



A Case Study on Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge of Total Physical Response in the Primary Schools of the Al-Dafniya Education Office, Misurata

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دراسة حالة حول المعرفة البيداغوجية للمعلمين بطريقة الاستجابة الجسدية الكاملة في مدارس المرحلة الابتدائية التابعة لمكتب تعليم الدافنية - مصراتة

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Abstract:

This study explored English language teachers' pedagogical knowledge of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in the primary schools of the Al-Dafniya Education Office in Misurata, Libya. As English is introduced in the first grade, the Libyan Ministry of Education has based primary English textbooks on TPR principles. However, limited training and a lack of awareness among teachers have raised concerns regarding the actual implementation of this method. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 female primary school teachers from six different schools of the Al-Dafniya Education Office. The findings revealed that although a few teachers applied certain TPR techniques, for instance, giving commands and incorporating songs with physical actions, most of them lacked background knowledge of TPR as a teaching method. Moreover, none of the teachers knew that it is the recommended method in Libyan primary English textbooks. The findings further demonstrated that factors such as insufficient training, a lack of classroom resources, and irregular use of English made it difficult for teachers to implement TPR effectively. The findings showed the gap between the recommended method and actual classroom practices which suggest a need for professional development and for improving primary English textbooks to align with pupils' needs.

Keywords: Total Physical Response (TPR), pedagogical knowledge, primary school teachers, teacher training, Al-Dafniya Education Office.

الملخص:

تناولت هذه الدراسة المعرفة البيداغوجية لدى معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية حول طريقة الاستجابة الجسدية الكاملة (TPR) في المدارس الابتدائية التابعة لمكتب تعليم الدافنية في مدينة مصراتة، ليبيا. ونظرًا لكون مادة اللغة الإنجليزية تُدرس ابتداءً كم الصف الأول الابتدائي، فقد اعتمدت وزارة التربية والتعليم الليبية كتب اللغة الإنجليزية في المرحلة الابتدائية على مبادئ طريقة الاستجابة الجسدية الكاملة. ومع ذلك، فإن محدودية التدريب ونقص الوعي لدى المعلمين أثار تساؤلات حول مدى التطبيق الفعلي لهذه الطريقة. وباستخدام تصميم بحث نوعي، جمعت البيانات من خلال مقابلات شبه مهيكلة مع عشر معلمات من ست مدارس ابتدائية تابعة لمكتب تعليم الدافنية. وقد أظهرت النتائج أن بعض المعلمات استخدمن بعض استراتيجيات الطريقة، مثل إعطاء الأوامر ودمج الأغاني مع الحركات الجسدية، إلا أن معظمهن افترقن إلى الخلفية المعرفية المتعلقة بطريقة الاستجابة الجسدية الكاملة. كما تبين أن أيًا من المعلمات لم تكن على علم بكون هذه الطريقة هي الطريقة الموصى بها في كتب اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة الابتدائية في ليبيا. وأظهرت النتائج أيضًا أن عوامل مثل قلة التدريب، ونقص

الموارد التعليمية داخل الفصول الدراسية، والاستخدام غير المنتظم للغة الإنجليزية، جعلت من الصعب على المعلمين تطبيق طريقة الاستجابة الجسدية الكاملة بشكل فعال. وتشير النتائج إلى وجود فجوة بين الطريقة الموصى بها والممارسات الصفية الفعلية، مما يبرز الحاجة إلى تطوير مهني للمعلمين وتحسين كتب اللغة الإنجليزية في المرحلة الابتدائية بما يتناسب مع احتياجات التلاميذ.

الكلمات المفتاحية: طريقة الاستجابة الجسدية الكاملة (TPR)، المعرفة البيداغوجية، معلمو المرحلة الابتدائية، تدريب المعلمين مكتب تعليم الدافنية.

Introduction

The widespread use of English across the world has significantly shaped the way it is being taught, especially in countries that use it as a foreign language. As globalisation continues to expand, the need to improve one's English proficiency is crucial. In Libya, although English is considered a foreign language, it has received growing attention. It was recently introduced and taught in the first grade of the primary level.

One of the key factors that influences the success of teaching English as a foreign language is the teachers' pedagogical knowledge, particularly their familiarity with teaching methods and their ability to apply them effectively.

Amongst the teaching methods, Total Physical Response (TPR) is one of the preferred methods. Several studies showed that TPR is an effective method for teaching young learners as it fosters their motivation to learn the language and increases their listening skills (Montecarlo & Abugadam, 2023; Shi, 2018). Thus, the Libyan Ministry of Education decided to design the primary English textbooks based on the principles of the TPR method. Moreover, it is a recommended method for English primary school teachers to teach their pupils. Despite its benefits, the actual implementation of TPR in many English foreign language classrooms depends heavily on the teacher's understanding of the method and their confidence in using it effectively.

Statement of the Problem

Total Physical Response is well known as the most preferable method for teaching children. According to Putri (2016), an efficient substitute method for teaching English to young learners is Total Physical Response. By using body movements, it helps children to quickly recall words and instructions. With this method, learning is not only efficient but also enjoyable.

When the Libyan Ministry of Education decided to teach English from the first primary level, only a few teachers received specialised training to prepare them for this shift. However, due to the scarcity of English teachers in primary schools, other English language teachers who were teaching different grade levels were asked to fill this gap, and those teachers might not be familiar with the TPR method and how to deal with very young learners. These challenges were also observed in the findings of Abugadam (2023).

To the best of my recollection, no prior studies have been conducted to explore how well English language teachers in the primary schools of Al-Dafniya Education Office understand TPR as a teaching method and whether they are aware that TPR is the recommended method in primary English textbooks. By understanding teachers' awareness, training, and usage of the TPR, the proper implementation of this method can be ensured.

The Purpose of the Study

This study aims to understand the pedagogical knowledge of TPR method among English primary school teachers in primary schools of the Al-Dafniya Education Office and to determine whether they are cognizant of TPR as the recommended method in Libyan primary English textbooks.

Research Question

This study is carried out to answer the following research question:

What is teachers' pedagogical knowledge about TPR as a teaching method in primary schools of the Al-Dafniya Education Office?

Significance of the Study

This research contributes significantly to the Libyan Ministry of Education by providing data on the implementation of TPR in primary schools. This may provide insights and support for English teachers in the primary schools. Furthermore, the findings can be beneficial for book designers in refining the prescribed textbook to adapt to the specific needs of young learners. In addition, this study can broaden primary school teachers' understanding of the challenges and implications of implementing the TPR method, allowing other teachers to incorporate it into their classrooms.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focused on teachers' pedagogical knowledge of the Total Physical Response Method, not any other teaching methods, particularly in primary schools of the Al-Dafniya Education Office in Misurata. The participants were purposely chosen according to specific inclusion criteria.

Literature Review

Total Physical Response (TPR)

In the 1960s, James Asher proposed the idea that language acquisition begins with comprehension and concludes with verbal expression (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Built on this foundation, Sano (1986) described TPR as "a teaching method which requires learners to respond physically to imperatives given by the teacher, who has contrived these imperatives in such a way as to cover the linguistic items that he or she wishes to teach" (p. 270). Asher (1969) further believed that learning through TPR represents how children acquire their first language. When they start talking, they usually comprehend more than they produce. Consequently, the idea behind TPR is to have students hear a command in the new language and respond correspondingly with a physical movement.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of the TPR method. They showed that this method was effective in teaching vocabulary to primary school pupils, and it enhanced their motivation in the classroom (Rosiana et al., 2025; Salma & Wafa, 2024; Yanti et al., 2024; Hutahaeen et al., 2024). TPR also enhances listening skills. To illustrate this, Montecarlo and Abugadam (2023) examined the impact of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method on the listening comprehension of third-grade Libyan pupils using short stories. The study involved 27 primary school pupils from Shuhada Almatar School in Misurata and followed a pre-experimental design. A pre-test was administered before implementing the TPR, followed by a post-test after one month of the intervention. The results revealed that TPR was an effective method for teaching short stories, and significantly, it improved pupils' listening comprehension and increased their classroom motivation.

Similar research was conducted by Abugadam (2023) about teachers' pedagogical knowledge and implementation of TPR in primary schools in Misurata city, Libya. The researcher used observation and semi-structured interviews as research instruments. The participants were 33 female primary school teachers teaching from first to sixth grades. The findings of the observation showed that teacher participants were linguistically incompetent, and some of them were teaching the same way they were taught at school. Only a few teachers used pictures or taught songs to pupils using TPR. Others neglected short story lessons because they considered them useless. It was also observed that teacher participants lacked teaching aids. The findings of the interview revealed that teachers used Arabic excessively due to pupils' low comprehension. Only a few teachers mentioned that they used commands to teach their pupils. Moreover, teachers expressed that their pupils did not use English in the classroom except for simple words such as 'water, please!' All teacher participants had no background in TPR except for one teacher, but she did not implement it in the classroom. Teachers did not even know other teaching methods, as they claimed that they had forgotten them. Additionally, the majority of them did not undergo any training courses or attend any seminars.

Through classroom observations and interviews, Abugadam (2023) investigated primary school teachers' pedagogical knowledge and their applications of the TPR method; however, the study excluded the primary schools of the Al-Dafniya Education Office. The current study fills this knowledge gap by exploring teachers' pedagogical knowledge with TPR specifically in the primary schools under the Al-Dafniya Education Office through using semi-structured interview as the only instrument of data collection.

English Language Teachers in Primary Schools

Teaching young learners is considered a challenge for some primary school teachers because children have different ways of learning i.e. they like playing, songs, and colours unlike adults; thus, some primary school teachers encounter difficulties in understanding children's mindsets. According to Halliwell (1992), when teaching language lessons, the classes are often lively and challenging. It is unreasonable to expect children to behave flawlessly all the time, especially when they are being expected to participate and be creative. Teachers should strive for positive outcomes while maintaining realistic expectations. Being realistic includes attempting to educate effectively while acknowledging issues such as having a large number of students and with uninterested ones. Teachers need to take a fair and constructive approach to managing children's behavior.

Additionally, English primary school teachers should consider that children enjoy being involved in activities, and they learn more effectively when they engage their bodies and senses. According to Scott and Ytreberg (1991), children's attention spans are short, and they learn effectively when they use their hands, eyes, and ears.

When primary school teachers use English, some of them may worry that children will not comprehend them. However, a recent study by Abugadam (2025) investigated the attitudes and interaction of Libyan fifth-grade pupils towards their teacher's use of English. The study involved 58 pupils from Al Ghiran Al Markazia School in Misurata and revealed that pupils comprehended and interacted with their teacher when a range of

classroom activities was used. They responded positively to their teacher's use of English, although they admitted that they encountered difficulty using it in real-world contexts. This is in line with Halliwell (1992) and Pinter (2006), who explained that children can understand their teachers' use of the target language even through intonation, visual aids, context, and facial expressions. Nunan (2010) further emphasized that the TPR method enhances pupils' comprehension, since they follow directions from their teacher or an audio recording using their bodies during activities. These exercises complement various learning styles such as kinaesthetic, auditory, and visual learning, and help pupils stay engaged. To illustrate this, Slattery and Willis (2001) explained that for children who are beginning to learn English, "follow the leader" is an excellent exercise, considering that they see and comprehend what to do. Children can alternately give the commands to others once they are accustomed to the task.

Being an English primary school teacher requires a broad range of knowledge related to language competence, the curriculum, and how children learn. Richards (2018) grouped this essential knowledge into three main categories. First, subject knowledge means that teachers do not just rely on their prior education but reviewing their knowledge and extending their comprehension through study or training courses. Second, pedagogical subject knowledge requires teachers to teach a subject in a way that young learners can comprehend through appropriate exercises, examples, and stories. This knowledge is expanded through teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional development. Finally, curricular knowledge expects teachers to be cognizant of the national curriculum, relevant policies, and available teaching materials. Although it is not required for teachers to be completely up to date in every field, they should be aware of who to consult and be ready to support others when needed.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach, specifically adopting a case study design. The qualitative approach focuses on understanding the world from the inside, not just in laboratory or controlled settings. It examines people's experiences, their life stories, interactions in real life, as well as documents (i.e., texts, pictures, film, or music) to understand experiences and interactions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Qualitative research seeks to interpret the world from the perspective of the participants. In line with this, a case study design was selected, since it allows for an in-depth exploration of a particular group or setting. A case study is described as a design that operates on the assumption that the selected case is typical, but rather reflects common characteristics of similar cases, allowing it to offer valuable insights into the broader group or context from which it originates (Kumar, 2011).

A qualitative case study design was selected because the study investigates a specific bounded group, particularly, the primary school teachers within the Al-Dafniya Education Office in Misurata. Since the research aims to understand teachers' pedagogical knowledge of the Total Physical Response Method rather than to measure variables or test a hypothesis, the case study provides the flexibility and richness needed to gather detailed data. This design allows the researcher to gain understanding teachers' knowledge and practice in an authentic educational setting.

Participants and Setting

The participants of this study were 10 female English language primary school teachers from six schools in the Al-Dafniya Education Office in Misurata, Libya. The teachers taught English from first to sixth grade. Eight teachers were graduates of the Faculty of Education, and only two of them were graduates of the Faculty of Arts.

The sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling. According to Kothari (2004), this type of sampling is used when researchers use their judgment to choose participants whom they believe accurately reflect the characteristics of the population.

Data-Gathering Instrument

This study used a semi-structured interview to collect the data. The interview questions were taken from Abugadam (2023). It was aimed to gain in-depth knowledge about teachers' background on the TPR method. The interview questions included six open-ended questions exploring the teaching methods used by English primary school teachers in their classrooms, specifically their understanding of Total Physical Response (TPR).

Data Gathering Procedure

In order to obtain rich data for this study, a series of steps was taken. First, official permission was requested through a formal letter from the Dean of the Faculty of Languages and Translation to the Education Inspectorate of Misurata, the head of the Office of Basic Education, and primary school headteachers. Once access to schools was approved, teachers were asked for individual telephone interviews. This method was chosen due to the teachers' busy schedules and time constraints that prevented in-person interviews.

The teachers received complete information regarding the aims of this study. I requested and obtained their consent to audio-record the interviews. While they could choose to respond in either Arabic or English, one teacher opted to speak in English; however, other teachers preferred to have the interview in Arabic. Each interview session lasted approximately 20 minutes. Teachers' responses were transcribed verbatim. I translated the Arabic responses into English. In order to establish the trustworthiness of the findings, especially their credibility, the transcription along with the translation were given to a translator to evaluate it.

Data Analysis

The data of this study were analysed thematically. According to Nowell et al. (2017), "[t]hematic analysis is an apt qualitative method that can be used when working in research teams and analysing large qualitative data sets" (p. 1). By using thematic analysis, I coded and classified the data, which allowed me to develop significant themes grounded in the participants' responses and the information gathered. In other words, I highlighted the similar responses, coded them, and categorised them under specific themes.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure the credibility of the findings of this study, ethical guidelines were carefully adhered to. Following the attainment of consent from the Education Inspectorate of Misurata, the Primary Education Office, and the relevant headteachers across the six schools, I began the process of data collection. With the guarantee that school names would remain confidential, all participating teachers were fully informed about the nature and goals of this study. They were also assured of their right to withdraw if they wanted. All participants willingly agreed to be interviewed and recorded at a convenient time. Furthermore, they were given the choice to talk either in English or Arabic during the telephone interview. Regarding participants' concerns about anonymity, I guaranteed that their identities and personal details would be kept confidential. In this study, I assigned pseudonyms to the participants to protect their real identities.

Findings and Discussion

Language Use in the Classroom

The majority of teacher participants reported using both Arabic and English in the classroom. When they were asked which one they used most, half of them (teachers Huda, Rahaf, Amna, Laila, & Taqwa) replied that they used English more than Arabic because they wanted to immerse their pupils in the target language. For teacher Taqwa, she had a different answer because, according to her, this was the first time she taught the primary level. She was teaching at the preparatory level and was suffering due to the low English proficiency and comprehension of her students. Thus, she decided to familiarise her first-grade pupils with the English language, and she noticed that they were excited and wanted to learn, unlike the preparatory-level students. However, other teachers such as Farah, Amira, Huda, Fadwa, and Saja replied that they used Arabic more than English because they assumed that their pupils did not understand English. They said that they read the words in English and then immediately translated them into Arabic.

The findings of the study showed that half of the teachers used English more than Arabic to teach their pupils indicating the teachers' awareness of the need for pupils to be immersed in the English language. Similar to these findings, Oktaviani (2017) found that the teachers in the Elementary Schools of Lubuklinggau Timur 1 considered learning English from an early stage to be crucial for some key reasons. They believed that starting to learn English early could lead to greater proficiency, which would be advantageous for future employment and could offer social and economic benefits in the years to come. This shows that teachers in both school settings share the view that teaching English to young children is important.

In contrast, Farah, Amira, Huda, Fadwa, and Saja claimed that they used Arabic more often because they believed that their pupils could not comprehend English. This view, however, appears to be inconsistent with Abugadam's (2025) findings, which showed that fifth-grade pupils could comprehend their teacher when she used English in an English foreign language classroom. This implies that pupils' comprehension skills may be higher than some teachers' perspectives. As a result, an overreliance on Arabic would not always be required and might even limit students' exposure to the language.

Teachers' Use of Commands

All of the teacher participants replied that they used commands during their classes. First, they demonstrated the commands, then they acted them out with their pupils. However, they did not write these commands on the board. The only exception was teacher Fadwa, who said that she did not use commands in class. Instead, she strictly followed the textbook because she found that the fifth-grade English lessons were difficult for her pupils to comprehend. She added that her pupils even questioned why they were studying lessons about other countries such as India, Oman, and Lebanon; stating that they had never learned about them in Arabic.

The findings demonstrated that the majority of the teacher participants used commands to teach their pupils. However, even though the pupils were acting out these orders, teachers did not write them on the board.

Besides, one teacher was unable to use the commands due to the complexity of the textbook. The same problem was raised in Abugadam's (2023) study, where two teacher participants complained that the primary English textbooks for fourth and fifth grades were above the pupils' comprehension level, which led to the frequent use of Arabic in the classroom by these teachers. This concern should be taken into consideration as the topics in primary textbooks should be related to the pupils' real life, which will help them use the language outside the classroom. According to Gipps' (2000) study, teachers pointed out two key limitations. Firstly, children struggled to recall information that was not connected to their daily lives. The second concern raised by the teachers was the risk of over-transmission. They explained that simply delivering information did not mean children were listening, and learning would not occur if teachers spoke for too long without quickly involving the pupils in an activity.

Using Songs to Teach English

When teacher participants were asked if they used songs with body movements to teach English, teachers Amira, Amna, Laila, and Taqwa replied that they taught their pupils English songs using physical gestures, which made their pupils interested during the class. Notably, these teachers stated that they purchased the speakers themselves because their schools did not provide them with teaching equipment such as English labs or audio devices. Teacher Amira observed that while she was acting out the songs with the class, even the shy pupils were enthusiastic and happy when they were acting out the song with the whole class. Similarly, teacher Laila remarked that her pupils liked the songs, and they were singing them together using movements outside the classroom during breaks. In contrast, teacher Huda said that the use of songs depended on the lesson. If the lesson included a song, she would use it; otherwise, she would not. The remaining teachers (Farah, Nuha, Rahaf, Fadwa, & Saja) replied that they did not use songs because they did not have speakers and CDs. Teachers Farah and Nuha said that they treated the song lessons like any other regular reading texts, and they moved to the next lesson immediately.

Some of the abovementioned teachers used songs to teach English, incorporating body movements, since they found that pupils were motivated and active during the class. English songs can help pupils learn the language easily and enjoyably. They also have the opportunity to listen to the accurate pronunciation of the words from native speakers through the audio. Teaching English through songs that incorporate body movements helps pupils associate and recall words and their meanings more accurately. This finding aligns with the study of Binti et al. (2024), which showed that combining TPR with songs enhanced pupils' memory in terms of spelling, pronunciation, and recalling words. Furthermore, this integration developed pupils' creativity, motivation, engagement, and enhanced the classroom environment.

Whereas, some of the other aforementioned teachers did not use songs to teach English because their schools were not equipped with the needed instructional materials. This is similar to the findings of Abugadam (2023), in which some of the teacher participants revealed that they could not use songs to teach English to their pupils due to the lack of CDs, English labs, and speakers in their schools.

Pupils' Use of the English Language

Most of teacher participants (Amira, Huda, Fadwa, Laila, Taqwa, & Saja) revealed that their pupils did not use English in the classroom. A few teachers (Nuha, Rahaf & Amna) said that their pupils used simple words such as 'drink water,' and teacher Farah replied that a few pupils said 'bathroom' when they wanted to go to the toilet.

This finding is similar to the findings of Abugadam (2023), which showed that all teacher participants in the interview revealed that their pupils did not use English unless with very simple words like 'water.' All primary school teachers should take into account the skill of speaking. They should not expect too much from young learners because they are in the stage where they listen, figure out the new language that they are learning, and save the words in their minds, even though they do not immediately demonstrate this understanding. With the teacher's constant use of English in the classroom, pupils may utilise these words and sentences outside the classroom with their classmates or their family. The immersion of the English language is necessary to ingrain in one way or another in their minds, and they will use it when they are ready to do so. As Reilly and Ward (1997) emphasised that asking young learners to speak early on can result in significant emotional discomfort. It is important to understand that language acquisition is working even when children are not verbally participating. Additionally, some children might not speak in the classroom but will use the language in their home environment to show their understanding. Therefore, language teachers should consider that children need a considerable amount of time to absorb a language before they begin to produce it.

Teachers' Lack of Knowledge about Teaching Methods

The teacher participants in this study lack knowledge of teaching methods, particularly TPR. When they were requested to provide some examples of the teaching methods that they had studied, all of them replied that they had forgotten them. Only teacher Huda, who holds an M.A. degree in Applied Linguistics, replied, "What I can remember is Communicative Approach and Grammar Method [*sic*]." When these teachers were asked how

they prepared their lessons if they did not know that TPR is the recommended method in the primary English textbooks, half of them (Rahaf, Farah, Huda, Fadwa, & Taqwa) answered that they prepared the lesson according to the Teacher's Book, but other teachers (Amira, Nuha, Amna, & Laila) replied that they used the Internet and watched videos to help them prepare their lessons. Teacher Saja replied that she shared the Teacher's Book with her colleagues because they had only one copy in the school for the fifth grade. For teacher Rahaf, she criticised the teaching methods that she studied in college for two semesters, saying that they were useless.

This finding is similar to Abugadam (2023), which showed that all teachers in the study lacked knowledge of teaching methods, especially the TPR, except for one teacher who knew it but was unaware that it was the recommended method for the primary level. This finding is also consistent with the findings of Hamed and Fadhil's (2019) study, which demonstrated that teachers were still deficient in their understanding of teaching methodology although most of them held B.A. degrees. According to Dorgu (2015), teachers need not only a strong understanding of various teaching methods but also the ability to know how and when to use them appropriately.

Insufficient Professional Development

Only two teachers (Laila & Taqwa) replied that they attended training courses in 2012 and 2013. Teacher Laila said that she attended three courses, which were about how to teach students using flashcards and how to deal with them. In addition, she attended three other courses for self-development to improve her English at her own expense. She said that she joined the courses because the instructor was a native speaker and she wanted to talk with natives. The other eight teacher participants highlighted that they did not take any training courses or attended any seminars. Teacher Amira was complaining that she felt sorry for herself because she worked hard during the school year, but the English inspector did not visit her. She said she wanted an educational expert to attend her classes to guide her and to know whether she was on the right track or not.

The findings showed that six of the teacher participants were untrained and had not attended any seminars. In addition, teacher Amira remarked that the inspector had never visited her although she was waiting for his guidance. According to Omar (2019), teachers in Libya frequently teach without inspection and rarely attend training courses or seminars. Furthermore, they are often not given opportunities to share their ideas or experiences with the curriculum content. However, even the teachers who had received training were not trained on how to use the Libyan English textbooks currently employed at the primary level. The findings also revealed that those trained teachers had attended courses many years ago, which may negatively affect their teaching practices and their pupils' achievement. This aligns with Orafi's (2008) study, which found that Libyan teachers' inadequate training and the lack of respect for their professional experience made it difficult to implement the new curriculum at that time.

Implications

The findings regarding teachers' language use in primary school classrooms indicated a lack of a unified method. The contrast that emerged among teachers who initiate using English over Arabic and those who depend on Arabic more than English can imply that there is an absence of pedagogical consistency using a unified approach, which leads to different learning outcomes among primary school pupils. This difference depends on the teachers' use of language in the class. On one hand, some teachers believe that immersion in English has a significant role in helping their students learn, which can eventually improve their proficiency. However, they should also consider that excessive use of English may lead to misunderstandings because of pupils' differences. On the other hand, teachers who overuse their native language may negatively affect their pupils' English language acquisition and proficiency level. Thus, there should be a balance in knowing when to use pupils' first language and when to avoid it. This finding suggests a strong need for primary school teachers' training on how to teach English to young learners in a foreign language classroom.

The findings also revealed that the majority of teachers used commands, which is one of the TPR techniques, in their classrooms. Although they were not aware of TPR as a method, they rely on kinaesthetic learning, considering that pupils at this stage prefer to move and be active in class, which makes the language understandable for them. Obeying teachers' commands and acting them out can aid their listening skills and change the class atmosphere. However, the absence of writing the commands on the board may not benefit visual learners who learn from what they see on the board. This absence in writing the orders may not help pupils connect with the spoken and written language. Writing the orders on the board, such as 'walk to the door and come back to your desk,' can aid pupils in reading and writing skills because some of them may memorise the spelling, which helps them to read.

In contrast, only one teacher said that she could not use commands due to the complexity of the fifth-grade English textbook. The experience of teacher Fadwa and her pupils' direct questions highlight a significant issue with the perception of the English textbook content. The focus on distant countries such as India, Oman, and Lebanon, which the pupils have no prior knowledge of or any exposure to the Arabic curriculum, creates disconnection and a lack of motivation. This disconnect between the textbook of fifth grade and pupils' real world

makes them feel that the English language is complicated and abstract, which leads them to have negative attitudes towards learning the language.

The findings showed that integrating songs with body movements changed the classroom environment, and pupils were delighted and enthusiastic during the class. Teacher Amira's observation about shy pupils becoming excited, and teacher Laila's comment about pupils who are using the songs with body movements outside the classroom strongly indicate that this method increases pupils' enjoyment and motivation. This is in line with the goals of TPR, which aims to relieve stress and create enjoyable learning environment.

The minimal use of English by pupils indicate the need for diverse activities to motivate them and encourage their class participation. The fact that only a few pupils used isolated words such as 'drink water' or 'bathroom' suggests that English has not been integrated into their classroom activities yet. This is consistent with the TPR method, which emphasises learning by only hearing the target language and acting out the orders. Teachers help pupils start using English terms more easily by implementing TPR activities through allowing them to give commands, use gestures, and perform physical movements.

If teachers have forgotten or were never properly taught about TPR, it is impossible for them to effectively implement it in their classrooms, even if the textbooks recommend it. Without a solid grounding in effective methodologies such as TPR, teachers are resorting to other means of lesson preparation. They rely on the Teacher's Book, or internet videos, or even teach the way they believe is correct, which suggests a lack of structured guidance. Rahaf's criticism of her study at college is a critical indictment. If teachers consider their Teaching Methodology course useless, it explains why they might not remember or value specific methods including TPR. This indicates an issue in teacher education that needs to be addressed. The fact that TPR is recommended in the Libyan primary English textbooks but largely unknown or forgotten by teachers shows a significant disconnection between pedagogy and classroom practice. There is a misalignment between the recommended methods and actual teaching. Furthermore, sharing just one Teacher's Book creates another problem. Even if a teacher likes the idea of implementing TPR as stipulated in the book, it would be challenging without having their own guide.

The fact that only two out of ten teachers attended training courses, which were over a decade ago, specifically in 2012 and 2013, suggests a general lack of ongoing training in the current teaching methodology. This means that several teachers have not been introduced to or updated on the benefits and practical implementation of TPR. Most teachers have not participated in training or seminars which indicates a deficiency of support for teacher professional development from the education system. This lack of opportunities prevents them from learning modern and effective teaching techniques. Amira's complaint underscores the real need for feedback from experts such as English inspectors. When teachers like Amira are left to their own, they may not realise the extent to which they implement TPR or whether they are successful in capturing their pupils' attention. This absence of feedback also implies that misconceptions about or improper applications of TPR would not be corrected. Even if the primary English textbook recommended it, the inadequate training in this method would affect the proper implementation of the pedagogical instruction provided in the textbook. This leads to a gap between what is supposed to be taught and what is taught in the classroom.

Limitation of the Study

There is a scarcity of studies in the related literature on this topic.

Conclusion

This study explores primary school teachers' pedagogical knowledge of the Total Physical Response Method in schools of the Al-Dafniya Education Office in Misurata. The findings demonstrate that although TPR is the recommended method in the Libyan primary English textbooks, most teachers lack awareness or understanding of it. While several participants apply some techniques of TPR unconsciously such as commands and songs with body movements, these practices are not often supported by training. In addition, limited access to resources and insufficient training opportunities hindered the effective application of TPR. These discrepancies show a mismatch between the realities of the classroom and curriculum design.

Recommendations

The Libyan Ministry of Education and educational stakeholders should equip schools with the necessary teaching tools, redesign the textbooks to reflect pupils' real-life experiences, and provide training courses to English primary school teachers. Future research may expand this investigation to other regions and include classroom observations to provide a more comprehensive view of TPR implementation in Libyan primary schools.

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The author(s) declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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