

# Enhancing the Seventh Grade Students' Listening Achievement through Total Physical Response (TPR) Method at SMP Nurul Islam Jember

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## Abstract

*The aims of this research were to increase the students' listening skill achievement by using TPR method and to know how TPR method could help the students understand the listening task. The research design used was Classroom Action Research (CAR) that was conducted in two cycles. The research subjects were the students of VIIC class which were chosen purposively based on the result of the listening pre-test. The data was collected from the students' listening test and field notes. Then, the data of listening test was analyzed quantitatively using formula and the data of field notes were analyzed qualitatively in the form of description. The data result showed that TPR method could help the students improve their listening skill because of its three key features; imperative drills implementation, the use of real objects and demonstration, and increasing the students' enthusiasm.*

**Keywords :** *Listening, Teaching Method, TPR, Physical Response*

## INTRODUCTION

Listening is a prominent skill in language learning that should be developed before the other skills. It plays as receptive skill which requires students to listen to English speech as their source of language inputs. Hamouda [2] states that the key success to acquire a language is to receive the language inputs. Since listening provides language inputs therefore it is worthy of the spotlight in the teaching learning process.

In Indonesia, listening is one of the skills of English that the students need to master. Based on the school based curriculum (KTSP), the seventh' grade students need to be able to comprehend functional oral text and very short monologue in the form of descriptive and procedure to interact with people around. To achieve this, the students need to use their listening ability in order to understand what other people said. Moreover, in oral procedure text, the students are required to listen to a series of instructions. Therefore, the students' listening skill especially in listening to the instructions is urged to be developed.

However, learning listening is not easy for the foreign language students. Hamouda [2] says that understanding speech in foreign language is a difficult task for foreign language students. It happens because the EFL students rarely listen to English speech outside the class. In Indonesia too, English is rarely used in daily life. Stated by Lauder [6], English as one of the prominent of foreign languages to be taught in Indonesia does not have wide use in society. Therefore, it makes the students receive less language inputs which also affects on the students' ability in comprehending the English speech.

Regarding the situation mentioned previously, the researcher also found some problems dealing with listening skill acquisition in the seventh grade of SMP Nurul Islam

Jember especially in VIIC class. Based on the listening pre-test conducted by the researcher, VII C class had poor listening achievement as it was known that they had difficulties in understanding the teacher's instruction and to concentrate during the teaching learning process which made them could not develop their listening skill maximally.

Considering this problem, the teacher needs to find an appropriate teaching method to teach listening skill. One method that can help students foster their listening skill is by using Total Physical Response (TPR) method. Developed by Dr. James J. Asher, TPR attempts to teach language mainly through instructions and actions. It means that students are required to listen to the teacher's instruction then they have to respond it with physical actions.

According to Asher in Richards and Rodgers [7], there are three prominent promises of the learning theory of TPR. First, there is an innate bio-program for language learning which can improve one's first and second language development. Second, TPR optimizes the learning function of left-brain hemisphere and right-brain hemisphere. Third, the absence of stress as the affective filter can cause the success of language learning.

According to Wilson [4], there are three variations of TPR which are;

1. TPR-B (TPR with body) that consists of activities that can be done with body movements
2. TPR-O (TPR with object) is TPR activities that require real objects as the media
3. TPR-P (TPR with pictures) is TPR activities that use pictures as the language learning tools.

In this regard, the researcher combined two of the TPR variations in teaching listening skill in which the combination in each meeting was selected based on the topic used. For example, when the researcher taught the listening skill with bathroom objects, the researcher used the

combination of TPR-B because students were asked to move their body in responding to the instructions and TPR-O since the activities used the bathroom objects in the teaching learning process.

In the TPR classroom, the prominent activity used is imperative drill in which the students are trained to respond to the instructions for many times. By doing this, it is hoped that the students are able to get used to listen to English instructions and spontaneously respond to the instructions with physical actions. Because the students are asked to listen to the instructions and do the actions, therefore the students' roles in TPR classroom are as the listener and the performer. Meanwhile, the teacher has active and direct roles. The teacher is active in selecting materials because basically there is no basic textbook provided in TPR. Thus, the teacher is the source of the materials of TPR. In addition, the teacher directly leads the class because the teacher is the instructor of the class.

According to Widodo [10], there are some advantages of TPR method.

1. It is very fun since students enjoy it and it lifts the pace and mood.
2. It is very memorable because it helps students recognize phrases or words.
3. It is good for kinesthetic students who are required to be active in the class.
4. It can be used both in large or small classes as long as the teacher is capable of taking the lead.
5. It works well with mixed-ability classes as the physical actions get across the meaning effectively so that all students are able to understand and use the target language.
6. It does not need a lot of preparation or materials as long as the teacher is competent.
7. It is very effective with teenagers and young learners.
8. It also involves left and right-brained learning.

To apply TPR method, the researcher followed the procedures provided by Asher (in Richards and Rodgers, 2001:77) which are as follows.

#### 1. Review

It is a warm-up where each students are asked to move their body to respond to basic instructions.

#### 2. New commands

It is a stage where new words are introduced through instructions. After that, the teacher asks simple questions and the students respond it with actions.

#### 3. Role reversal

The students manipulate the teacher's behavior (as the instructor) after they are ready to speak.

#### 4. Reading and writing

In this stage, the teacher writes the instruction items on the whiteboard, speaks out the instructions, and illustrate them. The students listen as the teacher reads the materials.

### RESEARCH METHOD

The design of this study was Classroom Action Research (CAR). The area determination of this research

was SMP Nurul Islam Jember with VII C class as the research subjects which had 37 students enrolled. VII C class was chosen as the research subject because among five classes of the seventh grade, VII C had the lowest percentage of the number of the students who passed the listening pre-test. Listening test and field notes were used as the tools of gathering data. Then, the result of listening test was analyzed quantitatively by using the following formula:

$$E = \frac{n}{N} \times 100\%$$

Notes: E = the percentage of the students who got scores  $\geq 70$

n = the total number of the students who got scores  $\geq 70$

N = the total number of the students who followed the test while the result of field notes was analyzed qualitatively in the form of description. [1]

Based on the formula above, the researcher determined the indicator success of the research. The research would be considered successful if there were 75% students who got score  $\geq 70$ . Meanwhile, the data of field notes was analyzed qualitatively in the form of description.

### RESEARCH RESULTS

#### Cycle 1

The data of field notes in Cycle 1 was used to analyze the teaching learning process of listening skill by using TPR method. The field notes result in Cycle 1 showed that in review stage, the students could not develop their listening skill well as they could not get the intention when the teacher gave the instructions because they had not experienced TPR method before. The students often looked confused in the teaching learning process therefore it made the teacher had to explain again and again how TPR method was proceeded. As the consequence, it consumed the time allocation for the next stage, that was new commands.

In new commands stage, the students began to accustom to TPR method. The students were able to follow the teacher's instructions. Also, there were three noticeable progresses from the students during the new commands method that could improve their listening skill. They were as follows:

1. The students were able to understand the meaning of the instructions due to the use of demonstration and real objects.
2. The students were able to strengthen their understanding of the instructions and to memorize the instructions because of imperative drills, in which the students were drilled to practice the instructions over and over.
3. The students were able to enjoy the teaching method because they were motivated to do the listening task better than their friends as they could watch and judge whether or not their friends were able respond to the instructions correctly. This enthusiasm then made the students able to absorb the language inputs well.

However, even though in this stage the students showed good progresses in acquiring listening, the researcher still found some problems in the new commands stage. Some students often made mistakes in responding to the

instructions especially in distinguishing the opposite prepositions such as *right* and *left*, *above* and *under*, *in* and *on*, etc. Then the researcher found out that these mistakes happened because when the teacher introduced the new words, the teacher only demonstrated three times for each instruction which was not enough for the students' language inputs. Moreover, the time allocation for new commands were only 25 minutes which were not enough for the students to have a lot of instruction practices. For these reason, the students did not get enough language inputs. Another problem found was that the students often misbehaved when the teacher could not give equal attention to the whole class.

Meanwhile, in the role reversal stage, the students who played as the instructor often made pronunciation mistakes which made the other students who played as the listener and performer could not understand what the models said. Then, for the last stage, in reading and writing stage, the students only listened and watch as the teacher read aloud acted out the instruction items. Thus, the students did not participate actively in the teaching learning process. Therefore, the researcher considered that role reversal and reading and writing did not have significant contribution to the students' listening acquisition.

Nevertheless, the result of listening test showed that from 27 students who followed the test, there were 18 students who got score  $\geq 70$  (66.67%). This result did not achieve the standard criterion success of the research which means first cycle failed therefore the cycle was continued on the second cycle.

This failure happened because there were two weaknesses from Cycle 1, which were;

1. The students often looked confused during the teaching learning process because they had never experienced TPR method before. They could not get the teacher's intention thus it made the teacher have to explain again to the students how to proceed the listening class using TPR method.
2. As the consequence, it took more time than it was expected. It consumed the time allocation for the other stages especially new commands stage which was considered important in this study. Because of this reason, the students did not have enough time to explore their listening skill as the students got fewer language inputs and listening practices than they were planned.

Dealing with the weaknesses mentioned previously, the researcher and the English teacher discussed to find the solution and revised some aspects that caused the failures. The solutions was that giving additional time allocation in new command stage as much as 10 minutes (from 25 minutes into 35 minutes). The additional time was obtained by decreasing the time allocation from role reversal and reading writing stages as these two stages did not show great effect on the students' listening understanding. For example in the role reversal, the students were not good enough to play as the model or instructor since the language inputs they got were not sufficient enough. Their pronunciations were not good enough to make the other students understand what they said so in this part, the students could not develop their

listening skill well. While in the reading and writing stage, the students could not develop their listening skill effectively because the activity in this stage did not require them to participate actively.

### Cycle 2

The data of field notes in Cycle 2 was used to analyze the teaching learning process of listening skill by using TPR method. The field notes result in Cycle 2 showed that after revising the lesson plans by adding time allocation in new commands stage as much as 10 minutes, the students showed improvement of their listening skill especially in listening to the spoken instructions. It was shown that the students had quick and correct response after practicing the instructions over and over. Besides, the use of familiar objects (classroom objects) made the students easier to remember the utterance words. It was shown that students were easy to follow the spoken instructions after they watched the teacher's five times repetition of each instruction for demonstration. It happened because familiar objects (classroom objects) could help the students stimulate the students to understand the instruction meaning by capturing the teacher's demonstration and the objects showed.

Furthermore, the classroom situations in Cycle 2 were better than in Cycle 1. Instead of making noise and wondering around the class, the students listened to the teacher's instructions more carefully in order to be able to perform the instructions well. In addition, the students were more competitive as they did not look at their friends anymore when they responded to the teacher's instructions. Also, the students were more motivated in participating the teaching learning process as it was shown by there were more students who volunteered themselves to practice in front of the class.

So it can be concluded that in Cycle 2, the students showed the improvements of listening skill after they had been taught the listening skill by using Total Physical Response (TPR) method. Those improvements were: (1) students had correct and fast response to the spoken instruction after having done practicing the instructions over and over, (2) the students also showed improvement in participating the learning process which could maximize the students' language inputs.

Meanwhile, the listening test in Cycle 2 showed that from 21 students who followed the test, there were 20 students who got scores  $\geq 70$  (95.23%) which means it achieved the criterion success of the research. Therefore based on the result of listening test in Cycle 2, it was known that the students' listening test had improved. It was shown by the percentage of the students who got score  $\geq 70$  had increased from 66.67 % in Cycle 1 rose to 95.23% in Cycle 2. While the criterion success of the research was 75% of the students who followed the test got score  $\geq 70$ . Thus it can be said that research was successful, therefore the action was stopped.

## DISCUSSION

The classroom action research focused on the use Total Physical Response (TPR) method to enhance the seventh grade student's achievement at SMP Nurul Islam Jember.

The research conducted the research in two cycles because the result of the first cycle did not meet the criterion success of the research.

The result of the listening test in Cycle 1 did not meet the requirement of the criterion success of the research because the percentage of the students who passed the test were only 66.67%. It means that the actions given to the students in Cycle 1 were not successful. Therefore, the researcher and the English teacher reviewed and revised some aspects causing the failure that were applied in Cycle 2. Then, the researcher implemented the actions collaboratively with the English teacher in Cycle 2 following the revisions previously suggested. Next, the listening test was administered and the result showed that there were 20 of 21 students who followed the test got score  $\geq 70$  (95.23%). It means that the percentage increased from 66.67% in Cycle 1 to 95.23% in Cycle 2. It indicates that the action research succeed to enhance the seventh grade students' listening achievement at SMP Nurul Islam Jember.

The increasing of the percentage mentioned above proved that Total Physical Response (TPR) method could enhance the students' listening ability which happened due to three key features of TPR method that could strengthen the students' listening comprehension. Those features were (1) the listening skill was developed using imperative drills which involved physical activities, (2) TPR used real objects and demonstration to stimulate the students in understanding the meaning of the instructions, and (3) TPR made the students enthusiastic in participating the teaching learning process.

For the first feature, imperative drills activity which involved physical activities helped the students develop their listening comprehension because before the students were able to respond physically to the teacher's instruction, they had to listen to and understand the instructions first. Therefore it can be said that instruction can enhance students' listening skill.

In the second feature, TPR used demonstration and real objects to help the students understand the meaning of the instructions. Field[3] states that visual cues not only provide a contextual framework but also contribute to the way an utterance is interpreted. In this case, the students received aural input from the teacher in the form of instructions, then demonstration and real objects as the visual cues helped the students to create the meaning and transformed what they had heard and seen into new information. In addition, Vandergrift and Goh [9] also mention that contextual information are able to make the listeners easier to process the language input more efficiently thus it makes working memory resources available to process larger chunks of information. In conclusion, it can be said that the use of demonstration and real objects played as the contextual factor in TPR method contributed to the students' listening success.

The last feature, TPR method made the students enthusiastic in participating the teaching learning process which was a part of affective factor in TPR method that helped the students in achieving the listening success. This feature occurred because basically TPR method was set free from the stress. At the early of the stages, the students were

not asked to produce any productive skill first therefore they felt that TPR was easy to follow. Another reason is that sometimes when the students were doing the physical activities, they were laughing and smiling in which it created good atmosphere in the teaching learning process. As the result, the students were able to absorb the lesson well. Hence, it is true that the lower the stress, the greater the learning [7]. Also, the previous studies conducted by Nuurvita [5] showed that TPR method could help the students in developing their listening skill and also engage the students' participation in teaching learning process.

Aside of the three key features mentioned previously, the researcher also found some positive improvements dealing with the students' behaviors during this study. First, the students were more confident in performing the listening task as they did not cheat or look at their friends anymore in order to respond to the teacher's instructions. Second, the students' were more competitive to do better in performing the instructions because if they made a mistake, it would be seen by the other students which made them feel embarrassed.

However, in this study it was found that Total Physical Response (TPR) method had its own weaknesses. First, TPR took a lot of time in order to make the students understand as it needed a lot of the instruction practices since this method emphasized on the students' language input acquisition. Second, TPR method was not suitable to be used in a large classroom because it was found that the students liked to move around the class during the teaching learning process. Therefore, it is suggested for the English teacher to give longer time allocation for new commands stage if he wants to enhance the students' listening skill through TPR method. Also, it is suggested to apply TPR method in smaller classroom in order to make the English teacher manage the students' behavior easily.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the result of the data analysis and discussion in this research, it can be concluded that;

- a. The use of Total Physical Response (TPR) method could improve the seventh grade students' listening achievement at SMP Nurul Islam Jember. The improvement can be seen from the percentage of the students who got score at least 70 as many as 66.67% in Cycle 1 rose to 95.23% in Cycle 2.
- b. Total Physical Response (TPR) method could help students to understand the listening task due to the three key features of TPR method that influenced on the listening success. Those key features were; (1) the listening skill was developed using imperative drills which involved physical activities, (2) TPR used real objects and demonstration to stimulate the students in understanding the meaning of the instructions, and (3) TPR made the students enthusiastic in participating the teaching learning process.

As the result of this research shows that the use of Total Physical Response (TPR) method could improve the students' listening achievement at SMP Nurul Islam Jember,

the researcher proposes some suggestions for the English teacher, for the students, and for the future researcher.

As for the English teacher, the researcher suggests to use Total Physical Response (TPR) method as the alternative method in developing the students' listening skill. The researcher also suggested that if the English teacher wants to apply TPR method, it is better to be used in a smaller classroom. Or, if it is applied in a big classroom, it is wiser to have additional teacher or assistant that can help the English teacher control the students.

For the students, the researcher suggests the students to be actively involved in the teaching learning process because the use of Total Physical Response (TPR) method can help them in enhancing their listening skill.

For the future researchers who have similar problems in teaching listening skill, the researcher suggests to use this research results as the information and a reference to conduct further research using Total Physical Response (TPR) method on teaching foreign language especially dealing with listening skill.

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