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Teacher's Perspectives Toward the TPR Method to Teach Vocabulary to Children in EFL Classrooms

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Resumen

Enseñar inglés a temprana edad requiere un buen método que se adapte a las necesidades de los niños. Total Physical Response (TPR) es un método atractivo y motivador que utiliza instrucciones orales y movimientos físicos para enseñar un idioma. El propósito de esta investigación fue recopilar información sobre las experiencias de los docentes de Inglés como lengua extranjera con relación al uso del método TPR para enseñar vocabulario a los niños. Siendo un método de enseñanza divertido y motivador, el método TPR se adapta favorablemente a las necesidades de los niños. Este trabajo proporciona información relevante sobre la implementación de este método en el aula, sus ventajas y desventajas y sus efectos en la actitud de los estudiantes hacia el aprendizaje del idioma Inglés. Para el proceso de recopilación de datos, se entrevistó a cinco docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Las entrevistas se realizaron en español, se grabaron en audio, se transcribieron y luego se tradujeron al inglés. Las conclusiones obtenidas en esta investigación fueron que el método TPR es considerado por los docentes como uno de los mejores métodos para enseñar vocabulario en inglés y puede ser utilizado con estudiantes de todas las edades, incorporando algunas adaptaciones. Además, crea un ambiente menos estresante y refuerza la confianza en los estudiantes. A pesar de que se considera un método antiguo, los profesores todavía utilizan el método TPR para enseñar el idioma inglés, brindando grandes beneficios a los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: método TPR, docentes, perspectivas, vocabulario, niños

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Abstract

Teaching English in early childhood requires a good method that adapts to the children's needs. Total Physical Response (TPR) is an engaging and motivating method that uses oral instructions and physical movements to teach a language. The purpose of this research was to collect information about experiences from EFL teachers regarding the use of the TPR method to teach vocabulary to children. Being an enjoyable and motivating teaching method, TPR adapts favorably to the children's necessities. This work provides relevant information about the implementation of this method in the classroom, the advantages and disadvantages this method has, and its effects on students' attitude to learn the language. For the process of collecting data, five EFL teachers were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, audio-recorded, transcribed, and then translated into English. The conclusions obtained in this research were that the TPR method is considered by teachers as one of the best methods to teach English vocabulary and can be used with students of all ages, incorporating some adaptations. Moreover, it creates a less-stressful environment and supports students' confidence. Despite it being considered an old fashioned method, TPR is still used by teachers to teach the English language, bringing good benefits for the students.

Keywords: TPR method, teachers, perspectives, vocabulary, children

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Dedication

This thesis work is dedicated to my family, especially my parents, Yolanda and Severino, my aunt Sulayna, and my sister Maritza, who have been a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges of graduate college and life and whose good examples have taught me to work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve. I am truly thankful for having you in my life.

Pablo Armijos

I dedicate this thesis project to God and to my aunt Mariana, who is actually my mother who was always there for me even on the tough days; without her outpouring of support, I would not have been able to overcome the difficulties of being an adult. She definitely was the first person to encourage me to not give up and finish this study stage. And not only in the academic stage, but also in my life she has been a great pillar. I love you mom, this is for you.

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CHAPTER I

1. Description of the research

1.1 Background

Learning English involves the mastery of different skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) and components (structure, vocabulary, and pronunciation) for which the implementation of an appropriate methodology is imperative (Safitri et al., 2017). According to Nuraeni (2019b), teaching children requires looking for methodologies that motivate them in the classroom and facilitate their learning process in response to their natural characteristics as children. Taking into account that children are very energetic and dynamic learners who can get easily distracted, frustrated, or bored during a class where they do not feel involved (Nuraeni, 2019b; Xie, 2021), the Total Physical Response (TPR) method emerges as an adequate tool in the teaching-learning process of children, especially for vocabulary acquisition. As Mariyam and Musfiroh (2019) mentioned, vocabulary is one of the main features that learners need to acquire to produce the language. TPR is a teaching approach created by the American psychologist James Asher in the 1960s. The mechanics of this methodology are based on teaching a language through the use of physical activities and oral commands that seem to fulfill children's needs and match their nature (Asher, 1972, as cited in Xie, 2021).

According to Shi (2018), "TPR is also known as the "listen-act model" (p.2) because it involves simple instructions given by the teacher and followed by the students. In fact, it is associated with the functioning of the right brain and the left brain; while the physical activities are carried out by the right side of the brain, the left side is in charge of the cognitive part (Mariyam & Musfiroh, 2019). In addition, this methodology creates a positive and motivating learning environment that helps students to learn effectively. Xie (2021) mentioned that the TPR method constructs a motivating environment by encouraging learners to participate and get involved in action, which increases their enthusiasm as they feel free to actively participate in class activities.

The Total Physical Response (TPR) method, however, also faces some drawbacks. Considering that TPR is a time-consuming method. An inconvenience that surges in the implementation of this methodology is the limited time that teachers have to develop a class session that lasts forty minutes in most secondary education institutions in Ecuador. Most of the time, teachers have a lot of work, which might make them rush in the development of classroom activities; this can negatively impact children's learning (Al Harrasi, 2014, as cited

in Xie, 2021). Another drawback of this method is that it is strongly focused on the following or imitation of a model through the reproduction of movements and repetition of sounds (Gusmuliana, 2018), which may represent a problem since it can decrease the chances that students have to develop their creativity and express their own ideas and opinions (Al Harrasi, 2014, as cited in Xie, 2021). Additionally, the implementation of the TPR method (or any method for that matter) in the classroom can be affected by other factors such as indiscipline, noise, or the use of the native language by the students (Xie, 2021). According to Kuo et al. (2014), another limitation that teachers may face when they use this method is that "teachers are unable to attend to all individual students when the class size is beyond manageable", which hinders the effectiveness of the TPR method. (p. 63)

Despite the TPR drawbacks mentioned above, there is evidence that shows that this method allows young learners to learn a foreign language better than other methods since it encourages students to take an active role in the classroom and creates a comfortable class atmosphere. Moreover, as mentioned above, the benefits of the TPR method facilitate the acquisition of vocabulary through physical activities that engage students in the learning process.

1.2 Problem statement

The implementation of activities based on the TPR method encourages children to adopt an active role in the classroom which has a positive impact on their learning process, especially for the youngest ones (under the age of 7) who are very dynamic learners and have not developed their reading and writing skills yet (Nuraeni, 2019b). As mentioned previously, vocabulary represents a fundamental part of the learning process of a language due to the fact that "vocabulary is known and recognized as a central component to any language acquisition process" (Nguyen et al., 2021, p. 103). Thus, considering both the fact that children learn in a better way through physical activities and the importance of developing vocabulary competencies, TPR meets the required conditions and is projected as a functional tool in the teaching process. According to Harmer (2001, as cited in Sariyati, 2013), children understand the meaning of words better when they can use their bodies and senses to learn rather than when being exposed directly to the literal meaning of words. A similar process takes place when they learn their first language.

Motivating children to learn a new language can be difficult, so the teacher's role and methodologies are fundamental in developing effective language acquisition. In this regard, Nuraeni (2019a) claimed that "by applying the TPR method, students are expected to be

more active, creative, and interactive and have an enjoyable activity in relation to the physical movement…" (p. 72).

What do primary school English teachers of Cuenca think about the importance and use of the TPR method to teach vocabulary? The authors of this study could not find data that can help us answer this question. A gap that seemed to be common in existing research on the use and importance of TPR to teach vocabulary to children was the lack of information regarding teachers' perspectives about the topic.

1.3 Rationale

When it comes to teaching a foreign language to children, it is important to create an environment in which they enjoy their learning (Hounhanou, 2020). Incorporating the TPR method into the English teaching process facilitates the acquisition of a new language (Wang et al., 2019). As Gayanti and Satriani (2020) mentioned, the TPR method is an appropriate tool to motivate and engage students as they are more interested in activities that get them moving and laughing. Regarding vocabulary, it is not possible to develop a language without acquiring vocabulary first since it is the basis of all languages (Safitri et al., 2017). Vocabulary is useful for developing language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Gayanti & Satriani, 2020).

In spite of the benefits of the TPR method in the teaching of vocabulary to children (Mariyam & Musfiroh, 2019; Safiti et al., 2017; Shi, 2018; Xie, 2021), there was no information about the perspectives that teachers had about this method in the context of Cuenca, Ecuador. Thus, this study attempted to collect data about teachers' perspectives regarding the use and application of the TPR method to teach vocabulary in EFL classrooms by conducting a descriptive research in public schools of Cuenca, Ecuador. This study helped to fill this gap since it allowed us to have a deeper understanding of what the participants think about this topic directly from them.

1.4 Research questions

1. What are English teachers' perspectives toward the use and importance of the TPR method to teach vocabulary to children?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages, according to the English teachers, of using the TPR method in EFL classrooms to teach vocabulary to children?

1.5 Objectives

1.5.1 General Objective:

To examine English teachers' perspectives toward the use and importance of the TPR method to teach vocabulary to children.

1.5.2 Specific objectives:

- To analyze the teachers' perceived advantages and disadvantages of using the TPR method in EFL classrooms to teach vocabulary to children.
- To identify the effects of the TPR method to teach vocabulary to children, according to the participants.

CHAPTER II

2. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, concepts, definitions, and existing theories regarding the implementation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method to teach English vocabulary to children are included. Moreover, we intend to further explain, discuss, and draw connections among the key terms and ideas that inform the present research study, namely perspectives, the TPR method, vocabulary, children, and EFL classrooms.

2.1 Perspectives

According to Lindsay and Norman (1977, as cited in Pickens, 2005), perspectives refer to how individuals process the information they receive from outside, creating concepts of what they have experienced. As people face life situations differently and have different backgrounds and experiences, the way they perceive things also differs (Kenyon & Sen, 2014). Hence, what people perceive from their environment tends to be subjective (Pickens, 2005). In this study, we view teachers' perspectives as "teachers' concepts, underlying assumptions, beliefs, values, and norms" (Sony, 2017, p.6). Thus, many teachers perceive that the TPR methodology is considered an effective method to teach vocabulary since it is easy to implement and helps to motivate students in class. Also, it enhances learners' creativity and decreases their stress levels (Sony, 2017). Furthermore, Xie (2021) interviewed a couple of English teachers who mentioned the following. One teacher mentioned that her students enjoy using body movements to learn English. While another teacher claimed that although he did not know about TPR, he used physical activities and flashcards in his classes. Thus, TPR is a good strategy to get students´ interest in the classroom and have fun in the process of learning a language (Xie, 2021).

2.2 The Total Physical Response method

TPR stands for Total Physical Response. This is a teaching methodology designed for learners of all ages. This methodology was created in 1977 by James J. Asher, who worked at San Jose State University as a professor of psychology (Rahmadani, 2019). Total Physical Response works by combining spoken commands from the teacher and physical actions from the students (Shi, 2018). In other words, students use body movements in response to oral instructions given by the teacher in the process of learning a foreign language. Through the TPR method, teachers attempt to make learners produce the language spontaneously by having them first listen, then internalize the language, and finally

communicate verbally. This is similar to the process which takes place when they learn their mother tongue (Xie, 2021). Besides, it provides a comfortable and motivating learning environment for learners since it promotes activeness and freedom to express themselves in the classroom (Xie, 2021).

According to Savic (2014), TPR seems to be the appropriate method when teaching a language to children since it suits their propensity to learn while moving. The author also explains that this method does not force learners to use the language immediately; first, students are exposed to the language, and later, they can use it when they feel prepared. Consequently, students do not feel under pressure, which reduces their stress levels (Savic, 2014). Moreover, through this teaching methodology, learners are exposed to fun, easy-to-follow activities during class time, which causes them to enjoy the process of learning a new language (Putri, 2016). Furthermore, implementing this method in class does not require too much preparation, and the materials to be used are easy to get or create. In addition, TPR contributes to the students' memorization and internalization of vocabulary and expressions in the language they are learning when the students perform actions. Finally, this method can be applied in classrooms where students have different levels of proficiency (Sophaktra, 2009, as cited in Sariyati, 2013). This method can be used to teach different parts of a language, for example, vocabulary.

2.3 Vocabulary

Vocabulary has been defined by many authors. According to Diamond & Gutlohn (2006, as cited in Ferreira, 2007), vocabulary is the understanding of words and their different meanings. Alqahtani (2015) stated that "vocabulary is the total number of words that are needed to communicate ideas and express the speakers' meaning" (p. 25). Neuman and Dwyer (2009) also described vocabulary as the words in a language that learners must learn in order to communicate effectively: "words in speaking (expressive vocabulary) and words in listening (receptive vocabulary)" (p. 385). In the process of learning a language, vocabulary seems to be an indispensable component. According to Wilkins (1972, as cited in Nguyen et al., 2021), it is impossible to communicate in any language without learning vocabulary. In learning English, vocabulary is directly connected with the development of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills (Ho et al., 2018, as cited in Ningrum, 2021). Thus, learners can not master a language if they do not master its vocabulary first (Mariyam & Musfiroh, 2019). All age groups need to develop their vocabulary. In this study, we analyzed the development of vocabulary in children.

2.4 Children

Human development involves different stages. Childhood is the best period to learn a language due to children's brain plasticity (Mariyam & Musfiroh, 2019). According to Hurlock (1950), early childhood involves children from two to six years old, while middle childhood is from six to eleven years old. In early childhood, children develop their motor skills and autonomy as well as their social skills. While in middle childhood, children are exposed to more complex academic aspects increasing their cognitive abilities. In this work, we have focused on middle childhood teachers, since the participants of our study are teachers who work with children of Básica Elemental and Básica Media levels whose ages range from six to eleven years old.

2.5 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms

EFL means English as a Foreign Language. Gass and Selinquer (2001, as cited in Gilquin & Granger, 2011) defined EFL learning as the process of learning an external language. According to Dingfang (1994, as cited in Si, 2019), EFL refers to learning English in countries where their people do not speak this language. EFL may be confused with ESL, but there is a clear difference between them. ESL stands for English as a Second Language. Iwai (2011) claimed that ESL is learning English in nations where this language is spoken as a mother tongue; for example, Hispanics who learn English in The United States of America learn it as a second language. On the other hand, EFL involves using English for purposes related to traveling, talking with foreigners, understanding foreign documents, etc. (Stern, 1983, as cited in Si, 2019). In short, EFL classrooms involve students who do not speak English as their mother tongue in a place where English is not spoken by its population.

As can be seen, TPR may be used to teach any language in the classroom because it creates a link between speech and action. TPR is an excellent methodology to be used with learners of different ages and skill levels. Also, with this teaching method, the lessons are easy to understand for students, and it allows them to learn a language better. Additionally, children may benefit from the use of TPR since it resembles their natural process of learning a language. Finally, as TPR encourages students to be active, it helps to create a friendly environment in which students can have fun while learning.

CHAPTER III

3. Literature Review

This section is focused on the exposition of relevant findings related to the use of the TPR methodology to teach vocabulary to children in EFL classrooms. The information was classified into two main categories of discussion: the use and importance of the TPR method when teaching English vocabulary to children and the effects of the TPR method on children's English vocabulary development.

3.1 Use and importance of the TPR method when teaching English vocabulary to children

As mentioned in previous chapters in this work, TPR is considered a useful method to teach English to children, particularly vocabulary. This has been demonstrated in different studies.

Mariyam and Musfiroh (2019) developed a qualitative study to understand how the TPR method helps children acquire English vocabulary, focusing on nouns, verbs, and adjectives. This study was conducted at a kindergarten in Indonesia. The participants were fifteen students from 5 to 6 years old. In this research, the authors found that, through the use of the TPR method, the vocabulary that children mostly acquire was nouns (99.26 %), followed by verbs (93.33 %), and then adjectives (79.26 %). Additionally, the researchers found that the use of games and visuals (commonly used in the TPR method) applied in this study increased students' enthusiasm in the classroom.

In the same line, Safitri et al. (2017) carried out a quantitative-qualitative research to prove the usefulness of the TPR method in teaching vocabulary to children. The participants consisted of fifteen students from the fifth grade. For this study, the students took a pretest before the treatment and a posttest after being exposed to the TPR method. In both tests, the students were asked to follow thirty commands from the teacher. The mean score in the pretest was 12.4667 out of 30, while in the posttest the mean was 28.0667 out of 30. Based on this, the authors claimed that the students' vocabulary achievement improved after the use of the TPR method, concluding that this methodology facilitates the learning of vocabulary in children.

Similarly, Nuraeni (2019) conducted a descriptive-qualitative research to examine the effectiveness of the TPR method when teaching English to young learners. The participants were one teacher and thirty students from five to eleven years old. For this study, a pretest before the treatment and a posttest after implementing the TPR method were used to check students' vocabulary learning. In the pretest, the mean score regarding vocabulary was

47.29 out of 100, while in the posttest, the mean score was 75.38 out of 100. The author concluded that TPR is an effective method to teach English since it helped students to increase their vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, the researcher reported that TPR improves students' confidence in the classroom and encourages their motivation, creativity, and curiosity.

In another study, Shi (2018) compared the TPR method with other methods for teaching English vocabulary. The participants were twenty fourth-grade primary school students. There was an experimental group with whom the TPR method was used and a control group that was exposed to other teaching methods and strategies to teach vocabulary, such as the use of textbooks and memorization. First, the results showed that in the experimental group, there was a positive attitude toward learning. The students showed a willingness to participate in the activities proposed by the teacher. Second, they acted with confidence and did not seem to worry about making mistakes in class. Third, the students were interested in learning and speaking the foreign language while interacting face-to-face in the classroom. Finally, the researchers noted that students were happy during this experiment and enjoyed their learning experience through the TPR method. In contrast, the students who belonged to the control group, where other methods were applied, were sitting most of the time, taking notes and studying grammar. The students developed grammar exercises with little oral interaction among them and with the teacher. Consequently, there was not an active or participatory learning environment and the students did not seem to be really engaged in the English language teaching and learning process.

Another comparison between other teaching methods and TPR was carried out by Holleny (2012), who tried to determine which teaching method achieves better results with students who manifest learning disabilities. The participants were forty-four high school students belonging to grades 9-12 with mild learning disabilities. The study consisted of two experimental groups in which vocabulary was taught using the TPR method and two control groups where other teaching methods were used. The results show a significant difference in mean scores on tests for classes taught with the TPR method in comparison with the other groups. The average test scores in the experimental groups were 84.3% in one and 78.3% in another, while in the control groups, the average test scores were 71.3% in one group and 70.4% in another one.

Although the use of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method is beneficial for the learning of vocabulary, it also presents difficulties. In a study carried out by Xie (2021), the author found that some factors that difficult the implementation of TPR are indiscipline, noise, and lack of teachers' training on the use of the TPR method. Besides, the author mentioned that teaching introverted students using this method can be a limitation since it

requires students to be active in the classroom. However, teaching students who are too energetic in the classroom can also be challenging. In a study developed by Sariyati (2013), the author found that children tend to overact when participating since they feel too enthusiastic and energetic, causing indiscipline and noise issues. Kuo et al. (2014) mentioned another drawback regarding the TPR method. In their study, the authors found that it is difficult for teachers to help and give students individual feedback in the classroom.

3.2 Effects of the TPR method on teaching English vocabulary to children

In this part, common effects that the use of the TPR method has on children who have been taught vocabulary through this method are exposed.

Nguyen et al. (2021) carried out a qualitative-quantitative study about the impact of TPR on students' English vocabulary learning and how students perceived this method. The participants were thirty fourth-grade students. Using questionnaires, the authors found that the students felt comfortable and happy learning vocabulary through TPR since it was easier for them to understand and remember the meaning of words, and the classroom activities were enjoyable and interesting, according to the answers given.

In the same way, Gayanti and Satriani (2020) developed a descriptive qualitative study to analyze the use of TPR for teaching vocabulary. The participants were thirty- five students in eighth grade. The authors claimed that it was easier for the students to increase their vocabulary command through the TPR method. The researchers also mentioned that as this method does not force students to produce the language, it can be helpful to teach shy students and help them develop their self-confidence; they are encouraged to talk or write as they progress.

In a quasi-experimental study, Samir (2017) examined the effectiveness of the TPR method in teaching commands. A pretest and posttest were employed in this study. The participants of this research were three hundred and twenty second-graders. The author claimed that TPR is the appropriate method to use for teaching commands since it gives students the chance to practice vocabulary using physical actions. Moreover, the author found that the students felt more relaxed and comfortable while doing classroom activities in which this method was applied.

Something similar was found in a qualitative-quantitative research executed by Sariyati (2013); the author wanted to find out if TPR improves students' vocabulary learning. The participants were forty-two Indonesian elementary school students. The researcher concluded that TPR is an appropriate method for children because classroom activities

become dynamic and enjoyable. The author observed that by using the TPR method in class students' stress decreased, allowing the learning of vocabulary in a better way.

Even though many studies about the use, importance, and effects of the TPR method are available in different academic sources, we were not able to find enough research studies regarding teachers' perspectives. We found one study which directly analyzed teachers' perspectives toward the use of TPR and two studies that do mention teachers' perspectives but in a general manner; the main focus of these two studies was not teachers' perspectives toward TPR but the effectiveness of this method. Among the short amount of data available about teachers' perspectives toward the mentioned method, we have found the following.

Sony (2014) explored the perspectives of thirty ELT teachers toward Total Physical Response for enhancing vocabulary in secondary school students. The data was collected through questionnaires and checklists. The findings show that TPR is considered one of the best teaching methods since it is easy to implement by the teacher and easy to follow by the students. Moreover, as young learners are very active, teaching techniques that are commonly implemented in TPR (games, role plays, drawing, showing pictures, and use of realia) have effective results in developing children's vocabulary skills. Furthermore, teachers in this study consider TPR as a method that requires both teachers and students to be active, helping to make classes enjoyable, which decreases stress and facilitates the teaching and learning of the language. Additionally, this method gives students more opportunities to practice their speaking, which contributes to enhancing their fluency. Similarly, other authors like Nuraeni (2019) and Xie (2021), whose studies had teachers as part of their participants, found through interviews and observation that English teachers used the TPR method because they considered it useful to motivate students and increase their interest in classroom activities.

As can be evidenced in the review above, the TPR method seems to have advantages for teaching vocabulary to children. In addition, it should be noticed that there seems to be a lack of information regarding EFL teachers' perspectives on this method, especially in our context, Ecuador. Hence, we have decided to analyze the opinions that high school teachers in the context of Cuenca, Ecuador, have regarding the use of the TPR method for teaching vocabulary to children. Thus, we might contribute to fill this research gap.

CHAPTER IV

4. Methodology

4.1 Research approach and design

The research approach for this study was qualitative since it allowed us to gather information regarding teachers' perspectives of the TPR method to teach vocabulary to children based on their experience in the classroom. According to Pathak et al, (2013), "the qualitative method is used to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions" (p.192). Besides the teacher´s opinions and perspectives on the implementation of TPR, this work looked at the advantages and disadvantages teachers had evidenced during the use of this methodology. Thus, a descriptive design was applied since it focuses on real-world situations faced by individuals or groups and how they addressed them in a certain context (Mills et al., 2010). Therefore, a qualitative descriptive study was used since, according to Kim et al. (2017), it helps collect information or viewpoints from participants regarding a phenomenon under study.

4.2 Participants and context

The participants of this study were five EFL teachers working in three different public schools in Cuenca, Ecuador. A non-probability convenience sample was used. The authors asked for volunteer teachers from elementary school. In order to protect the participants' identities, we used pseudonyms instead of their original names. It is important to mention that in the public school system of Ecuador, the amount of English class sessions that students have per week depends on their school grades. In Ecuador, primary and secondary education are divided into: Inicial, Básica, and Bachillerato. Children from elementary school, whose teachers were the participants of the study, have three class sessions of forty minutes each per week. The most important aim of these weekly English classes is to make students participate in the current globalized world considering the cultural and linguistic variety of the Ecuadorian population (Ecuadorian National Curriculum, 2016).

4.3 Ethical considerations

For the data collection process, an informed consent document was given to the EFL teachers who were the participants of this work. That document was analyzed and signed by them and the researchers. Through that document, the participants were informed that the

interviews were going to be anonymous and no personal details or institutional information would be published. Also, the researchers told participants that the interviews were going to be conducted in Spanish and that they would last ten to fifteen minutes. Besides, it was specified that the interviews would be recorded and later transcribed for their analysis. Moreover, it was mentioned that if the participants did not feel comfortable with any question, they were free to not respond. Additionally, in the informed consent, participants were notified that they could deny their participation in or leave the project at any time without any negative consequence against them.

4.4 Data collection

A semi-structured interview was administered with the intention of giving teachers the opportunity to share their opinions about the implementation of the TPR method in the classroom. Fylan (2005) said that a semi-structured interview helps to collect people's experiences and opinions regarding a topic of interest through a set of pre-established questions which can change considering how the conversation flows. The interviews were conducted in Spanish since the use of our mother tongue allowed for a more thorough explanation from the participants. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed and translated into English. The transcripts were examined using thematic analysis since "it is the minimum organization and description of a set of data that is widely used in qualitative data analysis" (Javadi & Zarea, 2016, p.1). Thematic analysis helps to analyze data in different forms including transcripts of interviews (Javadi & Zarea, 2016), which was the instrument that we used for the data collection.

CHAPTER V

5. Data analysis and results

This chapter is intended to provide an analysis of the data collected from five interviews conducted with English teachers in different public institutions in Cuenca, Ecuador. Subsequently, the results obtained from this analysis will help answer the research questions. The data analysis will be addressed according to five categories based on the participants' answers: the most commonly used teaching methods, how TPR is applied in the classroom, the advantages and disadvantages of using the TPR method to teach vocabulary, and the effects of the TPR method on students.

5.1. The most commonly used teaching methods by English teachers

Table 1

The most commonly used teaching methods by English teachers

Participants	Responses
Andrés	Task-based learning, CLIL, TPR, silent way, and suggestopedia.
Francisco	TPR, silent way, and repetition method.
Sofia	TPR and the heart method.
Pedro	TPR, suggestopedia, direct method, audio-lingual method, and TICs.
Mariana	Connectivism, gamification, task-based learning, and TPR.

Table 1 presents the methods for teaching English that the participants mentioned as the ones they are most familiar with and use most in their lessons. Among the answers, some methods like the silent way, suggestopedia, and task-based learning are repeated more than once, but TPR is the one that appears in all teachers' responses. Thus, TPR seems to be a method commonly considered by teachers as an option for teaching English.

According to Andrés, TPR is a method that is very useful, especially for teaching vocabulary, so he uses this method in units where students need to learn new words. Teacher Pedro seems to share Andrés's opinion as Pedro considers TPR a popular and

good method for teaching new vocabulary. Teacher Francisco said that he uses this method frequently to encourage students to use the English language more than their mother tongue. For teacher Sofia, TPR is a method that she uses, but it does not work all the time, so she tends to use different methods according to the students' progress. In the case of Mariana, she indicated that TPR is a method that needs to be adapted to the context in which it is used. Also, she said that because TPR is an old method, it is not used much nowadays. Based on what the teachers responded, the TPR method is implemented in their lessons to teach vocabulary topics.

Additionally, some teachers mentioned that they use music, flashcards, readings, role plays, pictures, etc., which for these teachers were considered "methods" for teaching English, specifically vocabulary. However, those are teaching techniques that are commonly used as part of TPR based on children's characteristics in order to facilitate their language learning (Sony, 2014). Other participants, such as Francisco and Mariana explained that they use materials and strategies similar to the ones mentioned above, but these participants stated that they were resources for teaching vocabulary, not methods.

5.2. How TPR is applied in the classroom

Table 2

How TPR is applied in the classroom

Participants	Responses
Andrés	Warm-up activity to teach vocabulary.
Francisco	Introduce new vocabulary in readings.
Sofia	Drilling activity.
Pedro	To provide feedback in lessons, especially vocabulary.
Mariana	Vocabulary, and warm-up activities.

Table 2 presents the responses that the English teachers provided about how they implement the TPR method in their classes. As can be seen in the table, the five English teachers in this study focus the use of the TPR method on teaching English vocabulary.

Based on the information presented above, two teachers used this method at the beginning of a class as a warm-up activity with the objective of "waking-up" students and motivating them. Andrés mentioned that he likes to use dynamics and games like "blind man's buff" or "listen-action games" to catch the students' attention and work on their understanding of vocabulary. For Mariana, the positive attitude that students have toward this method is necessary. She said, "For me, that [positive] attitude [of the students] is very important at the beginning of a class, so I use it mostly as a warm-up." So, beyond its use to teach vocabulary, TPR has an important role in enhancing students' attitude in the classroom.

Francisco uses the TPR method in the middle of a class as a tool to introduce and explain new vocabulary found in readings. He explained that he uses body movements to facilitate the students' understanding of vocabulary. Regarding Sofia, she said that she uses TPR as part of drilling activities to teach vocabulary; students listen to words and then they have to repeat and relate them with images. However, what the teacher explained is not really part of the TPR because it does not require any physical action by students when they perform this activity. Actually, what Sofia mentioned is more related to the audio-lingual method, which is based on repeating what is heard emphasizing oral expression and pronunciation.

Moreover, the TPR method is used as a way to give feedback to students. Unlike the teachers mentioned before, Pedro uses the TPR method to practice vocabulary and phrases that they have learned previously, using commands, for example. Thus, TPR is not only used to introduce new vocabulary or a new topic, but it can also be used as part of a lesson to check students' comprehension and production of the vocabulary already covered.

5.3 Advantages and disadvantages of using the TPR method

We decided to present the data regarding the advantages and disadvantages of TPR in two separate tables. Table 3 shows the positive aspects of this method and table 4 shows the drawbacks.

Table 3

Advantages of using the TPR method

Participants	Responses

Andrés	It's especially good for little children.
	It resembles how people learn their mother tongue.
Francisco	It helps students to talk less in Spanish and teach them meanings directly.
	It facilitates the understanding and internalization of vocabulary.
Sofia	It works well to teach vocabulary and introduce other features of the language later.
Pedro	To remember content already learned.
Mariana	It is useful to introduce a new topic.

Table 3 covers information from the participants regarding the advantages of the implementation of the TPR method. Andrés explained that this method helps students to learn English the same way people learn their mother tongue, by listening and responding physically. Moreover, Francisco claimed that TPR helps students talk less Spanish in class and facilitates teaching meanings directly. Since applying TPR does not require the use of Spanish, students do not feel the need to use their mother tongue, so they easily internalize the meaning of words through oral English instructions given by the teacher and physical movements. Sofia remarked on the usefulness of this method to teach vocabulary and mentioned that it helps to build a base in students' knowledge that allows the incorporation of other components like structures and phrases (depending on the students' level) later on. According to Pedro, TPR has the benefit that it works as a long-term method. In other words, it can be used to make students remember and practice vocabulary they have learned previously. In the case of Mariana, she said that another advantage of the TPR method is the positive atmosphere it creates that motivates students to participate in the classroom, so for her, it is just a good tool to start a class.

During the interviews, most teachers agreed that TPR is useful to teach English to children. Andrés mentioned that TPR works very well with children because of their facility to learn. He said, "It [TPR] is good for young learners because many studies have shown that a student learns in a better way during childhood." Pedro also shares the idea that TPR is good for children because they learn better when they are young. He said, "It [TPR] works for children. The sooner students are exposed to the language the better chances they will

have to learn it." Francisco and Sofia believe that TPR is a good method for teaching vocabulary to children. Actually, Sofia mentioned that among the different methods, TPR is the one that stands out as the most effective for this purpose. This was not shared by the other teachers who said that all methods have something important to contribute to English teaching, while others put the silent way, connectivism, and gamification as the most effective ones. Mariana also thinks that TPR is effective to teach vocabulary to children, but only to a certain extent; she said this method has some limitations. She explained that a mixture of different methods would bring more benefits to the students' vocabulary development.

Something additional to report in this section is that when teachers were asked if TPR is a method that could be applied to students of all ages, the participants responded positively. However, some of them like Sofia and Mariana said that depending on the students' ages, it was necessary to make some changes to the activities proposed in the classroom at the moment of applying the TPR method.

Table 4

Disadvantages of using the TPR method

Participants	Responses
Andrés	The production part is missing.
	It does not allow the students to use the language by themselves.
Francisco	It cannot be used with everything.
Sofia	It does not fit all learning styles.
Pedro	It does not work as a short-term method.
Mariana	It cannot be applied in an entire class.
	It is time-consuming.
	It does not help to develop the four skills.

Table 4 presents the disadvantages that teachers have experienced using the TPR method. Regarding Andrés, the main drawback is the lack of production of the language by

the students. He said that while using TPR students just follow orders, but they are not using the language in a spontaneous way, which is not beneficial for their language development. Francisco considers that although TPR is a good method, it cannot be used for everything, so it is limited to teach specific topics like vocabulary. According to this teacher, TPR is a limited method in terms of flexibility. Sofia agreed with Francisco's opinion, and she added that TPR could not work for all students because they learn in different ways. She explained that some students learn by touching, others by listening, reading, etc, so the TPR method is not suitable for all learning styles that students have. In the case of Pedro, he believes that TPR does not work as a short-term method. He explained that students need to practice constantly in order to internalize the language, otherwise, they will fail at learning the language. Similar to what Francisco and Sofia mentioned, Mariana considers that the TPR method is limited for teaching specific things because of its nature of combining just oral instructions and movements, which also limits the use of this method in a whole class. Furthermore, she indicated that TPR requires time and work to be applied in the classroom and for creating materials.

5.4 The effects of the TPR method on students

Table 5

The effects of the TPR method on students.

Participants	Responses
Andrés	Students' response becomes immediate and automatic.
Francisco	Students talk less in Spanish in the classroom.
Sofia	Students practice the language outside of the classroom.
Pedro	Students relate phrases, words, questions, etc; easily.
Mariana	Good attitude to learning.

Table 5 shows the effects on students that teachers have evidenced when they have applied the TPR method. According to Andrés, students respond automatically when they are given orders in the classroom. He said that just by practicing something once or twice

(using TPR) students are able to internalize the language so well that when they are asked to do something, they do it immediately. Francisco exposed that when he applies the TPR method in his classes, students tend to use their mother tongue less and start using English. Sofia indicated that TPR helps to encourage students to use the language outside the classroom. She mentioned that she has seen students practice the language when they are not in classes. In the case of Pedro, the main effect of the TPR on students that he has evidenced is that students understand better other elements like phrases, questions, etc. Finally, as was exposed previously, Mariana mentioned that students are willing to learn when she uses the TPR method in the classroom. However, she also explained that students do not develop the four skills they need in English, which in her opinion, is a negative effect that this method has. That is why the teachers mentioned that other methods and strategies should be used in combination with TPR.

5.5 Discussion

In the present study, we wanted to describe the perspectives EFL teachers have toward the TPR method for teaching vocabulary to children. The following are the research questions that guided this work.

What are English teachers' perspectives toward the use and importance of the TPR method to teach vocabulary to children?

What are the advantages and disadvantages, according to the English teachers, of using the TPR method in EFL classrooms to teach vocabulary to children?

Through the interviews carried out with the five participants, it was found that the TPR method is mostly used to teach English vocabulary. This finding is in line with what Mariyam and Musfiroh (2019), Nuraeni (2019), Safitri et al. (2017), and others demonstrated in their studies where they concluded that this method is particularly useful to teach vocabulary. Additionally, TPR is considered by some teachers as a good instrument to stimulate students' attitude in class. Something similar was exposed by Nuraeni (2019) and Xie (2021), where teachers who participated in their studies used the TPR method to enhance students' interest and motivation.

Regarding the advantages of using TPR, the participants mentioned that the method helps students learn a language the same way they learned their mother tongue. This is supported by what Xie (2021) found; this author claimed that through TPR students learn by listening first and then performing, similarly to how people learn a first language. The participants also mentioned that TPR encourages students' willingness toward learning

English, which was also found by other researchers such as Mariyam and Musfiroh (2019) and Shi (2018), who evidenced in their works this good attitude from students when the TPR method was applied. Some advantages that were particularly mentioned by the participants in this study were that TPR helps to build a base that facilitates students to understand more complex components of the language; TPR may decrease the use of Spanish in the classroom in students; TPR allows the reinforcement of vocabulary already learned. Another relevant point mentioned by the participants was that the participants not only found TPR as a good method for teaching children but also for all ages. This is supported by Rahmadani (2019), who stated that TPR is an effective method for teaching children and adults. Moreover, some of the participants expressed that the material and content needed to be adapted according to the students' level and age.

In the case of the disadvantages, the teachers mentioned that TPR does not let students produce the language. This might be true considering that the main principle of this method consists of oral instructions (by the teacher) and physical responses (by students) as was mentioned in many studies presented in this research. Although TPR does not require students to speak immediately, it helps them to unconsciously comprehend content and develop their self-confidence, which contributes to their natural production of the language later on, as was exposed by authors like Widodo (2005) and Mariyam and Musfiroh (2019). Participants also said that TPR does not fit all students' learning styles. This idea may be valid considering that because of the nature of TPR, this method brings more benefits to kinesthetic students as was mentioned by Wang (2019). Other disadvantages exposed were that TPR is limited to teaching vocabulary and that requires time and effort to implement it and create materials. Regarding the latter idea, Xie (2021) also claimed that TPR is a time-consuming method in terms of implementing it in the classroom. However, Sophaktra (2009, as cited in Sariyati, 2013) mentioned that not much preparation or materials are needed when applying TPR.

The participants also claimed that TPR allows a better comprehension of meaning. This is in line with what Nguyen et al. (2021) found; these authors stated that by using TPR, it was easier for students to learn and remember the meanings of words. As something negative, it was said that TPR does not help students develop the four language skills; this is a good point considering that the most developed skill when using TPR is listening.

CHAPTER VI

6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The aim of this descriptive research was to identify the EFL teachers' perspectives toward the use of the TPR method for teaching vocabulary to children, as well as the advantages, disadvantages, and main effects teachers have experienced when applying this method. After the analysis of the responses from the interviews conducted for the development of this study, the following conclusions can be stated.

TPR is mainly used to teach vocabulary. The participants in this work declared that the TPR method is effective in teaching new vocabulary and reviewing language already learned.

TPR helps teachers grow students' interest and motivation in the classroom. Some participants mentioned that they use TPR to stimulate students' attitude toward their learning process.

TPR is a useful method that can work well for learners of all ages, especially children. The participants claimed that although this method is principally used with kids, it can be implemented with groups of students of different ages, but making some changes according to the students' age.

Regarding the advantages, teachers exposed the following. TPR facilitates the students' language acquisition since it resembles the process of how people learn their mother tongue. TPR decreases the use of Spanish in class since it helps students learn meanings directly without the necessity of translation. TPR facilitates the students' understanding of other language components and creates a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom.

Regarding disadvantages, the teachers consider that TPR does not allow students to produce the language from the beginning since they are limited to responding only by using movements. It does not fit all learning styles because it is only focused on listening and doing, which also makes this method inflexible and limits its use to teach words and meanings. TPR is also considered a method that requires too much time to be applied in class and does not work as a short-term method.

As regards the effects evidenced by the participants when applying the TPR method, the following was mentioned. TPR makes it possible for students to have an efficient internalization of language contents that gives rise to an automatic response by students. In other words, the students respond immediately to the teacher's instructions in the classroom. The students learn and understand more complex structures of the language, such as phrases or questions, and feel motivated to practice the language outside the classroom. The greatest effect to highlight is that TPR predisposes students to learn and enjoy the teaching-learning process. It was also said that through this method, students do not exercise the four necessary skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) to become proficient in the English language.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the results presented in this paper, there are some recommendations to be considered in future studies. First of all, most of the research available online and used in this study was carried out in Asian and European countries. Thus, a recommendation is that further studies should be focused on the use of the TPR method in Latin American countries, so we can find more information centered on how TPR works in our context.

Another recommendation is that coming studies should continue looking for information regarding teachers' perspectives and opinions about the implementation of TPR in EFL classrooms because the data regarding this theme is very limited. Besides, having a wider range of information related to this topic will help to understand in a better way how effective and useful this method is for the teaching of English, as well as to discover other advantages and disadvantages TPR may have.

Furthermore, most of the studies found for the development of this work were focused on the impact that the use of the TPR method has on children. Therefore, in the future, researchers should point to the implementation of TPR with older teens and adults. In this way, we will be able to see the scope that this method has and if it works the same way with old learners as it does with children.

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