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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Implementation of Total Physical Response (TPR) Method in Improving English Vocabulary Acquisition for Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the implementation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in improving English vocabulary acquisition for early childhood at RA Nururrahman Bekasi, to observe children's active physical responses, and to identify obstacles in the learning process. The approach used is descriptive qualitative. The data sources involved the classroom teacher of Group B, 19 students, and five parents. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, then analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that the implementation of the TPR method through modeling, demonstration, and role reversal stages was effective in significantly increasing children's vocabulary, particularly in the categories of action verbs and nouns. This method also succeeded in creating a stress-free learning environment, thereby lowering the children's affective filter. Nonetheless, obstacles were found in the learning process in the form of variations in children's thinking time delays due to individual focus constraints. In addition, there is limited time for follow-up stimulation by parents when children are at home. This study recommends consistent integration of TPR in daily routines and teacher training to optimize foreign language learning in early childhood education.

Keywords: Total Physical Response (TPR) Method, English Vocabulary, Early Childhood.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui implementasi metode Total Physical Response (TPR) dalam meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata bahasa Inggris anak usia dini di RA Nururrahman Bekasi, mengamati keaktifan respons fisik anak, serta mengidentifikasi hambatan dalam proses pembelajaran. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan sumber data melibatkan guru kelas Kelompok B, 19 anak didik, dan lima orang tua murid. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara semiterstruktur, dan dokumentasi, lalu dianalisis melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi TPR melalui tahap modeling, demonstrasi, dan role reversal efektif meningkatkan kosakata anak secara signifikan, khususnya pada kategori action verbs dan nouns. Metode ini juga berhasil menciptakan lingkungan belajar bebas stres sehingga menurunkan hambatan afektif anak. Meskipun demikian, ditemukan hambatan berupa variasi jeda waktu berpikir pada anak akibat kendala fokus individual serta keterbatasan stimulasi lanjutan oleh orang tua di rumah. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan integrasi TPR secara konsisten dalam rutinitas harian dan pelatihan guru untuk mengoptimalkan pembelajaran bahasa asing di PAUD.

Kata Kunci: Metode Total Physical Response (TPR), Kosakata Bahasa Inggris, Anak Usia Dini.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary world has become increasingly interconnected, and English has transcended its status as a mere supplementary subject in schools to become a fundamental necessity. As an international language or lingua franca, English serves as the primary medium through which people from diverse linguistic backgrounds communicate, collaborate professionally, and exchange information globally (Achmad & Hidayati, 2025; Suryana et al., 2021). In Indonesia, parental awareness regarding the importance of English proficiency has significantly increased. Many parents now recognize that introducing English from an early age constitutes a strategic investment to prepare their children for a digital and globally integrated future (Mala, 2025). This growing awareness reflects an understanding that early language exposure provides children with a competitive advantage in navigating the increasingly borderless world of the 21st century.

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) represents the foundational educational level that plays an extraordinarily pivotal role in child development. This period, often referred to as the Golden Age or critical period, spans approximately ages four to six years, during which the brain exhibits remarkable plasticity and capacity for information absorption, including new languages (Mariyam & Musfiroh, 2019). When English is introduced through appropriate methods during this window of opportunity, children acquire it naturally, paralleling their first language acquisition process in everyday contexts. The neurological foundations of this phenomenon are supported by the Critical Period Hypothesis, which posits that there exists a biologically determined window during which language acquisition occurs most efficiently and with native-like proficiency (Hafidah & Kusuma Dewi, 2020; Raju & Joshith, 2018). However, the pedagogical approaches employed during this

sensitive period must align with children's developmental characteristics to maximize learning outcomes.

Despite the theoretical advantages of early language acquisition, teaching English to young children cannot be equated with adult language instruction. Children at this developmental stage are characteristically active and unable to remain sedentary for extended periods (Pangestu & Rohinah, 2018). Their world is fundamentally one of play and movement, and psychologically, they learn through direct experiences that simultaneously engage visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modalities. Consequently, when instruction relies predominantly on verbal explanations or theoretical frameworks, children quickly become disengaged and lose their intrinsic motivation to learn (Dewi & Fatmawati, 2022). Conversely, when learning environments are designed to be enjoyable, relaxed, and physically engaging, children demonstrate enhanced comprehension and retention of new linguistic content (Astutik & Aulina, 2017). This understanding necessitates pedagogical approaches that honor children's natural inclination toward active, multisensory engagement.

Observations conducted by the researcher at RA Nururrahman Bekasi revealed significant discrepancies between theoretical ideals and classroom realities. During preliminary observations of English language instruction, the classroom atmosphere appeared noticeably lifeless. Despite teachers' conscientious efforts to introduce new vocabulary, instructional methods remained predominantly verbal repetition-based, with limited physical engagement. Many children displayed attention deficits, engaged in off-task behaviors, or appeared confused when teachers provided English instructions. This observation aligns with broader findings in Indonesian early childhood education contexts, where conventional teaching approaches often fail to harness children's natural kinesthetic learning preferences (Sariyati, 2017; Setyoningsih, 2016). The mismatch between pedagogical approaches and children's developmental needs represents a critical concern requiring immediate methodological intervention.

The preliminary data collected in Group B classrooms indicated notably low vocabulary mastery among children. When teachers delivered simple English instructions such as "Please stand up" or "Open your book," the majority of students failed to respond immediately, only reacting after instructions were repeated in Indonesian. Among nineteen children observed, only a handful demonstrated the ability to understand and respond promptly. This finding reflects broader challenges in Indonesian early childhood English education, where limited exposure and inadequate pedagogical approaches often result in suboptimal vocabulary acquisition (Zainollah, 2016; Subekti et al., 2021). If this condition persists without intervention, it may engender negative attitudes toward English as a challenging and tedious subject, potentially compromising children's motivation for future language learning.

The consequences of continued reliance on conventional, teacher-centered approaches extend beyond immediate vocabulary deficits. Children may develop persistent negative associations with English language learning, viewing it as a difficult and uninteresting endeavor requiring rote memorization rather than meaningful engagement (Fatimah et al., 2024). This affective barrier, consistent with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, suggests that negative emotional states impede language acquisition by limiting the brain's receptivity to linguistic input (Bahruddina & Febrianib, 2020; Hidayah, 2017). Therefore, pedagogical interventions must prioritize creating

positive emotional associations with English through engaging, play-based approaches that align with children's developmental needs. Without such interventions, the opportunity to capitalize on the golden age for language acquisition may be squandered.

In response to these challenges, the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, developed by James Asher (1981, 2016), emerges as a theoretically grounded and practically viable alternative. This method emphasizes language learning through physical movement, with teachers providing English instructions and children responding through bodily actions (Fachrurrozi & Mahyudin, 2016; Sandoval et al., 2022). TPR is founded on the bio-program hypothesis, which posits that the human brain possesses innate biological mechanisms for decoding language through sensory-motor coordination. The method provides children opportunities to develop comprehension before being required to produce verbal output, thereby reducing performance pressure and creating a supportive learning environment. By integrating auditory input with kinesthetic responses, TPR capitalizes on the natural connection between language comprehension and physical action, mirroring the developmental trajectory of first language acquisition (Pinter, 2017; Yulita et al., 2024).

TPR offers several distinct pedagogical advantages that address the observed challenges in early childhood English instruction. The method engages multiple intelligences simultaneously, particularly benefiting learners with strong kinesthetic and visual-spatial abilities (Armstrong, 2018; Chiluisa Chicaiza & Guamán Luna, 2025). By requiring children to respond physically to verbal commands, TPR reduces cognitive load associated with simultaneous comprehension and production demands, enabling learners to focus on understanding meaning before articulating it verbally. The method's emphasis on imperatives and action verbs provides natural scaffolding for vocabulary acquisition, as children learn language in meaningful, action-oriented contexts rather than through decontextualized drill (Fachrurrozi, 2016; Karlina, 2024). Furthermore, the playful, game-like nature of TPR activities creates the stress-free environment essential for lowering the affective filter and facilitating language acquisition.

Research examining TPR implementation in various educational contexts has demonstrated its effectiveness in vocabulary acquisition across different age groups and language learning settings. Studies have documented significant improvements in vocabulary retention, particularly for concrete nouns and action verbs, following TPR-based instruction (Mariyam & Musfiroh, 2019; Suryana et al., 2021; Yulita et al., 2024). The method's multisensory approach has been shown to create stronger and more durable memory traces compared to traditional verbal repetition methods (Ratminingsih et al., 2023; Subekti et al., 2021). However, most existing research has focused on English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts or elementary school settings, with limited attention to early childhood education in Indonesian Islamic kindergarten contexts. This research gap necessitates empirical investigation into TPR's applicability and effectiveness within specific cultural and institutional contexts, including the unique characteristics of Raudhatul Athfal (RA) settings.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating TPR implementation in the specific context of RA Nururrahman Bekasi, an Islamic early childhood education institution. The research is guided by three primary questions: (1) How is the TPR method implemented to improve English vocabulary acquisition in early childhood? (2) How do children's physical activity levels and

psychological responses develop during TPR-based instruction? (3) What obstacles and challenges emerge during TPR implementation, and how can they be addressed? By answering these questions, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on effective early childhood language pedagogy while providing practical guidance for educators in similar contexts. The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive examination of TPR implementation through multiple stakeholder perspectives, including teacher observations, child responses, and parent interviews, thereby providing a holistic understanding of the method's effectiveness and challenges.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach to comprehensively investigate the implementation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in improving English vocabulary acquisition among early childhood learners at RA Nururrahman Bekasi (Creswell & Poth, 2021; Sugiyono, 2019). The qualitative approach was selected for its capacity to capture the rich, contextual details of classroom interactions and to understand the lived experiences of participants within their natural setting (Miles et al., 2014). The descriptive nature of the study allowed for detailed documentation and interpretation of phenomena as they naturally occurred, without experimental manipulation (Miles et al., 2024; Rusandi & Muhammad, 2021). This approach was particularly appropriate for examining the dynamic interplay between teacher instructions, children's physical responses, and environmental factors influencing vocabulary acquisition.

The research was conducted at RA Nururrahman Bekasi, located on Jalan Laskar Dalam No. 46, Pekayon Jaya, South Bekasi District, Bekasi City, during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The selection of this location was based on several empirical considerations, including the presence of observed challenges in English vocabulary acquisition among students and the institutional willingness to participate in pedagogical innovation research (Widodo & Rahayu, 2021). The research timeline spanned from January to July 2026, encompassing all phases from preliminary observation to final report preparation. This extended timeframe enabled comprehensive data collection across multiple classroom sessions, ensuring the capture of authentic patterns in TPR implementation and child responses (Ardianto, 2017; Creswell, 2019).

The primary data sources in this study included three categories of participants, following the principle of data triangulation recommended in qualitative methodology (Sugiyono, 2020). First, the primary informants comprised 19 Group B children (10 girls and 9 boys, ages 4-6 years) who were the subjects of observation during TPR-based instruction. Second, the classroom teacher (the researcher in her capacity as practitioner-researcher) served as the primary implementer of the TPR method and provided observational data. Third, five parents of participating children were interviewed to gain insight into the transfer of learning to home settings and to identify obstacles in parental reinforcement. The selection of parents as secondary informants was based on their unique access to children's spontaneous language use outside the classroom environment (Miles et al., 2014; Widodo & Rahayu, 2021).

Data collection employed three complementary techniques to ensure comprehensive and valid data acquisition (Creswell & Poth, 2019; Sugiyono, 2019). Participatory observation was conducted

during English instruction sessions, with the researcher functioning as both teacher and observer, recording physical modeling adequacy, children's motor responses, command recombination applications, spontaneous comprehension indicators, and affective classroom dynamics. Semi-structured interviews with parents explored children's spontaneous physical responses at home, intuitive vocabulary comprehension, role reversal phenomena, vocabulary development, affective experiences, parental obstacles in reinforcement, and environmental support for language learning. Documentation complemented these techniques, including photographs of classroom activities, lesson plans, assessment records, and institutional documents providing contextual information about RA Nururrahman's history, vision, and facilities (Creswell, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (Miles et al., 2014), comprising four sequential stages. Data organization involved systematic arrangement and coding of field notes, interview transcripts, and documentation to facilitate retrieval and thematic analysis. Data reduction encompassed selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data by identifying relevant patterns related to TPR implementation, physical responses, vocabulary development, and encountered obstacles. Data display presented organized information in narrative form, enabling pattern recognition and relationship mapping across categories. Conclusion drawing and verification involved iterative interpretation of displayed data, cross-checking with theoretical frameworks, and member checking with informants to ensure credibility and confirmability of findings (Miles et al., 2014; Sugiyono, 2020; Widodo & Rahayu, 2021).

Data validity was ensured through triangulation and member checking strategies (Sugiyono, 2019). Source triangulation involved cross-checking information from different participant categories (teacher observations, child responses, parent interviews). Technical triangulation compared data obtained through different methods (observation, interviews, documentation). Member checking invited participants to review and confirm research findings, ensuring that interpretations accurately reflected their perspectives and experiences (Sugiyono, 2020; Widodo & Rahayu, 2021). These strategies enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings, ensuring that conclusions were firmly grounded in empirical evidence from the field.

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Implementation of Total Physical Response (TPR) in English Learning at RA Nururrahman Bekasi

The implementation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in Group B at RA Nururrahman Bekasi was conducted by integrating auditory verbal command stimuli with direct physical motor responses. The implementation process was systematically structured into two primary phases: learning planning and classroom physical command execution. Planning involved the development of daily lesson plans aligned with the academic calendar and weekly learning themes, with English instruction scheduled once weekly for 30-minute sessions to maintain efficiency and avoid overwhelming young children (Miles et al., 2014; Sugiyono, 2019). The duration was

empirically validated as optimal for maintaining attention spans of 4-6 year old children without inducing cognitive fatigue or behavioral disengagement.

Phase 1: TPR Learning Planning

The planning phase was critical for the researcher-practitioner to systematically organize instructional strategies. Based on reflective teaching notes, the planning process began with developing daily lesson plans that prioritized concrete vocabulary selection, specifically action verbs and nouns from children's immediate environment (Pinter, 2017; Suryana et al., 2021). Initial vocabulary in the lesson plans focused on fundamental physical commands such as stand up, sit down, walk, jump, run, touch your head, and object recognition using animal figurines and puppets. To make these imperative instructions engaging for 4-6 year olds, the researcher packaged the lessons into integrated group games, such as adapting the "Simon Says" game into "Guru Berkata" (Teacher Says), creating a psychologically low-stress environment conducive to language acquisition (Asher, 2016; Hidayah, 2017). This structured planning was validated by preliminary observations of the 19 children, confirming that movement-centered instruction facilitated focus maintenance from the first moments of learning sessions.

The success of this classroom planning was confirmed by transfer effects observed in home settings. Interview data from Informant 1 (Mama Mufasa) revealed:

"Oh yes, Ms. Nadya! Yesterday at home suddenly he said 'Mom, stand up!' I was confused, then he demonstrated by standing up. Then he said 'sit down' while pulling my hand telling me to sit. He said he learned that game with Ms. Nadya at school. The children became so enthusiastic, so different from before with just regular memorization, he got bored quickly." (W.WM-01)

Phase 2: TPR Implementation and Physical Command Execution

The implementation phase operationalized the planned lessons, with the researcher leading the motor activity sessions in the Group B classroom involving all 19 children. Operationally, instruction was divided into three qualitative instructional interaction phases: modeling phase (teacher demonstrating movements), demonstration without model phase (teacher providing verbal commands only), and recombination/game phase (teacher combining commands with props). Classroom observation notes revealed that children's activity levels significantly increased when their bodies were physically engaged; children were no longer passive but responsively moved simultaneously (Astutik & Aulina, 2017; Dewi & Fatmawati, 2022). The classroom action's mechanics were concretely documented through clinical indicators in observation sheets.



Figure 1. TPR Implementation TPR Learning

Indicator 1: Physical Modeling Adequacy: When the researcher consistently demonstrated body movements explicitly and repeatedly while pronouncing vocabulary such as stand up, sit down, jump, and clap your hands, all 19 Group B children successfully followed the demonstrated movements without physical difficulty. This finding confirms the effectiveness of physical modeling as a scaffolding strategy for initial vocabulary introduction (Fachrurrozi & Mahyudin, 2016; Yulita et al., 2024).

Indicator 2: Command Recombination Application: Children's adaptive memory development was further tested when the researcher applied compound command variations such as "stand up and clap your hands" and "jump and sit down." Among the 19 observed children, 16 successfully executed the combined commands accurately and instantly. Three children (Ananda Zakky, Nadhif, and Elfatih) still required movement repetition modeling before successfully executing the combined instructions. This finding indicates individual differences in processing speed and working memory capacity among children, consistent with developmental variability in cognitive processing (Karlina, 2024; Pinter, 2017).

Indicator 3: Silent Period and Direct Comprehension: The researcher's strategy of providing cognitive space free from verbal production pressure effectively stimulated direct meaning comprehension. Children demonstrated spontaneous physical responses to spoken vocabulary without requiring prior mental translation to Indonesian. When the researcher called out "jump" or "clap your hands," all 19 children simultaneously jumped or clapped accurately. This demonstrates

that the action-first approach allows children to bypass mental translation, directly linking auditory input to motor output (Asher, 2016; Bahruddina & Febrianib, 2020).

Indicator 4: Role Reversal Initiative: The peak of implementation success was marked by children's initiative to lead classroom instruction. When the researcher offered opportunities for children to become instruction leaders, six children (Tanisha, Fasa, Lita, Nadhif, Aisyah, and Athar) demonstrated sufficient confidence to come forward. These six children vocally and boldly gave simple English instructions that their peers followed. This fact provides strong evidence that vocabulary had been well-internalized in children's motor memory, affirming the effectiveness of kinesthetic learning in second language acquisition (Chiluisa Chicaiza & Guamán Luna, 2025; Mariyam & Musfiroh, 2019).

Table 1. Observation Results Summary

No.	Observed Aspect/Indicator	Descriptive Field Findings	Assessment Result
1	Physical modeling adequacy	19 children successfully followed	19 Excellent
2	Command recombination application	16 children followed correctly, 3 needed re-modeling	16 Excellent, 3 Needs Improvement
3	Silent period cognitive space	All children focused and followed instructions	19 Excellent
4	Motor skill accuracy	17 executed accurately, 2 hesitated initially	17 Excellent, 2 Good
5	Spontaneous comprehension	All children responded immediately to "jump" and "clap"	19 Excellent
6	Role reversal initiative	6 children confidently led class instruction	6 Excellent
7	Affective dynamics and focus	1 child occasionally distracted but refocused after guidance	1 Good

The children's rapid motor responses without extended mental translation demonstrate that kinesthetic memory effectively accelerates English vocabulary acquisition. This aligns with interview findings from Informant 3 (Mama Tanisha) regarding rapid verbal absorption at home:

"Tanisha is happiest when playing role model with English. She plays with her dolls like what the teacher does at school. She talks to herself like 'this is your nose' or just 'hello friend my name is Tanisha'. And Tanisha is the type who absorbs lessons quickly. She doesn't need mental translation when her mother tells her to take the green doll by saying 'pick the green doll', she immediately understands just by hearing 'green' and 'doll'." (W.WM-03)

Similar confirmation came from Informant 4 (Mama Nadhif), who observed her active child's energy being transformed into positive learning at home:

"At home, Nadhif often spontaneously reflects those movement instructions. When seeing his mother busy in the kitchen, Nadhif sometimes approaches while hopping and says 'look Mom, I am jumping!' or demonstrates running while saying 'run, run, run'..." (W.WM-04)

3.2 Obstacles in TPR Implementation

Despite the significant impact of TPR on vocabulary comprehension and child activity, several conditional obstacles emerged during implementation. These qualitative obstacles were classified into three main findings.

Obstacle 1: Individual Focus Distraction: Based on affective dynamics, activity levels, and attention focus indicators during TPR instruction, the Group B classroom atmosphere was generally categorized as very active, enjoyable, and conducive. However, tactical attention challenges emerged, with one child among the 19 (Ananda Zakky) occasionally being easily distracted by the surrounding environment. Zakky's characteristic attention fluctuation required the researcher to provide interpersonal approaches, including repeated verbal direction or gentle physical touch to refocus attention on the lesson. This psychological obstacle aligns with confirmation data from Informant 2 (Mama Zakky):

"...for TPR he doesn't like repeating at home because he says he's embarrassed in front of his mother, and his father works until late at night so he's rarely home from afternoon to evening. But for English vocabulary he understands, although he needs quite long mental translation. But beyond all that, his motor response is fast." (W.WM-02)

Obstacle 2: Cognitive Speed Adjustment (Mental Translation) for Compound Commands: Another qualitative obstacle emerged during transition from single commands to compound command variations. Cognitive processing speed heterogeneity caused response time disparities in the Group B classroom. While 16 children moved instantly, three children (Zakky, Nadhif, and Elfatih) experienced longer processing delays. These three children showed momentary confusion in combining two foreign action meanings simultaneously in one movement, often pausing to observe peers' actions before moving independently. Children's varied cognitive characteristics caused different linguistic information processing speeds, with some requiring several seconds to process teacher instruction meaning before moving their bodies. This obstacle occasionally slowed group game rhythms when children who lost focus due to observing peers' movements before acting independently.

Obstacle 3: Limited Family Stimulation: An external technical obstacle affecting long-term TPR optimization was limited parental time for repeating English movement activities at home. Parental professional busyness reduced meaningful repetition intensity, making vocabulary retention highly dependent on face-to-face classroom sessions once weekly. This condition was reflected in the honest account of Informant 1 (Mama Mufasa) regarding learning time management:

"...because the mother is busy working, she only occasionally accompanies Fasa to repeat those lessons. And Fasa requests repetition voluntarily without coercion or prompting, so it's his pure interest..." (W.WM-01).

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 TPR Implementation and Vocabulary Acquisition Impact

The implementation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method at Group B RA Nururrahman Bekasi demonstrates that foreign language introduction in early childhood proceeds optimally when involving coordination between auditory commands and physical activity. The learning design, structured once weekly for 30 minutes, proved ideally aligned with the attention spans of 4-6 year old children, preventing cognitive fatigue while ensuring meaningful engagement (Pinter, 2017; Suryana et al., 2021). This finding supports Asher's theoretical foundation that TPR mimics the natural process of mother tongue acquisition, where children respond physically to language before producing verbal output (Asher, 2016; Fachrurrozi, 2016). The playful packaging of imperative instructions through group games like "Guru Berkata" transformed potentially rigid instructional commands into meaningful play activities, consistent with the play-based learning philosophy fundamental to early childhood education (Raju & Joshith, 2018; Sandoval et al., 2022).

The field observations demonstrated that the researcher's consistent provision of verbal command stimuli accompanied by explicit physical modeling significantly influenced Group B children's motor responses. This classical gross motor engagement successfully stimulated children's right brain hemispheres and created strong associative connections between linguistic sounds and tangible actions (Duan, 2021; Hafidah & Kusuma Dewi, 2020). The physical engagement approach resonates with the dual-coding theory, which posits that information processed through multiple sensory channels creates stronger, more redundant memory traces than single-channel processing (Setyoningsih, 2016; Yulita et al., 2024). Through simultaneous verbal command and physical demonstration, children not only heard vocabulary but also saw and performed corresponding actions, effectively binding linguistic meaning to embodied experience.

The observed vocabulary improvements specifically targeted action verbs (stand up, sit down, jump, run, walk) and concrete nouns via animal figurines and puppets, categories that are particularly amenable to physical demonstration (Karlina, 2024; Mariyam & Musfiroh, 2019). This vocabulary growth occurred because linguistic information was not merely memorized through conventional verbal repetition but was encoded into children's kinesthetic memory. When the body is simultaneously engaged in enacting word meanings, retention becomes more robust and durable. This finding aligns with the enactment effect in cognitive psychology, where actions performed during encoding enhance subsequent memory retrieval (Astutik & Aulina, 2017; Sandoval et al., 2022). The immediate comprehension indicator demonstrated that most children showed motor responses (jumping, clapping) immediately upon hearing instructions, bypassing mental translation processes.

This direct comprehension finding was powerfully confirmed by parent interviews (Informants 1 and 3), who reported children reflectively repeating vocabulary and movements at home with pure interest and enthusiasm. This transfer effect indicates that vocabulary acquisition is maximized when stimuli are concrete and functional for children's play world (Sariyati, 2017; Zainollah, 2016). The spontaneous home reproduction of classroom language and actions suggests that TPR creates learning experiences that are sufficiently meaningful and engaging to be self-motivating,

without requiring external reinforcement (Dewi & Fatmawati, 2022; Subekti et al., 2021). This aligns with self-determination theory, which identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key motivators for sustained engagement (Bruce et al., 2023; Fatimah et al., 2024).

4.2 Child Physical Activeness and Psychological Development

The TPR method appears to transform both children's physical response characteristics and psychological dispositions, creating a virtuous cycle of engagement and learning. The spontaneous physical responses demonstrated by children, such as Ananda Nadhif reflexively enacting jumping and running at home, confirm that physical engagement activates Gardner's Body-Kinesthetic Intelligence (Armstrong, 2018; Chiluisa Chicaiza & Guamán Luna, 2025). This intelligence type, often underserved in conventional classroom settings, is effectively harnessed by TPR's movement-centered approach. The active movement characteristic of early childhood Group B children is positively channeled by TPR to reduce learning burden, enabling new vocabulary absorption naturally through their muscle and body memory (Pangestu & Rohinah, 2018; Ratminingsih et al., 2023).

From an emotional perspective, observational findings indicated that Group B's affective classroom atmosphere was notably active, enjoyable, and free from psychological pressure. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, learning environments characterized by low anxiety, reduced fear of error, and minimal boredom are associated with reduced affective barriers to language input (Bahruddina & Febrianib, 2020; Hidayah, 2017). When the affective filter is low, foreign language input flows more readily into children's cognitive systems, facilitating acquisition. This theoretical framework explains why TPR-based learning, with its playful, game-like quality, creates conditions conducive to language acquisition and simultaneously builds children's confidence and initiative (Hafidah & Kusuma Dewi, 2020; Raju & Joshith, 2018).

Qualitative-empirical analysis also revealed differentiated emotional development outcomes based on children's unique characteristics. Fast learner type children like Ananda Tanisha demonstrated instant processing of visual-auditory recombination instructions and comprehension of compound commands ("pick the green doll") without extended mental translation. This rapid processing likely reflects superior working memory capacity and more efficient neural pathways for language processing (Pinter, 2017; Suryana et al., 2021). Conversely, quieter or more distractible children like Ananda Zakky, Nadhif, and Elfatih, while requiring initial adaptation and encouragement, nevertheless demonstrated good receptive understanding and accurate psychomotor responses. This finding underscores the importance of differentiated instruction that respects individual differences in learning pace and style (Armstrong, 2018; Mariyam & Musfiroh, 2019).

The pinnacle of TPR's psychological impact was evident in growing children's self-confidence, with six children (Tanisha, Fasa, Lita, Nadhif, Aisyah, and Athar) demonstrating sufficient courage to perform role reversal, leading the class as teachers. Role reversal represents a critical milestone in language acquisition, indicating that linguistic structures have transitioned from short-term memory to more permanent productive language mastery (Asher, 2016; Fachrurrozi & Mahyudin, 2016). This phenomenon demonstrates that TPR provides space for diverse learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) to flourish while simultaneously boosting young children's mental courage and leadership initiative (Karlina, 2024; Yulita et al., 2024). The emergence of such confidence

suggests that TPR's supportive, low-pressure environment enables children to take linguistic risks and claim ownership over their learning.

4.3 Obstacles and Strategies in TPR Implementation

Despite TPR's high effectiveness, the researcher identified several conditional obstacles influenced by individual developmental variation and external environmental factors. The most notable psychological obstacle was the silent period observed in Ananda Zakky, who demonstrated rapid physical response and word comprehension at school but was reluctant or embarrassed to vocalize at home. This phenomenon aligns with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which acknowledges that children in certain developmental stages often experience silent periods during which they build receptive language competence before they are ready for productive expression (Bahruddina & Febrianib, 2020; Raju & Joshith, 2018). Zakky's reluctance to speak at home does not indicate language acquisition failure but rather represents a natural phase in second language acquisition where comprehension precedes production (Hidayah, 2017; Subekti et al., 2021).

Cognitive processing delays emerged during transition from single to compound command execution. Observation data recorded that while 16 children moved instantly, three children (Zakky, Nadhif, and Elfatih) required longer mental translation processing. Early childhood brains require time to translate foreign language auditory symbols combined simultaneously into motor commands (Karlina, 2024; Pinter, 2017). This processing delay can be understood through Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory, where repeated physical modeling and adjusted command tempo function as scaffolding for children to achieve independent understanding (Suryana et al., 2021; Zainollah, 2016). The researcher's approach of providing individual re-modeling rather than correction or criticism aligns with Vygotsky's emphasis on supportive guidance within the child's zone of proximal development.

External obstacles centered on limited home reinforcement opportunities. The weekly gap between school sessions makes vocabulary retention highly dependent on home repetition. However, parental professional busyness (as in the cases of Mama Fasa and Mama Zakky, who work) creates external barriers, limiting synchronization of language stimulation between school and home environments (Achmad & Hidayati, 2025; Subekti et al., 2021). This finding highlights the importance of the frequency effect in second language acquisition, where more frequent exposure and repetition of vocabulary leads to stronger language memory traces (Hafidah & Kusuma Dewi, 2020; Sariyati, 2017). The interactive recall activities implemented at the beginning of each classroom session can be understood as efforts to address this limitation, creating memory refreshment opportunities that partially compensate for limited home reinforcement.

The obstacles identified in this study share similarities with challenges documented in other early childhood language acquisition research. Studies have consistently reported variations in children's processing speed, attention spans, and home support systems as factors influencing language learning outcomes (Duan, 2021; Mariyam & Musfiroh, 2019; Yulita et al., 2024). The strategies employed by the researcher, including individual re-modeling, adjusted instruction tempo, and interactive recall activities, have been validated by previous studies as effective scaffolding approaches for accommodating individual differences (Chiluisa Chicaiza & Guamán Luna, 2025; Karlina, 2024; Sandoval et al., 2022). Future research should explore technology-mediated

solutions, such as interactive video or mobile applications, to address the home reinforcement gap and provide more consistent exposure opportunities.

4.4 Broader Implications and Future Directions

The findings of this study have significant implications for early childhood language pedagogy in Indonesian Islamic kindergarten settings. First, they demonstrate that TPR can be effectively integrated within the existing curriculum structure of RA institutions without requiring extensive additional resources. The method's reliance on basic classroom equipment and the teacher's physical presence makes it highly accessible and implementable (Asher, 2016; Fachrurrozi & Mahyudin, 2016). Second, the positive outcomes observed across diverse learner characteristics suggest that TPR may be particularly suitable for mixed-ability classrooms, where children with different learning styles and developmental readiness can all participate meaningfully (Armstrong, 2018; Chiluisa Chicaiza & Guamán Luna, 2025). Third, the transfer of learning to home settings, despite limited parental reinforcement, indicates that TPR creates sufficiently engaging and memorable learning experiences that children voluntarily reproduce (Dewi & Fatmawati, 2022; Suryana et al., 2021).

For RA teachers, the study suggests the value of consistent TPR integration into daily routines, such as morning circle activities or transition periods, beyond dedicated English sessions. This increased frequency could enhance vocabulary retention and create stronger connections between English vocabulary and daily experiences (Mariyam & Musfiroh, 2019; Zainollah, 2016). Teachers should also be encouraged to develop creativity in combining physical commands with visual media support (such as flashcards or hand puppets) to maintain engagement for children with shorter attention spans. These approaches align with recommendations for differentiated instruction that addresses individual differences while maintaining whole-group engagement (Ratminingsih et al., 2023; Subekti et al., 2021).

For parents, the findings underscore the importance of providing reinforcement at home through playful interaction, even in the midst of professional busyness. Simple strategies, such as practicing physical instructions during daily routines (e.g., mealtime, bath time) or using English commands during family play, can supplement classroom learning without requiring substantial additional time commitments (Achmad & Hidayati, 2025; Fatimah et al., 2024). The study's finding that children spontaneously reproduce classroom learning at home suggests that parents' role may be less about direct instruction and more about creating opportunities and responding positively to children's initiatives (Pinter, 2017; Sariyati, 2017).

For policy makers and educational institutions, the study provides evidence supporting the inclusion of movement-based language teaching methods in early childhood curriculum frameworks. The observed dual benefits of vocabulary acquisition and positive psychological development suggest that TPR contributes not only to linguistic competence but also to broader developmental outcomes, including motor skills, social confidence, and engagement (Mariyam & Musfiroh, 2019; Suryana et al., 2021). Professional development programs that equip teachers with TPR methodology and its variants could represent a cost-effective investment in improving early childhood English instruction quality (Karlina, 2024; Ratminingsih et al., 2023).

Future research should explore several promising directions. Quantitative experimental studies could measure the comparative effectiveness of TPR versus conventional methods in a more controlled manner, providing statistical evidence for the method's efficacy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sugiyono, 2019). Longitudinal studies could examine the long-term retention of vocabulary learned through TPR and its impact on subsequent English proficiency development (Hafidah & Kusuma Dewi, 2020; Yulita et al., 2024). Additionally, research combining TPR with technology-based approaches, such as interactive videos or augmented reality, could investigate whether digital enhancements further improve vocabulary learning outcomes and address home reinforcement limitations (Dewi & Fatmawati, 2022; Subekti et al., 2021). Cross-cultural comparisons could examine whether TPR effectiveness varies across different linguistic and cultural contexts, informing culturally responsive adaptations (Achmad & Hidayati, 2025; Chiluisa Chicaiza & Guamán Luna, 2025).

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the comprehensive analysis of data, field findings, and in-depth discussion regarding the implementation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in improving English vocabulary acquisition among early childhood learners at RA Nururrahman Bekasi, several conclusions can be drawn. The implementation of TPR was systematically conducted through three main stages: modeling (teacher providing verbal commands with physical movement examples), demonstration (children responding to commands solely through body movements), and recombination through game variations such as "Guru Berkata" and role reversal with an optimal 30-minute session duration. This process was proven to significantly enhance children's English vocabulary mastery, particularly in the categories of action verbs and concrete nouns, through direct gross motor coordination that encoded meaning into long-term memory naturally without requiring rigid mental translation.

The application of the TPR method was associated with observable improvements in children's motor responses and body-kinesthetic intelligence development, reflected in children's active participation in following verbal instructions. Psychologically, the learning environment created was relatively free from pressure, and the allowance for children to pass through silent periods was consistent with the Affective Filter Hypothesis, where low anxiety levels were associated with children's openness to absorbing and responding to foreign language input. This triggered improvements in self-confidence, cheerfulness, and children's courage to actively participate and lead class activities through role reversal. Although the method provided broad benefits, several individual-conditional obstacles were identified, including variations in processing time among specific children who required longer mental translation and were more prone to distraction, as well as external barriers including limited parental time for home reinforcement. Effective solutions implemented included individual re-modeling, adjusted instruction tempo, and optimizing interactive recall activities during classroom sessions. The study recommends consistent integration of TPR in daily routines, enhanced teacher professional development, and active parental participation in home reinforcement to further optimize English vocabulary acquisition in early childhood settings.

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