Total Physical Response (TPR)
"Babies don't learn by memorizing lists; why should children or adults?"

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http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikZY6XpB214
TPR is…

- a language teaching method built around the **coordination of speech and action**
- a method of teaching a language using **physical movement to react to verbal input**
The Origins

- Originated in late 1960s, became popular in 1970s-80s.

Why?

High dropout rates in second language classes.

... but almost no problems learning the first language.
Learning fundamentals

- **Bio-program**
  - Children understand complex utterances they cannot spontaneously produce

- **Brain lateralization**
  - Directed to right brain hemisphere

- **Reduction of stress**
  - The lower the stress, the better the learning
Theory of language

- Grammar-based view of language
- The verb in the imperative as the central linguistic motif
- Language being composed of abstractions and non-abstractions
Principles

- Understanding of TL before ability to speak
- Meaning of TL words conveyed through actions
- Spoken language preferred over written language
- Understanding should evolve through the movement of the student’s body
- No forcing to speak
Objectives

- To teach oral proficiency (at a beginning level), and the ultimate aim is to teach basic speaking skills
- To produce learners who are capable of free communication, which is understandable to a native speaker
- All goals are attainable through the use of action-based drills in the imperative form
Syllabus

- Sentence-based
- Lexical criterion is primary
- Initial attention to meaning rather than to the form
Learning activities

- Fixed number of items (usually no more than 30)
- Predominantly imperative drills
- Role playing can also be used
- Conversational dialogues begin after at least 100 hours of instruction.
Roles of Learners

- **Listener & performer**
  - Recognize and respond to novel combinations of previously taught items
  - Produce novel combinations
  - Encouraged to speak not until they feel ready
Roles of a Teacher

- Active and direct role
- Select supporting materials, and model the lesson
- Allow speaking abilities to develop in natural pace
- Parent-like feedback
Materials

- Generally no basic text
- **Initially**: teacher’s voice, actions and gestures, later – classroom objects and/or supporting materials
  - TPR student kits (focus on specific situation)
TPR student kit

- Put the table in front of the sink.
- Put the bread on the table.
Learning process

- **Review**
  - Teacher repeats items from previous time

- **New commands**
  - Teacher gives new commands, repeat and vary them

- **Role reversal**
  - Student command their teacher and classmates

- **Reading and writing**
  - Teacher writes new items on the blackboard
Myths about TPR

- TPR only works for children
- TPR is limited to imperative
- TPR is limited to beginning students
Advantages

- TPR is fun and easy.
- TPR is inclusive.
- Good tool for building vocabulary for long-term retention.
- Does not require long preparations.
- Effective for both adult and young learners.
Disadvantages

- Challenge for shy students.
- No opportunity to talk in a creative manner.
- Can become too repetitive and boring.
- Preparation becomes an issue at higher levels.
Conclusions

- TPR is a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action.
- TPR proved to be useful in second language acquisition.
- **BUT!** In order to be successful TPR should be used in association with other methods and techniques.
Useful links

- http://www.tpr-world.com
- http://www.teacherjoe.us/TeachersTPR.html
- http://www.tprsource.com/