mode. The teacher becomes active and takes part in the TPR method him/herself. The use of a textbox is discouraged for TPR. This situation is that the instructor has to intentionally select or take an object upon which makes arrangements (Setiawan et al., 2022).

The use of correct technique in teaching young learners may accommodate teaching young learners hence the goals of the study will be achieved. Using media in teaching English for young learners will accommodate the challenge of finding meaningful language input. As it is explained in Rahman et al. (2024), that seeing a picture might give a context of the words that is being learned, which is greatly helpful for the young learners in this matter by supplying them meaningful language input. This idea is also related with the use of TPR in education. As TPR creates a connection of spoken instructions and meaning, it will create a meaningful input to teach children new language. Using TPR will also solve the challenge of putting the language in communicative context, since the interactions between the students and the teacher and other students should be carried out while using TPR as teaching method (Setiawan et al., 2022). Thus, using TPR and visual media could be considered to be greatly beneficial for improving young learners' vocabulary comprehension.

There are several researches related to this research the first is a community service research of Ninsiana et al. (2024). This community service aimed to introduce English to the students consisting of young learners. The teaching method that was used in this research was TPR and the researchers reported that by using TPR for their context, the learning result of the students were astonishing. This research is relevant to the current research by its use of TPR specifically for young learners, however this research also incorporated another elements that complemented TPR which was visual media. The other research was a research conducted by Xie (2021). This research investigated the effectiveness of using TPR in teaching English for young learners. The researchers studied the effectiveness of TPR by doing observation on English teachers and interviewing the teachers, the students and also the parents. The study revealed that TPR was a good technique to teach young learners together with the use of games, roll-play, storytelling and pair works involving physical activities. However, TPR was also could possess challenges for teachers. One of the interesting findings of this study was that the study actually indicated that traditional method of delivery might become a challenge for TPR technique, indicating that using techniques of TPR itself may not satisfy the learning expectation and the learning instructions based on student-centered approach should be incorporated as well in the classroom. The last study is the study of Riyanti & Rustipa (2024) that investigated the use of TPR for teaching young learners English vocabularies. The research investigated the use of TPR in order to solve the pupils' learning problems found in kindergartens. It was reported that by using TPR teacher managed the get better learning results. The pupils were also reported to be more active with TPR.

From the explanations of studies above, as TPR is a popular technique to teach young learners and proven to be effective in sheer amount of studies, the use of TPR should be able to be applied in every context, especially for young learners. In this context of research, TPR was used to teach very young learners within the range of three to seven years of age. While teaching English vocabulary was reported to be challenging (Bakhtiyarova, 2024; Riyanti & Rustipa, 2024) the use of TPR, supplemented with visual media as it possesses similar goal (Vanesa & Setiawati, 2021), should assist the teacher tackle the problem by taking children in environment where they can 'enact' directly the words they were learning (Asher in Liu et al., 2024). Although, the other study reported challenges for TPR (Xie, 2021). Hence, with this consideration, this research was conducted with aim to find out how visual media and TPR could affect young learners in learning English vocabularies.

Method

The research was a qualitative research and incorporated narrative inquiry. This aimed to elucidate personal account of the researcher's experience in teaching English in for very young learners (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In using narrative inquiry, the design of the research allows a researcher to take stories, narratives, or autobiographies as the fundamental source of data. There is a main concept of narrative inquiry that concerns on honoring lived experience by regarding it as an essential source of knowledge and understanding (Wa-Mbaleka & Rosario, 2022). The subjects in this research were a K-1 kindergartener pupil and a second grade pupil of elementary school. The site of the research was in the subjects' residency. The data was taken by creating field notes in observation during the learning session (Creswell & Creswell, 2017)..

Result and Discussion

From the observation, the researcher recognized that, while learning English with visual media and TPR, the students carried out the learning by perceiving the meaning of the vocabularies through directly with their vision through English learning videos fetched from Youtube video sharing platform. In some occasions, the students guessed the meaning of vocabularies by identifying the picture that was showed when a specific vocabulary showed up. The students then, if they were going confused with the context of the image being presented, would ask directly what it means. The subjects looked perplexed when they could not guess the meaning behind the words.

When the subjects were told the meaning of the words presented to them, sometimes the subjects were asking more about the concept related to the word they had just learnt. One time they were confused over the word 'tooth' or 'teeth'. While they became puzzled, they automatically realized that the visual in front of them should reveal something meaningful for them. At this time, they faced difficulty in making sense of the visual, since it actually showed a shark opening its big jaw. The subjects realized that there were many things in the picture and their first guess was 'mulut' (mouth) which was not a correct meaning for the word appeared on the screen.

The subjects were asked about the correct hints leading to the correct meaning, and finally they learnt that it was tooth/teeth. Right after having subjects knowing the meaning, the subjects were given an instruction,

"Those are the shark's teeth, do you have any? Where are yours? Show me!"

One of the two opened his mouth, and showed his teeth. Moreover, they told the researcher that they were losing some of their teeth in teasing manner. The subjects seemed to possess instinctive wondering nature. After knowing that the word 'tooth' meant in their native language, they learnt in a following line that came up on the screen telling numbers of teeth a shark could possibly have. Suddenly, they made sense of it that it should be telling about the number of shark's teeth.

The learning process turned out to be significantly longer since the subjects were playing around with each other and they liked to turn away to do their own stuff. After finishing the videos and completing discussion on the vocabularies they had interest with. The session was closed by having a little quiz session. The subjects understood almost none of English vocabularies of color. They were presented objects of same shape but with different colors and the objects were pointed out and asked what color was that in English. Then, they were asked to show me their belonging or something around them that had the same color and they looked a bit enthusiastic while showing what they had to show.

When the subjects were asked to watch the video, they showed good learning reactions signifying the content were meaningful for them which was the purpose of the visual media (Sofian & Anggraeni, 2021). With visual content, the subjects could directly derive the construct the meaning of a vocabulary. It was showed when the students were managing to build their new language understanding by identifying the picture as it was pointed in Celce-Murcia and Hilles in Tairova (2023) that media helped in developing language skills. The fact that the subjects misunderstood the word was also an indication of newly developing language acquisition (Soma, 2017).

In practicing simple TPR instructions, the subjects' knowledge gradually developed their knowledge demonstrated by the subjects' ability to show corresponding action that involved the vocabulary that became the focus. This was in line with the idea that TPR taught students English components or skills with performing actions, making a student own self the center of their own learning (Asher in Liu et al., 2024). Especially, when the subjects were eager to show their stuff which shows that TPR also increased the subjects' motivation to learn which might tackle the difficulty in learning foreign languages (Bakhtiyarovna, 2024).

Conclusion

Very young learners are unique learners and well-known to possess characteristics that are considerably different with the other learner, namely the adults. Specifically, young learners' physical stage also allows richer amount of information permeates better in their mind hence creating better and more long-lasting understanding. This should be taken as an opportunity by language educators since learning language requires great amount mental exercises. One of the components of language is vocabulary that reported to be difficult for language learners to master. By using visual media and TPR which featured an ultimate advantage which was offering authentic meaningful input, language learner will learn language better. The behavior of the subjects who were very young learners was shown to support the use of visual media and TPR for teaching English vocabularies. The subjects became active and they demonstrated an effort to construct their language knowledge and also skills. The treatment indicated that instructions with visual

media and TPR became substantial in the subjects' language development especially in vocabulary acquisition.

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