

**EFFECTS OF TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE STORYTELLING ON
IRANIAN STUDENTS' VOCABULARY ACQUISITION**

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To my mom as my model in all my life who has been to glory. .

To my kind father and brother for their encouragementt and motivation, and to my husband and my lovely kid for their sincere help and accompany during my studies

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of total physical response storytelling (TPRS) on foreign language students' English Language vocabulary acquisition. It was an experimental research design. This study was conducted on one class of thirty students. The students were taught for two weeks **using the TPRS method in their vocabulary lessons**. In this research, **the students' receptive** knowledge which is the dependent variable was measured using **receptive** vocabulary test (**pre-test and post-test**). **The Paired Sample T-Test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test**. Besides that, the attitude of students **towards different** strategies applied in TPRS **was also** surveyed **using questionnaires**. The findings show that TPRS has led to increase in the knowledge of vocabulary. In addition, it **is also found** that students have **positive views towards** the role of **different** techniques used in TPRS on their vocabulary acquisition. **Thus, it can be concluded that** TPRS has significantly contributed in increasing the knowledge of vocabulary **among** students.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TPRS	-	Total Physical Response Storytelling
SLA	-	Second Language Acquisition
CLT	-	Communicative Language Teaching
CI	-	Comprehensive Input

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter starts with the background in which the existing problems related to learning English as a foreign language in Iran are stated. Besides, the importance of learning vocabulary and its contribution in reading achievement is highlighted. In last part of the background, Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS) is introduced as a potential problem solver. After that, in statement of problem, the gaps related to application of TPRS as a new teaching method in teaching vocabulary is stated. The first problem is mentioned with regard to the fact that there are different views toward efficiency of this method as a method taking advantage of both input and output on enhancing the receptive knowledge of vocabulary. Besides, referring to the point that implicit learning of vocabulary through context can be difficult for foreign language learners, the researcher has addressed the need for research to be done on investigating this method of teaching to find out how it leads to vocabulary acquisition.

After that, the conceptual framework on which the research is carried out is proposed. The framework is shown to consist of three important parts including the application of TPRS, its principles and aspects of vocabulary acquisition related to TPRS. Having explained the framework, the researcher states her objective and research questions. The next part named scope shows the focus of study on investigating gaining the receptive type of vocabulary in secondary school students.

Finally, in significance of the study, it is stated that this study is useful to students as it can increase their motivation to learn English considering the potentiality of creating fun during teaching. Besides, its importance to curriculum developers is highlighted.

1.1 Background of the Study

English in Iran is considered as a foreign language. Students are not needed to communicate with each other using the foreign language. However, the most important need is to achieve the ability to be fluent in reading comprehension. Reading proficiency has been the main purpose of language learning which is emphasized by the curriculum designers in the Education Department of Iran (Jahangard, 2007). In Iran, students start studying English in secondary school at the age of 12, and every year they have one subject as English course. However, when they enter the university and majored in different courses, they have to read some academic materials in English. Although their success during the undergraduate period depends on how fluent they are in comprehending the texts, they usually fail in achieving this purpose (Ghorbani, 2008).

Many foreign language adults, who experienced studying a foreign language in schools, complain about the inefficiency of the teaching systems. In fact, these adults are not able to apply what they have learned in the target language and they are not satisfied with the education that they received over the studying years in school (Ghorbani, 2008). Through the researcher's personal experience of teaching for children and teenagers, it is noticed that most students have difficulties in remembering vocabularies. Besides, it is noticed that they forget many of the vocabularies that they learned in their secondary and high schools. It has been observed that vocabularies are taught using traditional methods of teaching vocabulary. The traditional ways applied in teaching vocabularies include translating the words, giving definitions and looking up the words in dictionaries. The traditional way of presenting new words and making students to memorise them is

not an effective way to help students to increase the knowledge of vocabulary (Gersten and Bakar, 2000).

In this research, the researcher is focusing on teaching vocabulary. This is because increasing the number of vocabularies that a learner knows can lead to improving his reading comprehension (Nation, 1990). There has been a lot of research over the previous years and they all attempted to show the relation between vocabulary acquisition and its effect on reading comprehension. Nation (1990) referred to the role of vocabulary as an indicator of reading ability of learners. In addition, Joshi (2005) and Qian (2002) claim that well developed vocabulary is one of the main factors that lead to reading comprehension. One of the major reasons that causes problem in comprehending texts is shortage of knowledge in vocabularies. It is believed that many difficulties in reading comprehension are related to lexical problems and these problems prevent the learner from having a perfect comprehension (Haynes and Baker, 1993). Vocabulary learning plays a major role in language learners' success in acquiring the foreign language vocabularies.

The concept of storytelling in the process of language learning has emerged as a potential problem solver for this issue. Total Physical Response Storytelling was proposed by Ray in the early 1990 and Ray followed the findings of Ashar who developed Total Physical Response method of teaching. Within this method, the value of storytelling as a means of providing the students with large amount of comprehensible input is considered. It provides a meaningful context for vocabulary to be used. In fact, this puts the language into a meaningful context, thus helping learners to retain the learnt vocabulary long. According to Young (2008), storytelling plays a significant role in retaining information. Increase in the ability to retain information can lead to a better understanding of concepts and a better memorization of the new vocabularies.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Considering the fact that in TPRS method of teaching, the teacher takes advantage of circling technique in which the teacher asks students a lot of questions to make students participate in the process of storytelling, TPRS can be considered as a combination of Input and Output or Modified Input method of instruction (Ray and Seely, 2009). In fact, teachers are allowed to ask a lot of questions during the process of storytelling to make sure students have understood the concepts, and it results in slight levels of modified input which is not found in similar input based methods such as Extensive Reading.

There are two issues with regard to application of TPRS. The first issue is related to existence of controversial results on effectiveness of Modified Input based methods on vocabulary acquisition. In fact, former studies have shown controversial results. The first group of researches investigating the role of Input based instruction on vocabulary acquisition of English Foreign Language (EFL) learners found that the kind of instruction, in which students have opportunity for both input and output lead to vocabulary acquisition better than only input based methods. (Nagata, 1999; Shintani, 2011). Results of these studies indicate that Modified Input instruction which is considered as combination of input and output is more effective in vocabulary acquisition of young learners.

The second group of research on receptive knowledge of EFL students has shown that there was no difference in receptive knowledge of vocabulary as a result of being treated by either Input based methods or Modified input methods (De la Funte, 2002). Other groups of researches have indicated that Pre modified Input (Input only) leads to acquisition of more words (Ellis, 1995). Since there have been controversial results on effect of combination of Input and Output on vocabulary acquisition, it is necessary to investigate the effect of this new method of teaching on EFL students. Therefore, a study on how teaching story telling can promote students vocabulary can help teachers to determine the efficiency of new teaching methods in enhancing students' vocabulary acquisition. The purpose of this study is to describe

the effects of a newer methodology of language teaching called TPRS on students' ability to become familiarized with key vocabularies.

The second issue which calls for research on investigating the effect of TPRS on vocabulary acquisition is related to the fact that although acquiring vocabulary incidentally through reading in context facilitates retention of vocabulary in memory (Nation, 1990); guessing, from context is considered as a complex and difficult strategy. Based on what is stated by nation indicating that successful guessing in context occurs when about 95% of the lexical items in a text are already known. It can be said that foreign language students have less vocabulary than sufficient for successful learning in context. In fact, explicit strategies of teaching vocabulary are suggested to be added to learning in context (Stahland and Fairbanks ,1986).

With regard to the above point, if TPRS wants to be effective in enhancing the acquisition of vocabulary to foreign language learners, there should be a research investigating if TPRS is taking advantage of different strategies in process of teaching a new vocabulary. In order to solve this problem, this research has considered the importance of attitude of students toward a new method of teaching. In fact, this research has considered the point that a strongly motivated student can acquire the language better than a student who is not motivated (Harmer, 1991). Therefore, this study investigated the perceptions of students toward this method to identify the aspects and strategies related to storytelling that contribute in enhancing the vocabulary acquisition in secondary school students.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

This study uses a conceptual framework to illustrate the concepts that underline the study. Through reviewing of literature, the researcher draws a relation between application of TPRS and its role on vocabulary acquisition. The presented framework consists of two important components. One component addresses the

TPRS and the other shows aspects of vocabulary acquisition which are related to TPRS.

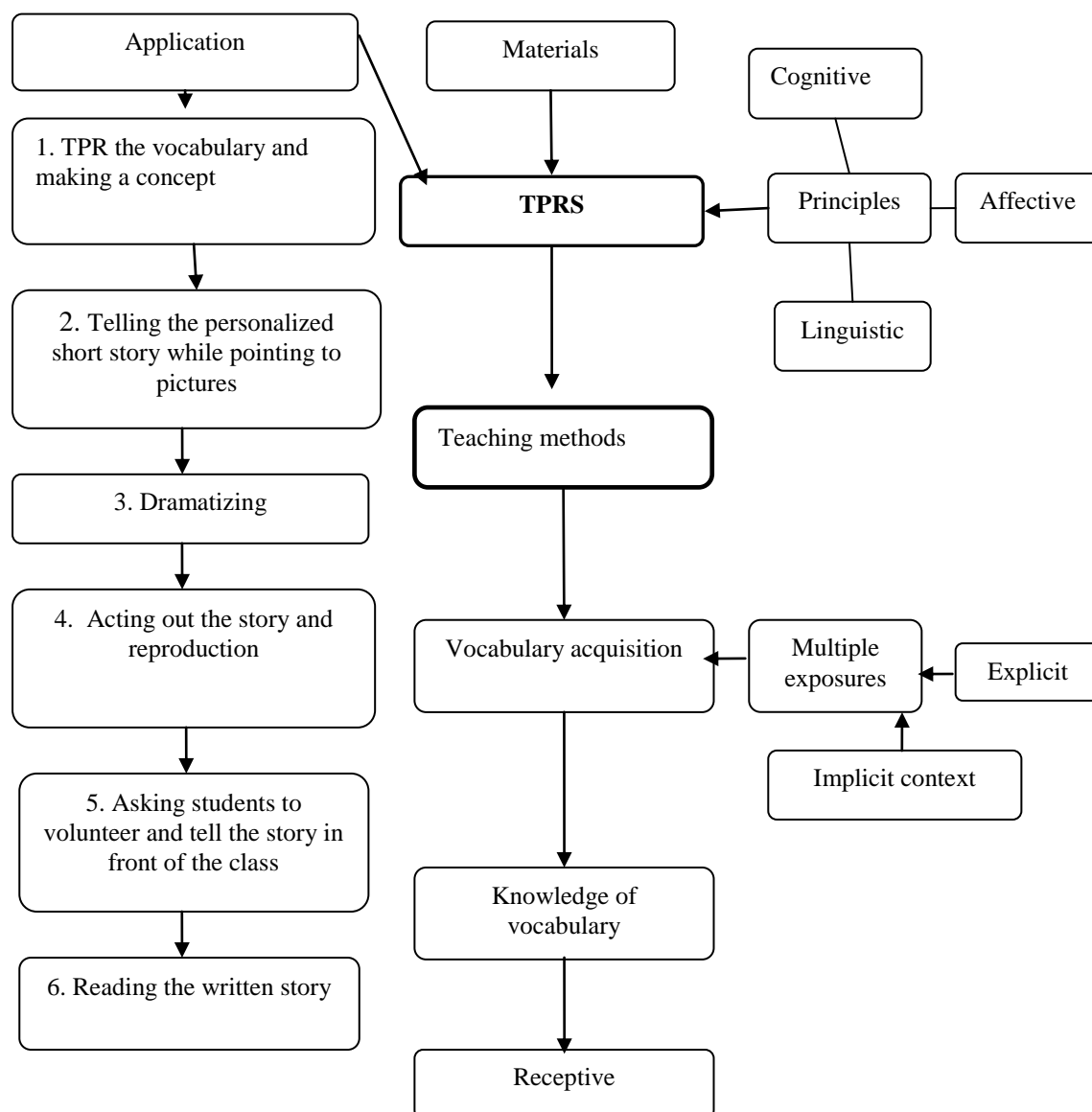


Figure1.1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

In case of the principles, there are three parts including; cognitive, affective and linguistic principles. On the other hand, the aspects of knowledge of vocabulary which directed the researcher to identify such relation include the necessity of Multiple Exposure through context and explicit instruction leading to retention of knowledge of vocabulary. Cognitive principles refer to the elements that affect the processing of mind. The first cognitive principle which is evident in story telling is Meaningful Learning. It is a mental process by which new pieces of information will

be linked into existing information. According to Brown, connection between these pieces of information facilitates the retaining of individual forms. Stories which are applied in TPRS develop the memory structures which help retention of new vocabularies.

One of the main linguistic principles which are exploited by TPRS is taking advantage of Comprehensible Input. Based on this principle, everybody can pick up the language by receiving the messages. The main important factor is that teacher provides the learner with a lot of input and data. It insists on making the input as simplified as possible. For example, reading passages and stories are good sources of data. Affective principles describe the factors that affect students' anxiety and motivation. Affective Filter Hypothesis which is proposed by Krashen is one of these principles. According to Krashen, the environment in which students feel safe leads to higher amount of learning. In case there is fun in class, Affective Filter is low, so more information reaches to brain, and if the learning is boring, affective filter is high and receiving information is hindered. Consequently, the learners retain less amount of vocabulary.

Based on vocabulary learning hypothesis (Nagy and Herman,1985) vocabularies are learned over a gradual procedure through repeated exposure to new words in different contexts and remembering a new word requires ten to twelve exposures to that new word, thus TPRS provides frequent storytelling and reading opportunities. This can be a source of multiple exposure of new vocabulary. Among four stages of vocabulary acquisition that Nation (2007) theorized, TPRS is focusing more on receptive generative stage of vocabulary acquisition. In fact, another aspect of vocabulary acquisition that is addressed in this study on TPRS is the distinction that is made between receptive and productive vocabularies. Receptive vocabulary of a person is larger than its productive knowledge (Clark, 1993). This focuses on the receptive knowledge of vocabulary and explains how storytelling addresses the receptive and reproduction aspect of knowledge of vocabulary of students.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are as follows:

- 1 To investigate the influence of TPRS on students' vocabulary acquisition in teaching vocabulary in the classroom
- 2 To explore students' perception on the influence of TPRS method of teaching on vocabulary acquisition

1.5 Research Questions

The research aims to find answers to the following research questions.

- 1 What is the influence of TPRS method used in teaching vocabulary on Iranian secondary school students' vocabulary acquisition?
- 2 What are the students' perceptions on TPRS method of teaching in influencing their vocabulary acquisition?

1.6 Scope of Study

This study is conducted to find out the performance of students in acquiring vocabulary through TPRS method of language teaching. It finds out whether teaching vocabularies through stories is able to motivate students to acquire vocabulary .This research is carried out in one of the secondary schools in Iran.

1.7 Significance of the Study

With regard to results gained from this study, students, teachers and Ministry of Education of Iran can benefit. The first benefit of the project refers to the point that TPRS can be a means to promote students' vocabulary acquisition. Students can apply this techniques and gain more confidence in comprehending text as well acquiring vocabulary through comprehending more concepts, they will be able to acquire more vocabularies. They may also acquire incidental communicative competence which can be taken indirectly from the stories.

It is also beneficial in terms of increasing motivation. Many Iranian and other foreign language students lack motivation to study English. This is because they do not have to use the language outside their classrooms. So TPRS in teaching vocabulary can be explained as one way to increase secondary school students' motivation to acquire second language vocabulary. When students detect that their knowledge of vocabulary is expanding, they receive a lot of motivation (Lieb, 2006).

The study also provides some insights to the Ministry of Education of Iran to give provision for storytelling to be applied in school language curriculum because TPRS can be adopted as a teaching method in schools. This can lead to innovative and effective means of teaching vocabulary to students. The study has also provided the teachers with a direction showing in which context TPRS can be employed successfully and in which ways it can be improved.

1.8 Definition of Terms

In the context of this study, there are several distinct terms and concepts that are important and they are defined as follows:

TPR Storytelling: The concept of TPRS in this study refers to introducing items in a meaningful manner instead of teaching list of vocabularies and grammar

rules .By providing the students with stories, it prepares a context in which vocabulary and grammar can be repeatedly introduced and applied. It emphasizes on making the input understandable to learners (Asher, 2001).

Secondary School Students: Secondary school students in this study refer to foreign language learners at the age of 14 who are in grade three in a junior high school. They start learning English at the age of 12 and they take one compulsory English subject every year.

Vocabulary Acquisition: The concept of vocabulary acquisition in this study refers to acquiring the receptive level of knowledge of vocabulary by multiple exposures of students to different contexts that are in the form of storytelling (Colins, 2010).

1.9 Conclusion

By exposing learners to vocabularies repeatedly in different types of comprehensible contexts such as teachers narrating the story and students retelling the story to each other, the new information can be internalized, moreover new vocabularies can be picked up and they can be linked to the former body of knowledge of the learner. Thus, a study of how TPRS method is used in language classroom can provide insights in how a particular teaching method can help to enhance students' vocabulary acquisition.

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