

The Application of TPR English Teaching Method in Primary Schools

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Abstract—In recent years English teaching has showed a obvious tendency of low age in China. Many experts believe that Childhood is a critical period of language development and we should pay attention to the development of their unique proficiency of studying foreign language. TPR Teaching Method is very popular because of its nimble teaching way and scientific teaching theory. This article analyzes the application of TPR English teaching method in primary schools and finally makes some advice about training tips and precautions of TPR teaching method.

Keywords—TPR Teaching Method; primary Schools; application

I. INTRODUCTION

There is one kind of popular TPR (Total Physical Response) teaching method in the domain of language teaching at present; the domestic scholars translate it into the “pure, somatic and effect” teaching method. It was founded by Ashel who was an American famous scholar in the late 60s; he tried hard to carry on the language teaching through body’s activity on the basis of harmony and consistence between the spoken language and the motion. The TPR teaching method belongs to an “active teaching method”, namely one new language teaching method according to the developmental psychology, cognition psychology, language theory of learning etc. At the beginning of studying mother tongue, the children merely listen to others’ speech or look at others’ expression, but can not able to make the response to speech and movement on own initiative. Along with children’s more and more familiar to the language, they start to imitate and make response to others with their simple words or movement. When children can quite thorough understanding of the language pattern, they learn gradually with certain form to compose the words into simple sentences, and start with sentences or complex bodily movements to express their own thoughts. Children studies mother tongue’s process is a highly harmonious and consistent process of spoken language and motion. In this process both language and movement are throughout unified. The TPR teaching method regards the process of foreign language’s study as that of the mother tongue’s study, and it may definitely be looked like children study mother tongue, foreign language teaching is designed according to the study way of mother tongue, unification of language and movement is stressed in the foreign language teaching process. This article will study the

application of TPR teaching method in primary schools; it is very meaningful for studying English of children.

II. APPLICATION OF TPR TEACHING METHOD IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS ENGLISH

The general objective of TPR teaching method refers to the fluent spoken language which is taught in preliminary stage. Skills of basic speaking are the ultimate objective. The concrete guidance goal is decided by learners’ need, the goal must be achieved through taking imperative sentences as the basis in primary schools.

A. Curricular Design

If we wish to study the application of TPR English teaching method in primary schools, we should first analyze the curricular design first, because the TPR teaching method must be implemented through curriculum. Generally speaking, the curricular design should consider the curricular compendium, types of teaching and studies, roles of students.

1) *Curricular compendium*: Curricular standard which is based on the sentences, grammar and glossary’s standard, and it is the basic for the choice of teaching contents. It is different from those methods which take the grammar or the structure as languages’ key elements, TPR English teaching method proposed that we should pay the first attention to the meaning and teaching the grammar by induction, but not the formality of phrases. The grammar’s characteristic and the glossary’s choice should be in accordance with their situation of utilization and the study’s atmosphere.

2) *Types of teaching and studies*: TPR English teaching method takes imperative sentences as the main activities of practice in the classroom. These practices are used to draw learner’s body’s movements and activities. When the teacher compiles the instruction, the instruction’s order should be grasped well. In line with the principle of hearing ahead, the teacher should say the instruction first, when students listen familiarly, then ask the students to repeat. When there is no difficult for them to repeat, then request them to make the expression. So we can summarize the sequence of the practice of imperative sentences: A teacher says the instruction and makes the movement of demonstration, the student listens and

observes; The teacher says the instruction and makes the movement of demonstration, then asks the students to do it so; The teacher says the instruction without the movement of demonstration and asks the students to do according to his instruction; The teacher says the instruction without the movement of demonstration and requests the student to repeat the instruction and to complete the movement; Ask a student to say the instruction, the teacher and other students together execute the order.

3) *Roles of Student*: TPR teaching method requires the students to be the listeners and the performers. They must listen to each order earnestly and make the response accurately with their bodies. The learners do not make any influence on study's contents; the contents of course are decided by the teacher according to the plan of curriculum. The students should also be able to identify and reorganized what they have studied before. They compose new sentences as well as control and appraise their own progresses.

4) *Roles of teacher*: When adopting TPR English teaching method, teachers should play fully very positive and direct roles of instruction. A teacher decides the course's contents and the teaching methods, thus the teacher needs to prepare a lesson earnestly and write down each few words which should be said in the classroom. The teacher decides the classroom's activity and order, the teacher instructs the students to perform mutually. This procedure conforms to the current teaching method of task's essential regulations and displays the teaching idea of taking the students as the central. The teacher provides not only the study's opportunity but also the responsibility of the best direction of language's studying, and students may internalize more easily the basic principle of the target language. The teacher controls students' language's input and provides students with raw materials of cognition in their own brains. The teacher also should allow the students to develop verbal skills in accordance with their own steps and should not underestimate the difficulty of studying foreign language. Otherwise their progress will be too quick and students can not transit well from a stage to another stage. Of course the mistake in the speech can not be tolerant excessively.

5) *Roles of instruction materials*: The curriculum of TPR English teaching method usually does not contain the basic teaching materials, because teachers' sound, movement and gestures are enough for beginners to study in classroom. Then the teacher will only use the universal things of classroom. Along with the deepening of curriculum, the teacher need manufacture or collect materials to support the contents of course, including drawing and word cards and so on. They can manufacture tools which are very suitable for the specific situations such as cinema, playground, home and supermarket. The students may use these tools to build scene, for example hold one ticket to go to the cinema or make purchases of things in the supermarket etc.

6) *Steps*: The steps of TPR English teaching method stress movements and activities of body, the teacher may unify the

teaching method of duty to require the students to make preparation for the teaching, then to enhance their interests of studies. If students study and play at the same time, their enthusiasm will be aroused fully; they will study with happy and relaxed moods.

B. Experimental result and analysis

The language teaching has indicated that the language's study is completed through three stages, namely the response of stimulation, internalization of language and rationalization. At the stage of response of stimulation, teachers only use the target language of teaching and give some very simple requests and instructions to the participants as well as some stimulation of language and movement, and the participants only be requested to understand attentively these requests and instructions, then to make response to the stimulation of the teaching. Usually through 10-15 hours' trainings, the participants can form a kind of chain of response simultaneously can obtain enough confidence and change the passive learning into the active learning, totally involve themselves into activities of teaching. Because the students already have understood basically the target language, on their own initiative they will imitate and create the language naturally. At the stage of the internalization of language, the language's pattern will be cognized by the students through their operation and the repeated stimulation. This kind of cognition is formed on their own initiative naturally on the basis of accumulation of massive perceptual knowledge, but not external input. The cognition already partially includes the language's constitutive contents; the students are able to act according to their understanding to the contents and the forms of the language initially. But this cognition is perceptual without being rational abstraction and sublimation. And the language is composed by abstract (grammar and structure) and non-abstract (glossary and knowledge). Above mentioned language teaching's steps mainly aim at the descriptive and non-abstract parts in the language. As a result of its non-intuitiveness, often the beginners are not easy to understand the abstract part in the language, in addition the abstract part's study is not necessary for the students to understand language's grammatical structure, so at the stage of rationalization, mainly the abstract language's study and the non-abstract parts are unified until the students generally complete the internalization of language. The grammar and structure's study may promote the students to understand truly language's essence and grasp skillfully the language.

III. TRAINING TIPS AND PRECAUTIONS OF TPR ENGLISH TEACHING METHOD'S APPLICATION

A. Application Pitfalls of TPR English Teaching Method

Although the TPR English teaching method suits well the children's instinct and conforms to the principle of the happy study, the children may feel the joy of study through the easy, good, much, and quick study; there is still some insufficiency. The TPR English teaching method is generally popular with

many English teachers in the primary schools, because there are big classes in our country generally and the TPR teaching method can be used to control and adjust the big classes and to show the new knowledge which is related to movement, it is a better teaching method that is good, practical, easy to be operated and make the preparation, and suitable for the schoolchild. Although TPR teaching method owns the above mentioned merits, through investigation of scholars, we have found there is some problems, and many teachers still misunderstand this kind of teaching method.

1) *Neglect of students' listening and understanding process.* This is one erroneous aspect of the application of TPR teaching method, namely when presenting or implementing the new contents, many teachers hold all possible opportunity to train the skills of speaking, but neglect the students' listening and understanding process.

A form of CLT (communicative language teaching) is based entirely on listening to comprehensible input. Students listen to commands in the foreign language and respond only through movement and action e.g. getting up and sitting down, turning round, putting things on shelves. The difficulty of the input is gradually increased and eventually students take over the teacher's role and give commands in the foreign language.

TPR teaching method mainly refers to the response of movement which is made by the children after they hear the instruction, but this teacher only requests the students to say "This is my...." this sentence pattern is not the response to the instruction of the teachers, in addition "This is my..." and "Touch your..." do not contain the meaning and the scene, which are the pure machinery response without practice of meaning. The teacher does not see clearly the TPR teaching method's four stages. The listen and do activities are particularly useful for beginners, ... this type of activity allows pupils to be actively learning and participating, but does not force them to speak or produce language till they are ready. After students have understood the new language's knowledge, it is impossible to replace teacher's role to give the instruction immediately, therefore before the stage of utilizing the language, some machinery's language practice is still needed (here machinery's language practice does not belong to the activity of TPR teaching method), then the students may be required to do the TPR activity in the real scene, namely the practice of meaning. From the above analysis, we can understand TPR teaching method stresses more hearing training of the students; the students make response to their understanding of language through listening and activities. At the final stage, the students replace teacher's role to say the instruction, their ability of language has been improved in the real scene, and thus the teacher should encourage students to creatively say long or complex instruction at this stage. For example: Touch your apple and orange. Touch your yellow banana with left hand. Touch your red apple with your both hands, and so on. The teacher may examine the students and his own teaching effect through student's movement.

2) *Neglect of purpose of language practice.* Another erroneous zone of the application of TPR English teaching method refers to neglect of purpose of language practice, namely linguistic purpose has been neglected. We can analyze this erroneous zone through the following example: A teacher's contents of teaching are: Write down some alphabets. Pick up the paper. Blow up the balloon. Ride a bicycle. The teacher shows the above sentence patterns through the movements as follows: write down "A" or other alphabets on a sheet of paper with a pencil; pick up one paper on the ground.

After so many times of repetition, the teacher requires the children to repeat three times of the above contents together. Many people will worry about whether this kind of activity can achieve the good effect or the students' response. Through these activities, the students almost can not speak out the sentence pattern independently besides repetition of action. At here the teacher has used the real balloon and the movement to help the student to remember the sentence pattern, it is very helpful for the students to understand and remember them, but afterward the following simple and mechanical repetition and practice, children, and especially high grade students will easily lose their interest or feel terrible.

Therefore, when the teacher designs the activity of TPR English teaching method, it is the first important thing for the teacher to grasp the goal of language's practice clearly. On the basis of the children's understanding of language, they are able to make the response and speak the instructional sentence, but not only the simple and mechanical movement. Otherwise the TPR English teaching method may be a form, but not a true meaning. In addition, the form of practice may be various, such as: first, form of the teacher and the students. The teacher gives the instruction and the students make the movement; second, form of the students and the group. In six persons of groups or four persons of groups a student speaks out the instruction and other students make the response; third, form of the students and the students. In these two persons of groups a student speaks out the instruction, another student makes the movement, then both of them exchange from one role into another. Next, the teacher must pay great attention to classroom's monitoring and management of the discipline. The movement may exaggerate greatly, but if it is arranged better, the effect will be good. The movements had better not too many, otherwise the students, especially lower grade students will feel easily weary.

3) *Neglect of reading and writing skills.* In fact, there is another kind of erroneous zone in the application of TPR English teaching method: The activity of TPR English teaching method is only used to the practice of listening and speaking, but it is very difficult for the students to practice the skills of reading and writing. A lot of teachers use TPR English teaching method to train frequently the students to listen and speak, but hardly to read and write. The skills of language include listening, speaking, and reading as well as writing. People will communicate with each other by means

of these skills. Linguists generally consider listening and speaking as the spoken languages, consider reading and writing as the written language; the spoken language is the oral expression of the written language, the written language is the writing record of the spoken language. The spoken language is the first nature and the written language is the second nature. The spoken language and the written language are different in the expression's main points and way, glossary, syntax, density of information, language's effect etc. But considering the cognition, we can find that listening and reading are the input of words and information; writing and speaking can express one's thoughts, so they are output of information. These four skills complement and promote each other when studying language. So the teacher should not neglect reading and writing skills. In fact the activities of TPR should be very flexible, so long as we use the principle of "adapt", but not "adopt", and make the modification slightly, then many teaching activities are more suitable. Before the students make the response, a teacher may not only give the instruction with oral English, but also provide them written instruction. Through this mode the skills of reading can be trained. The teacher may also write down a long instruction on the blackboard, in the meantime many kinds of movements are implemented to improve ability of reading. When training the writing, the teacher may require a student to make the movement and other students to write; or require a student to write the instruction and other students make the movement. For example: a teacher wish to teach the following words: laugh, cry and angry. He can require a child to express himself these words in the front of the class room and other students to write down the words. Or he requires the student to write these words, and other students express these words through their body language and activities. Thus this TPR teaching method may attract the interests of students and fully take full advantage of the TPR teaching method.

B. TPR activities

1) *To do as I say, not as I do.* When speaking out the instruction, the teacher makes the movement which is different from the instruction; the students must make the corresponding movement according to what the teacher has said, but not what the teacher has done. Such as, the teacher speaks out the right hand, but puts up the left hand. Then the students should put up one of their hand according to what the teacher has said, but not what he has done. This will increase the interests of students' learning English.

2) *TPR tornado.* This means the teacher reads the words and the students make a circle according to their listening. For example the teacher reads such the following words: car, baby, and plane. When the students hear the different pronunciation of the vowels, they should make several circles according to the sequence of the words said. If the word which has different pronunciation of the vowels exists at the first position, the students make one circle; the second position in

the three words means two circles and so on. So the students should make one circle in this example.

3) *Command game.* The teacher will prepare some cards which have been written down some instructions and numbers for the participants, one student tosses dice; if the dice shows one, the students will make the instruction of number one card; for example if the instruction is to turn around, then the students have to turn around.

4) *Body touch.* The teacher or a student speaks out the instruction, and then the students touch the different word cards with different parts of their body. Such as when the teacher teaches the words of different colors, he may prepare for the students the cards with different colors and words in advance, and then the teacher or a student may speak out: touch red with your hand. Touch blue with your knee. Touch black with your head. Touch yellow with your shoulder. The students do it according to the instruction. 4)

5) *Body expression.* Namely to build a body statue: a student acts the "sculptor", another student acts the "work" of the "sculptor", the "sculptor" gives the "work" the instruction, the "work" must express it according to the instruction and stay still, for example the "sculptor" may give his instructions to the "work" including "Put your right hand on your head. Smile. Close your left eyes." The "work" should do what the "sculptor" has said to his satisfaction, and then the whole class will see the "masterpiece" of the "work".

IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, the TPR teaching method is easy to attract students' attention very quickly, attract the students to participate in the activity and involve them into the actual environment to study English. The key aspects of this TPR teaching method lie in helping the students to understand English and exchange with English. We can see that only TPR English teaching method is not enough for the teachers to teach the pupils in primary schools, we had better explore the unification or some more proper and excellent teaching methods in actual teaching. Although the TPR English teaching method may promote the English teaching at present, we should never stop our steps of pursuing better and newer teaching method.

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