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研究論文

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USING TPR / TPRS TECHNIQUES ON THE
AMOUNT OF WORDS WRITTEN IN ENGLISH
CLASS AT JAPANESE COLLEGE

日本の大学の英語の授業における TPR/ TPRS 法がライティングの単語数に
及ぼす効果に関する研究

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Abstract

This paper is based on the author's research into teaching proficiency through reading and storytelling (TPRS) and the teaching tool of total physical response (TPR) and his experience of teaching English as a foreign language to non-English-major students in Japan. The author's hypothesis was that teaching using TPRS and TPR in college English classes over two semesters as opposed to one, would increase the amount of words written by the college students. Two classes of Japanese college students studied English using TPRS and TPR techniques for one academic year. A component of their first and second semester exams was to write a story using as many English words as possible in response to seeing a cartoon strip of pictures. The data was statistically analyzed and the results showed the number of words-per-picture increased at the end of the second semester, compared with the first semester, so supporting the author's hypothesis. The author discussed the limitations of this study and proposed further research.

キーワード：TPR, TPRS, Storytelling, EFL, 書く英語

Key words：Total Physical Response (TPR), TPRS, Storytelling, EFL, Written English

This paper follows on from the author's detailed review of TPR and TPRS as teaching methods (Jones, 2009 & 2011) which described how TPRS and TPR could be used in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language in a compulsory course for non-English majors,

at a junior college in Japan. In the author's experience teaching this course was challenging since English is a compulsory subject. This resulted in students with levels of ability ranging from "false beginner", as discussed by Bengoa (2008), to intermediate, as

well as students whose motivation ranged from good to poor in the same class. So the author decided to use TPR and TPRS teaching techniques in a 30 lesson English course over one academic year. The author chose to use TPR to review language that the participants had been exposed to. As well as improving the participants' ability to access language information, TPR lessons allow the participants to feel that they are successful language learners. This is important as "nothing motivates like success" (Gross, 2010). A detailed review of TPR can be found in Jones (2011) but in summary the TPR lessons involved the teacher introducing a limited set of vocabulary, approximately 16 words or less in each lesson. Each word was supported by a gesture, a picture or a prop. These words were arranged into commands spoken by the teacher to the participants. If the participants successfully responded to the commands, then the teacher knew that comprehension had been successful (Asher 2009).

After the TPR section of the course the participants would have successfully comprehended a foundation of English that they would use in the remaining TPRS classes of the course. The TPRS classes built upon the basics acquired in the TPR section of the course, a detailed review of TPRS can be found in the author's previous paper (Jones, 2011). In short, the TPRS method involved the participants comprehending the meaning of key words and phrases; then these phrases were used in a story. The participants' comprehension of the story was assessed by using various exercises including answering questions, and translating the English story into their native language of Japanese.

Finally, the participants were scaffolded by cartoon strips, to write stories following a similar story line as the base story.

The author predicted that using these techniques would increase the amount of words that the participants would write at the end of the course, as opposed to half way through the course.

Method

Participants

The 79 Japanese participants in this study were 75 first year students and 4 second year students at a junior college in Japan. Their average age at the start of the course was 18 years old. The participants were 94% women and 6% men. The participants were all non-English majors whose English ability ranged from "false beginner" level as discussed by Bengoa (2008), to intermediate level. The participants had already studied English for six years before entering college and had been exposed to most of the language items required in this course. However, most participants were unable to use the language that they had previously experienced and so were at the false beginner level of English ability.

In addition, many of the participants had low motivation to continue learning English. They felt it was difficult, that they were not suited to learn languages, that they would not need English in their future careers, and they were only taking the course because English was a compulsory subject (Jones 2011).

Research Design

The research was designed to test the effect of the independent variable, which was the number of TPR and TPRS classes that the participants attended, on the dependent

variable which was the amount of words written by the participants.

Measures

This investigation measured how many words were written by the college students after 15 lessons and 30 lessons. In the writing test, the participants were instructed to write as many words as possible and that the number of words written, as opposed to grammatical accuracy would be used to calculate their grade. The total word count was divided by the number of pictures in the cartoon strip to give a words-per-picture value for each participant.

Procedure

The participants attended the compulsory English course once a week for a 90 minute class over one academic year. The course was split into two 15 lesson semesters and taught using TPR and TPRS methodology. To assist the participants, a TPRS textbook was used called "Look, I can Talk!" by Blaine Ray (1990). This textbook followed the following format. First, pictures of approximately a dozen vocabulary words were displayed; the following page had the written word associated with each picture. The next page had a cartoon strip story, which used the previous vocabulary words. The next page had a model story written following the cartoon strip. Following the story, was a set of exercises designed to test the participant's written comprehension of the story. In addition, there were questions designed to scaffold the participants in creative writing. The final two pages of the textbook had two new cartoon strips which followed a similar theme as the original story. These additional cartoon strips were used as prompts for the participants to write creatively.

The participants were split into two classes alphabetically. From the first lesson the author wanted to impress on the participants that they were going to be learning English in a different way than they had probably studied in high school. This was achieved by changing the layout of the classroom. In a typical language classroom the participants sit at desks in rows facing the teacher. Each participant can see the teacher and the back head of the participant in front of them. During this course, the author used the classroom sitting plan as recommended by Garcia (1996) which involved the participants sitting facing each other in two sections facing each other. This was done to allow the participants to see the faces of half the class, as well as providing a space for the teacher and participants to use.

In the course the first 6 classes used TPR techniques and the remaining 9 classes used the TPRS method. In the second semester, the same participants undertook a further 15 classes of English taught using the TPRS method.

At the end of 15 classes and 30 classes the participants were given a test of their English listening, reading and writing ability. The writing test consisted of the participants writing a story to match the cartoon strip of pictures they were presented with.

The data was collected with due regard to issues raised by Swann (2001) which say: "no observation is entirely free of interpretation" and there is "a danger of unintended bias, in that researcher's may notice features that support a point they wish to make and ignore counter-evidence".

Note, that the names of the participants were not reported to protect their identity.

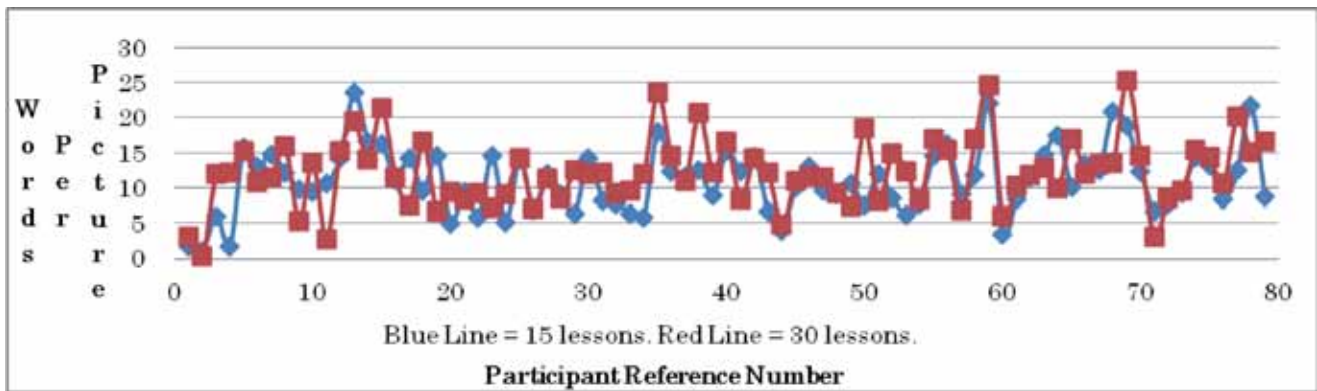


Figure1. The words-per-picture written for each participant after 15 lessons and 30 lessons

An arbitrary number was assigned to the participants in ascending order from the lowest word count of the first test. The same participant number was used for both tests to allow for comparison between the two tests.

Results

The number of words that the participants wrote in the writing test after the first semester's 15 classes were finished was counted for each participant. As there were 8 pictures in the first test's cartoon strip this figure was divided by 8, to calculate a words-per-picture value. Similarly, the number of words that the participants wrote in the writing test after 30 classes at the end of the second semester was counted for each participant. As there were 6 pictures in this cartoon strip this figure was divided by 6, to calculate a words-per-picture value. See Appendix A.

As the same participants took the test after 15 and 30 classes respectively a paired samples t-test with two tails was undertaken on the data using to determine if the difference in results reached statistical significance. In addition, the words-per-picture data was statistically analyzed to determine the mean and standard deviation. The percentage of participants who increased their words-

per-picture value between the test after 15 weeks and the test after 30 weeks was also calculated.

It was found that in the test after 30 weeks the participants wrote more words-per-picture ($M = 12.1$, $SD = 4.9$) compared to the test after 15 weeks ($M = 11.1$, $SD = 4.7$). It was found that the percentage of participants who increased their words-per-picture score from the test after 30 weeks compared to the test after 15 weeks was 63%.

A paired samples t-test with two tails was conducted to examine the differences in the words-per-picture written in the test after 15 classes and the words-per-picture written in the test after 30 classes. There was a significant difference in the number of words-per-picture written after 15 weeks ($M = 11.1$, $SD = 4.7$) and 30 weeks ($M = 12.1$, $SD = 4.9$); $t(78) = -2.11$, $p = 0.038$. See Appendix B.

The p value was 0.38 which is less than the alpha level of 0.5, therefore the difference is significant and so these results support the author's hypothesis that teaching English using TPRS and TPR over two semesters as opposed to one, would increase the amount of words written by college students in a writing test prompted by cartoon strips.

Discussion

As the author predicted, teaching English using the TPRS method for an additional 15 weeks after completing the 15 week TPR & TPRS lessons, increased the number of words that the participants wrote per picture whilst prompted by cartoon strip pictures.

The results lend weight to the author's view that using TPR and TPRS methods is effective to teach English to non English major students of different levels of ability and motivation.

However, it is also acknowledged that due to the small sample population, the results from this small scale action research are not statistically significant. Some other limitations of this study were that there were other possible reasons why these results were obtained and compounding variables across the two tests include for example: the difficulty of each cartoon story, the number of pictures in each story, the familiarity of the subject with the material, their motivation and time taken in writing the stories.

Reflecting on this research the author will look at how to remove or reduce compounding factors in subsequent research investigations. The author proposes to further investigate the merit of using TPR and TPRS techniques in teaching English to Japanese language students. In order to do this the author proposes to remove the TPRS textbook from the lessons so that the teacher and the participants could collectively construct stories during the lessons. This is closer to the TPRS methodology recommended by Gross (2010) and the author predicts it would yield better results. However, removing the textbook could lead to participant resistance in the teaching methodology,

as the cultural norm in Japan is to teach classes using a textbook.

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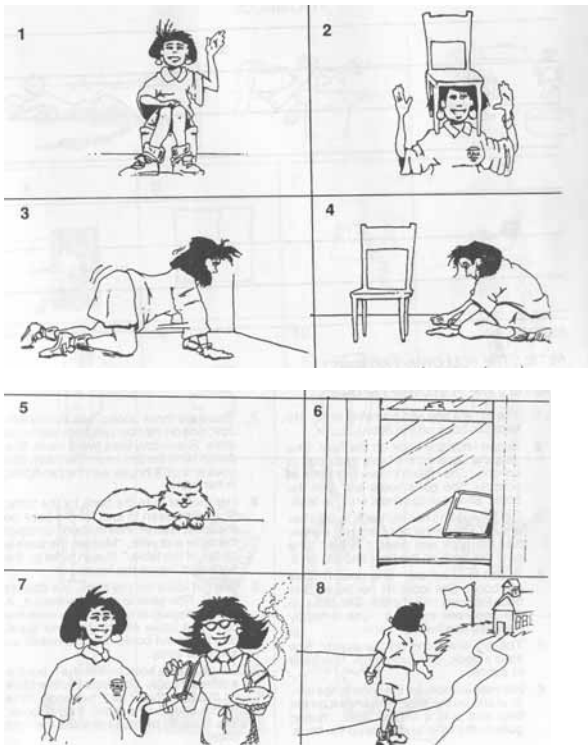
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Appendix A

The cartoon strips used to elicit English stories - Test 1 and Test 2

Test 1 – 15 lessons

Test 2 – 30 lessons



Appendix B

SPSS output for the number of words-per-picture written after 15 lessons and 30 lessons

Paired Samples Statistics:					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	15 lessons	11.0749	79	4.65010	.52318
	30 lessons	12.0989	79	4.86518	.54738

Paired Samples Correlations:				
		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	15 lessons – 30 lessons	79	.590	.000

Paired Samples Test:									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	15 lessons – 30 lessons	-1.102392	4.31038	.48496	-1.98940	-.05845	-2.111	78	.038