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## Exploring Students Engagement in Learning Vocabulary through The Use of Total Physical Response (TPR) Method

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### ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore student involvement in vocabulary learning through the Total Physical Response (TPR) method. The TPR method combines physical movement with language learning processes, which are believed to improve student memory and understanding. This research uses a qualitative approach to the design of case studies. The study collected data through observations, interviews, and pre- and post-test vocabulary tests. The results showed that students showed positive engagement, both behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. Significant improvements in vocabulary skills also increased, as seen from the average student vocabulary test score after the application of the TPR method, from 38.55 on the pretest to 81.11 on the posttest. Observations and interviews revealed that students were more active and involved in the learning process, showing a higher interest and positive response to TPR methods. In addition, physical movements associated with vocabulary learning help students memorize and understand vocabulary better.

## 1. Introduction

In learning English, vocabulary is very important. According to Dweikat et al. (2023), learning words has the potential to improve a person's ability to think, communicate thoughts and ideas either verbally or in writing, and share information. The more vocabulary students master, the better they understand English. As stated by Widiyarti and Fitriani (2023), the greater the number of words students have, the more effectively they will be able to express themselves in writing or speaking, as well as comprehend text and audio. According to Widyatmoko et al. (2023), the ability to master vocabulary is a valuable skill for utilizing language words in a manner that suits our interests and requirements. It's important to understand the vocabulary because the meaning can change depending on the situation. Engaging students in activities that require them to use new vocabulary helps them internalize words and understand their usage. Pustika

(2019), as quoted by Wahyudin et al. (2021), states that teachers should give English vocabulary to their students. In teaching vocabulary to students, it is important for teachers to choose approaches, strategies, and learning media that can make English learning more interactive. In addition to choosing the right learning methods, student engagement is also crucial to improving learning outcomes.

Student engagement provides a broad overview of how students act, think, and feel in a learning environment. Therefore, engagement in the learning process is very important. Bloom (1956) defines student engagement in three dimensions—behavioral, emotional, and cognitive—as quoted by Trowler (2010). Behavioral engagement is defined as when students actively participate and undertake actions that help them understand and acquire knowledge in the classroom. Xiao and Zhang (2023) quoted Fredericks et al. (2004), who stated that students' participation in class measures their behavioral engagement. Behavioral engagement can assist classroom management in creating a more positive and productive learning environment for all involved.

Emotional engagement in learning is crucial because students who have emotional engagement with lessons will be more motivated, show greater interest in lessons, and have better academic results. (Dubey et al., 2023). Cognitive engagement is a measure of how interested, attentive, and mentally engaged students are in learning activities in the classroom. This shows the student's level of understanding (Khan & Haider, 2023). Cognitive engagement encourages students to solve problems, think critically, and analyze data. According to Gray and DiLoreto (2016), as quoted in Dubey et al. (2023), high student engagement can increase academic productivity as well as student happiness and their learning. Students involved in the learning process tend to have higher levels of motivation and self-efficiency, which will result in increased academic success. Fredericks et al. (2019) quoted Hiver et al. (2020) for their findings linking high student engagement to numerous positive outcomes in education. As a result, student engagement is essential for improving learning and teaching.

Total Physical Response (TPR) is an approach that recognizes the importance of physical activity in the process of language acquisition. The TPR method facilitates vocabulary learning. Acurio & Rivadeneira (2023) stated that in the TPR method, the teacher's role is to give instructions to the student using some sort of bodily movement, and the student's role is to physically respond to the instructions. Dewi and Fatmawati (2022) stated that TPR is an effective language learning method that offers numerous advantages to students in various capacities. This allows them to participate in educational activities and enhances their retention of vocabulary and grammar structures through physical activity (Xie, 2021). It enables students to engage in educational activities and facilitates the learning of vocabulary and grammatical structure through physical activity. By cultivating an engaging and pleasant classroom environment, TPR can improve student motivation and performance in language studies. TPR is important because it encourages students' experiential learning and accommodates their diverse learning preferences. Hayadi (2023) demonstrated that the TPR method is

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highly effective in helping students learn vocabulary. This is because students are required to respond to their teacher's instructions in addition to simply listening to them. As a result, this method is one of the techniques used to learn a language, particularly vocabulary expansion.

Gayanti and Satriani (2020) conducted research that focused on identifying an increase in the vocabulary of Total Physical Response (TPR). The research employed qualitative methodologies. The research findings indicate that using TPR can significantly improve students' vocabulary. Juwita (2019) conducted the research with the primary objective of determining the effectiveness of TPR in enhancing students' vocabulary mastery through the use of objects. The study employs the classroom action method in two cycles, Cycle I and Cycle II. The students' vocabulary mastery increased from 56.4% to 80.7%, as indicated by the research results. Rahmatullah et al. (2023) investigated whether TPR approaches were useful for teaching vocabulary. Qualitative approaches were utilized.

The study's findings indicate that TPR approaches can assist students in enhancing their vocabulary; the majority of students agree. Additionally, Ningrum and Ma'rifah (2021) The study's goal is to find out how students perceive the teaching of English vocabulary in virtual courses using the Total Physical Response (TPR) approach. According to the study's findings, students are positive about using the TPR approach to acquire English vocabulary in a virtual classroom setting. Furthermore, implementing this strategy improves student perception throughout class and increases language acquisition. In this study, the researchers emphasized analyzing student participation in vocabulary learning through the use of the TPR approach, a shift from their earlier focus on the implementation process and students' impressions of this method.

## **2. Methodology**

This research used a qualitative approach. The study employed a case study design by Yin (2014). The researchers conducted the study in the eighth grade of an Indonesian Islamic secondary school. This study used purposive sampling to choose a sample of six subjects. Tests, interviews, and observations are among the methods utilized in data collection strategies. To collect data, researchers used a variety of instrumentations, such as student worksheets, observation sheets, and interview guidelines. The researchers used a thematic examination of six phases, sourcing from Braun and Clarke's (2006) as quoted in Kiger and Parvio (2020).

Data familiarization is the initial step of data analysis, during which the researchers read and reviews the data to become familiar with its contents. The collected data set consisted of interview transcript and a student worksheet. The second step, initial coding generation, involves applying codes representing concepts, ideas, or phenomena to specific data segments. In the third step, analyze, combine, compare, and classify related codes in order to find potential themes through a topic search. The fourth step entails reviewing the themes, determining their relationships with their subordinate components, and

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reevaluating the broader context in which each theme operates during data collection. The fifth step involves identifying and labeling the major themes. After that, create a thorough report outlining each theme and providing instances or quotes from the source material to support it. Report production is the final step. The researchers complete the thematic analysis report.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### *Students' Engagement on The Use of Total Physical Response (TPR) Method*

In this study, the focus of the research is to find out student engagement towards the use of the TPR method in vocabulary learning. Researchers used tests, and semi-structured interviews to collect data on student engagement. The behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement categories represent the three categories into which the researchers categorized their data. Student engagement is presented below.

#### *Students' Behavioral Engagement on The Use of TPR Method in Learning Vocabulary*

The TPR technique of vocabulary learning encourages students to engage in more active learning, which improves student behavioral engagement. Student behavior in the classroom and participation in the learning process are components of behavioral engagement. In interviews, students said that they started to participate more actively in class. In the following interview, the students shared their thoughts.

***"I became more active in class because I was usually quiet. However, now I am more active in moving because there are activities responding to teacher instructions using body movements individually and collectively and discussing with other friends." (Student 1)***

This method entails physical activity, in which students must move their bodies individually and in groups to respond to teacher instructions. This demonstrates that the TPR technique can increase student participation in vocabulary acquisition through the use of the TPR technique is possible. Using the TPR approach increases student involvement and participation in all subjects, according to Nguyen et al. (2021). Through the use of body language, the TPR approach enables students to actively participate in their instructors' teachings, both individually and in groups with friends. Yuquilem Mulalo (2024) asserts that including movement and physical activities in language instruction can boost student engagement and foster an interactive learning environment. Consequently,

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Total Physical Response (TPR) facilitates the environment of interactive learning. Throughout the interview, additional students shared their viewpoints.

*“Previously, I was shy and quiet in class because I struggled to understand the lesson. However, now that **the learning is easy to understand**, I don't feel embarrassed at all, so **I've become more active.**” (Student 2)*

The statement illustrates that using a TPR promotes students' engagement and efficacy in the learning process, especially when they get clear and easy instructions. Chaniago et al. (2021), in Yaqin and Yasir (2024), asserted that students found it challenging to understand English quickly and that an intuitive guide was necessary to ensure that they understood the meaning of the conversation. This implies that a deeper comprehension of the subject matter could potentially boost student engagement, leading to more active participation in class discussions and activities. Furthermore, students demonstrate positive behavior during the lesson. Other students voiced their viewpoint during the interview.

*“**I followed the teacher's guidance** because it was my first experience with the TPR approach to learning English, which I found to be **easier to use**. Consequently, I got **interested and developed a sense of curiosity.**” (Student 4)*

*“**I actively follow all of the teachers' directions** and never ignore him, as the **instructions provided by the teachers are simple and easily understandable.**” (Student 2)*

The student's statement does not demonstrate inappropriate conduct. TPR-facilitated physical movements and body integration in learning can also lead to positive behavior participation. This method makes students more engaged and joyful in the learning process. Zur and Selfieni (2022) attested that implementing the TPR method in the classroom boosts student engagement, piques their curiosity, and presents them with fresh learning opportunities. Students who actively participate in the learning process and feel included are more likely to be cooperative and less inclined to reject the lesson's direction.

***Students' Emotional Engagement on The Use of TPR Method in Learning Vocabulary***

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The use of the TPR method for learning vocabulary may produce strong emotional engagement from students in the classroom environment. These emotions include interest, happiness, boredom, sadness, anxiety, and others. The students expressed increased enthusiasm while engaging in vocabulary learning through the TPR method. The following statements are the students' statements as presented in the interviews.

***"I feel enthusiastic because learning becomes more fun with movement and lots of laughter; besides that, it feels like learning while playing with other friends." (Students 1)***

***"Increase enthusiasm because learning becomes easier" (Students 3)***

According to the statements, students had a positive and engaging class experience, as well as enthusiasm to study. Arofah et al. (2023) reported that students were more engaged and enthusiastic when they were using the total physical response. Students believed that learning was becoming easier and more interesting, leading to an increase in their excitement. They also actively followed the teacher's orders and answered the teacher's questions. Using the TPR method boosts students' enthusiasm and encourages their interest in the learning process, according to Zur and Selfieni's (2022) study. This illustrates how an enjoyable setting that incorporates physical activity and social interaction with others can significantly increase students' excitement for learning. Furthermore, several students assert that they have never felt anxious when learning vocabulary using a TPR approach. In the ensuing interview, the students shared the following statements:

***"I never worry or get bored during learning. I feel braver when practicing in front". (Students 3)***

***"I am never anxious or bored. I feel braver when I practice" (Students 5)***

According to the statement, students who actively engage in their studies do not experience boredom or anxiety. Students feel more brave and confident when they practice a sentence using body movements in front of the classroom. Salma & Wafa (2024) stated that the entertaining TPR method makes students less bored during study. Farisatama (2023) states that the TPR method is useful in reducing students' tension and anxiety levels, which makes studying simpler. It is also enjoyable. By using this strategy, students might have increased bravery and confidence when responding to the teacher's instructions with physical movements. In the following interview, another student explains their motivation for using the TPR method in vocabulary learning. Other students participated in the interview and shared their statements.

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*“Yes, I feel motivated because learning vocabulary using the TPR method is simple to understand and remember.”*  
(Students 4)

*“Yes, I am feeling motivated because I have learned to use it effectively. The TPR method is easy and fun.”* (Students 6)

Based on students' statements, the TPR approach demonstrates their motivation to learn language. Students find this method simple and enjoyable, as well as easy to understand and apply. Wulandari et al. (2023) state that when students sense joy, excitement, and happiness, the TPR technique can promote their motivation to participate actively in their vocabulary learning. Jazila and Megawati (2024) reported that they are more enthusiastic and motivated to engage in the English language teaching process in the classroom by using TPR method. Because they view this method as enjoyable and successful, it raises students' motivation levels for their academic work.

#### ***Students' Cognitive Engagement on The Use of TPR Method in Learning Vocabulary***

The TPR method allows students to effectively demonstrate their cognitive engagement in vocabulary acquisition. Students that participate in TPR engage in critical analysis and active learning, which improves their language skills. This research demonstrates the impact of the TPR method on students' vocabulary comprehension as well as their level of active engagement and critical thought. Using the TPR method to learn vocabulary, a student stated that using the TPR method in learning vocabulary increases their understanding. The interview stated the following statement from the student:

*“Increased, as evidenced by my growing memory. remember a lot of new vocabulary. Additionally, I feel like my test scores have improved.”* (Student 2)

*“Increased, as before, when learning vocabulary just by memorizing. However, with TPR, you learn vocabulary through body movements so that you remember it and don't forget it.”* (Student 4)

The TPR method for vocabulary learning significantly influences students' cognitive engagement. Students perceive an improvement in their ability to remember new vocabulary, which consequently enhances their vocabulary skills. Practice in the classroom through physical activity can enhance students' learning,

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motivation, and memory (Ruz et al., 2019). The use of TPR methods by Lincoln (2024) demonstrated an increase in student scores and vocabulary comprehension. According to Freire (2023), the TPR method assists students in the development of motor skills, creativity, the capacity to think and solve problems rapidly, and the improvement of vocabulary through movement. An increase in student test results also demonstrates the value of applying an efficient TPR strategy to improve vocabulary comprehension. Through the use of body language, this method more effectively improves vocabulary understanding. Researchers evaluate students' language comprehension and word-use skills through vocabulary exams. Researchers administer a pretest and a posttest during two sessions. The table below displays the test results:

Table 1. (Pre-test and post-test scores)

NO	SHORT MESSAGE		NOTICE	
	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST
1	42	72	54	70
2	34	82	66	70
3	30	82	36	82
4	36	76	28	80
5	28	84	54	84
6	34	88	60	84
7	54	94	72	96
8	34	74	36	72
9	46	92	68	92
10	38	72	54	70
11	56	94	64	94
12	28	76	30	80
13	34	80	32	80
14	36	76	30	80
15	34	74	40	72
16	46	78	46	80
17	48	92	74	92
18	36	74	36	80
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>694</b>	<b>1.460</b>	<b>888</b>	<b>1.448</b>
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>38.55</b>	<b>81.11</b>	<b>49.33</b>	<b>80.44</b>

Implementation of the TPR method in vocabulary learning has produced positive results in terms of student improvement, as shown by the increase in the average test value of the vocabulary in the short message material from 38.55 in the pretest to 81.11 in the posttest, as well as the average pretest value in the notice material of 49.33 while the average posttest value increased to 80.44. This demonstrates the method's effectiveness in improving students' vocabulary skills.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the application of the TPR method shows a positive level of student engagement in vocabulary learning. First, student behavioral engagement involves actively participating in activities related to the application of TPR methods in the classroom. During learning, students also show a positive attitude by following



each teacher's instructions well and timely and not showing negative behavior during learning. Secondly, students show an interest in vocabulary learning using the TPR method, indicating emotional engagement. Students also expressed that using the TPR method to learn vocabulary brings them immense enjoyment. TPR improves student motivation and interest in learning vocabulary; in addition to making learning more enjoyable, TPR has also made learning easier. Finally, the TPR method has enhanced students' cognitive engagement by improving their vocabulary skills, as evidenced by improved test scores. The student's memory of new vocabulary also becomes stronger with the use of TPR methods. As it consistently increases positive student engagement, the TPR approach is a creative and practical learning strategy for vocabulary teaching.

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