TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE THROUGH VOLLEYBALL

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English as a Foreign Language was carried out with a group of fifth semester students pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Education, Recreation and Sports outside of the traditional classroom context. Eleven of the students were female and fourteen were male. The unique method used was Total Physical Response (TPR), a system developed by the psychologist Dr. James Asher who has been utilizing TPR to teach English by approaching the language from a new angle, incorporating physical actions with linguistic interaction. In this experience, the content, methodology, commands, rules, and activities developed in volleyball classes were clearly established and defined. Furthermore, all those aspects related to the process of judging or refereeing a game of this sport were taken into account. Finally, it was also designed with the images of each of the commands, activities and rules that are executed in the class.

Keywords: Physical Education, regulation, Total Physical Response, volleyball.
NOTA DE CLASE · 5

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a Foreign Language through volleyball using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method presented an exceptional opportunity for the students of the Physical Education, Recreation and Sports Program to expand their knowledge of another language and improve their professional profile as bilingual teachers. The Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, at the Bucaramanga campus, wanted to train quality teachers that respond to all areas of English and Physical Education as recognized by the National Ministry of Education. Furthermore, the objective was to strengthen their communication skills so that they would be well equipped to work in Colombia’s bilingual institutions.

TPR is a method designed for language learning using a combination of verbal and motor skills. Total Physical Response, known in Spanish as “Respuesta física total,” was developed by the psychologist Dr. James J. Asher who has been using the method to teach English successfully for years. For him, it proved to be an effective way to approach language, integrating physical activity with linguistic exchanges.

The advantages of TPR are the reduction of stressful situations in the learning process, long term retention of vocabulary, the participation of students in their own learning, and the development of activities related to recognition and interpretation, which generate more open and spontaneous classes.

Volleyball was chosen as the featured sport for this study due to its technical vocabulary and teaching methodology introduced using commands and common orders. Defined by Kinesis,

[…] volleyball is a sport of collective participation which is practiced by two teams made up of six players each whose objective is to send the ball, in accordance with the rules, over the net, within the limits of the opposing court, trying to be sure that the opponent is unable to answer the play or stop it from touching the ground (2002).

The sport was also chosen because, as noted by the International Federation of Volleyball (FIVB), there is no contact between the attacking and defending players, as well as for all of the rules referred to in volleyball regulation (2004). The official signs and signals of the referees and linesmen were also taken into account. Furthermore, information was extracted from Guimaraes’ Voleibol iniciación y alto rendimiento (2006) in which the fundamental techniques and basic skills of volleyball are described. Of the three aforementioned documents, common terms, rules, commands and other important controls used in this sport were selected and applied in a practical class utilizing the Total Physical Response method.

OBJECTIVES

General Objectives

Teach English as a foreign language using the focus of Total Physical Response (TPR) in volleyball classes at the Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, Bucaramanga campus.

Specific Objectives

- Develop a card index of volleyball games in English, incorporating related Physical Education content.
- Create a database of expressions, rules and commands, useful for the volleyball classes and for the entire Physical Education, Recreation and Sports program at the university.
- Design index cards to reinforce the theoretical work.
- Improve listening skills.
- Improve English proficiency.
CONTENT:

- Games of the different content blocks.
- Interdisciplinary content games.
- Commands, expressions and rules in bilingual Physical Education.
- Index cards with theoretical content.
- Games and popular, traditional dances from English speaking countries.
- Websites and useful literature about Physical Education in English.
- Basic concepts and characteristics of volleyball.
- Basic, fundamental techniques in volleyball.
- Common activities in volleyball.
- Referees’ official hand signals.
- Line judges’ official flag signals.

At both the national and international level, studies and proposals have been developed which focus on, and implement, the teaching of English through the Total Physical Response Method in Physical Education classes. One of the most emblematic authors is Fernández Barrionuevo (2007) who in an article about the sequencing of linguistic content within Physical Education, responds to the fundamental concepts in order to organize the linguistic aspects and their repercussions in the area of Physical Education, Recreation and Sports. In turn, this makes contributions to the methodology, the interaction of content from other areas, and provides a dual perspective of an interdisciplinary nature. This linguistic content has the double objective of teaching information inherent to Physical Education, and also simultaneously, teaching the English language through the use of different methods for age groups including pre-school, elementary, as well as middle and high school (Up, 2011).

In agreement with the previous contributions, Rodríguez Abreu (2010) defines bilingualism as the situation in which a person speaks two languages in a balanced way and indicates that this individual possesses at least basic competence in two languages, in one of the four linguistic macro-skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. The teaching methodology used is based on the union of these two disciplines, using the TRP method, established by James Asher (1977) and implemented in many schools worldwide. The method is defined by the following characteristics: assimilation by the students’ kinesthetic sensory system, development of the spoken language (which must happen before use), and the recognition that comprehension and retention are best obtained by moving (total body movement by the students) in response to a sequence of commands elicited by the teacher/instructor. Speech would be included in this and it emerges automatically without pressure or prompting from the teacher. The aforementioned is due to the development of “kinesthetic intelligence” or motion, which is related to learning through motor activities.

In a document about learning the English language as taken from the National Program of Bilingualism: Teacher’s Guide (Pinzón Ochoa, Cortés Medina, Moore, & Jiménez Torres, 2012), many practical and effective tools are offered for Colombian teachers to successfully teach English to their students. In the guide, special attention is paid to the acquisition of vocabulary and communicative skills that are for immediate use by the student or teacher in the classroom. The readings are characterized by the reality of the children, of their schools, of their communities and of their cultural background; thus making this process one of meaningful learning. Together these aspects are all framed within the Total Physical Response Methodology. The text
of Pinzón Ochoa, Cortés Medina, Moore and Jiménez Torres (2012) reported the following:

This methodology (TPR) is based on the idea that a language can be taught using physical movements as a way to react to a verbal impulse. That physical movement indicates to the professor that the lesson or information taught was understood, and therefore, received successfully. TPR allows students to react without having to think too much, facilitates long-term retention, as well reduces anxiety and stress in the students and teachers. TPR should be seen as progressive instruction as it involves adding a new language combined with prior learning (recycling). This methodology adjusts to the conditions of our teachers and students while practicing the new language, thanks to the increase in interest on the students’ and teachers’ behalf. (p. 3)

To execute this methodology, first, the teacher presents a new topic, function or vocabulary in a clear and meaningful context for the students. After, the students develop skills and an understanding of that material, which is based on TPR, they are constantly molded and guided by the teacher himself. During practice, students are mainly repeating the elements learned in the teacher’s presentation. Finally, the students and teacher move to the level of production where they use what was learned in a more independent way through the interaction with other specific contexts.

Complementing these ideas, Ortiz Calvo (2013), in the article “The value of Physical Education in Teaching English as a Foreign Language,” emphasizes the importance of dual, bilingual, Physical Education projects. Bilingual Physical Education is being developed in a progressive way in different regions of Spain where it is shown that there are truly many advantages when used to teach English. The course mentioned in Ortiz Calvo’s article is based on the Total Physical Response activities, development of oral skills, motivating and playful methodology and interconnection of the contents of different areas. Therefore, according to its mere definition, physical education already meets the majority of the requirements considered basic necessities when teaching a second language.

The article, “Metodología TPR: introducción progresiva del inglés en las clases de Educación Física” (1998) establishes that in order to be learned, a language must be spoken, before the learner reaches this point in the learning process. It is also crucial that he hears the “goal language” often. The TPR method is based on the biological premise that the human brain is programmed with the capacity to learn any language, that is, people are born with the capacity to acquire and reproduce a language’s linguistic code. Following this approach, the TPR method tries to move along the “natural” process of acquiring a language, the way in which we learn our native language, but adapted and regulated for the learning of a second language. This basically means establishing a strong relationship between speech, the actions and gestures that accompany speech, and finally the word’s meaning. The objectives posed by the author are to develop the students’ communicative competence, improve their English fluency, enhance listening and observation in the classroom, develop an understanding of body language and expression, and finally, sensitize the students to today’s multilingual society.

To guarantee success in teaching English in Physical Education classes, we must ensure a number of factors: speaking English with complete fluency, clear vocalization, slow and clear speech, make constant use of gestures and body language, as well as include many practical examples to reinforce all explanations. Furthermore, it is crucial that the spoken language does not switch back to Spanish unless it is absolutely necessary and
it is ideal to have, a minimum of two or three Physical Education classes every week.

In the article “The Total Physical Response Method as a teaching resource in teaching English in Primary or Elementary Education,” Canga Alonso (2012) proposes that this method ought to use the most appropriate teaching model, teaching oral skills, which is designed according to the way in which an individual acquires their first language or mother tongue. This statement became the foundation for TPR, which was the model used in the research subject of this article. In order to make different learning processes complement one another, routines must be established. TPR is based on the physiological theory of “tracing” which implies that, “the [learning] retention is greater when the trace left in one’s mind is more intense and frequent by a memory association. Such a trace can be either oral or motor [an association with movement or action]” (Sánchez, 1997).

In Learning Another Language through Actions: The Complete Teacher’s Guide Book (1977) Asher, defines TPR as a method designed for language learning through the combination of verbal and motor skills. It was created as a set of techniques to facilitate the acquisition of a second language, following the natural process of language learning, which takes place in a mother-child relationship. During infancy and childhood, the child absorbs language, internalizing and decoding instructions and responding physically until it is able to reproduce language in a spontaneous way. Asher finds that the key to this kind of learning seems to be the combination of action and observation; he says:

[…] the three key elements that appear as determinants of learning success are small: the ability to listen to the language without the pressure of speaking, the fact that the language of the early years is mostly related to daily activities and the high degree of interaction with the message’s context. (Asher, 1977)

**Commands, Rules and Activities in Volleyball: Starting the pe Lesson**

1. Abdominals
2. Adolescent
3. Antenna
4. Anticipation
5. Athlete
6. Athletic shoes
7. Attack
8. Backwards dive
9. Ball
10. Basic attack system
11. Be quiet, please!
12. Block
13. Captain
14. Change of service
15. Cheat! / Don’t cheat!
16. Child
17. Collective block
18. Collective tactics
19. Come forward a bit
20. Cones
21. Counterattack
22. Court invasion
23. Defense system
24. Defensive action
25. Defensive system
26. Dive and plank
27. Don’t cross the line
28. Excellent!
29. Exercises
30. Fantastic!
31. Feint
32. Field/court
33. Finger pass
34. Forearm pass
35. Forward
36. Forward dive
37. Game system
38. Games
39. Gesture
40. Go to the corner
41. Go, go, go!
42. Great!
43. High position
44. Hitter
45. Horizontal jump
46. Hurry up!
47. Individual tactics
48. Invasion of space
49. It’s my / your / his / her turn
50. Jump
51. Lateral Dive
52. Lateral shift
53. Launch
54. Let’s go out to the play area
55. Libero
56. Lie face down
57. Lie on your back
58. Line of attack
59. Locker room
60. Long diagonal
61. Low position
62. Make a line/ circle
63. Mat
64. Medicine ball
65. Mid-air
66. Middle position
67. Mini-volleyball
68. Net
69. Offensive action
70. One behind the other
71. One, two, three…
72. Opponent
73. Overhand service
74. Partner
75. Pass the ball
76. Pay attention and listen to the explanation
77. Penetration
78. Physical preparation
79. Play area
80. Position
81. Pushups
82. Ready, steady, go!
83. Reception
84. Reception system to defend the serve
85. Reception system to defend the spike
86. Regulation retention
87. Right!
88. Rope
89. Rotation
90. Run
91. Service
92. Service area
93. Service team
94. Set
95. Setter
96. Short diagonal
97. Sit on the ground
98. Skip / Jump / Hop!
99. Spike from defender
100. Spiking in mid-air
101. Squats
102. Stand face to face
103. Stand in the middle
104. Starting formation
105. Stay behind the line
106. Strike
107. Student
108. Substitution
109. Swaps
110. Systems to support the attack
111. Tactic
112. Take laps around the field/court
113. Technical gesture
114. Technique
115. Tense
116. T-Shirt
117. Underhand service
118. Vertical jump
119. Very well done!
120. Walk
121. We won / The winner is___ / The winners are ___
122. We’re going to divide the class into two groups
123. Wonderful!
124. You’re in / out
**Official Signs of Arbitrators/Official Signs of the Judge**

**FIGURE 1.** Authorization to serve  
Source: Compiled by the authors

**FIGURE 2.** Team that serves  
Source: Compiled by the authors

**FIGURE 3.** Change of courts  
Source: Compiled by the authors

**FIGURE 4.** Time-out  
Source: Compiled by the authors

**FIGURE 5.** Substitution  
Source: Compiled by the authors

**FIGURE 6.** Misconduct warning  
Source: Compiled by the authors

**FIGURE 7.** Expulsion  
Source: Compiled by the authors

**FIGURE 8.** Disqualification  
Source: Compiled by the authors
FIGURE 9. End of set (or match)
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 10. Ball not tossed or released at the service hit
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 11. Delay in service
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 12. Blocking fault or screening
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 13. Positional or rotational fault
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 14. Ball “in”
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 15. Ball “out”
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 16. Catch
Source: Compiled by the authors
FIGURE 17. Double contact
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 18. Four hits
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 19. Net touched by player - served ball fails to pass through to the opponent
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 20. Reaching beyond the net
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 21. Attack hit fault
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 22. Penetration into the opponent’s court or ball crossing the lower space
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 23. Double fault and replay
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 24. Ball touched
Source: Compiled by the authors
Official Signs of the Line Judges

FIGURE 25. Delay warning / delay penalty
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 26. Ball "in"
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 27. Judgement impossible
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 28. Ball touched
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 29. Ball touched an outside object, or foot fault by any player during service
Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE 30. Ball "out"
Source: Compiled by the authors

Fundamental Techniques of Volleyball

Block

FIGURE 31. Block
Source: Compiled by the authors
Players who are standing close to the net jump straight up with their arms outstretched and open hands to block the ball from crossing onto their side of the court. A successful block requires excellent arm, hand and foot form, as well as timing the jump to reach above the net at the same time as the ball is coming from the opponent’s attack.

Set

The ball is launched in the air by the player while standing behind the baseline. It is then struck with the goal of landing in the opponent’s court. Speed, direction and acceleration are all important factors that come into play and can help to determine the success of a team’s serve.

Underhand service

Setting usually occurs in the second contact the team has with the ball. The main goal is to get the ball in the air so that it can be sent into the opponent’s court with an attack. The general form is using the fingertips of both hands, which should be open, leaving little space between them.
Today, underhand serves are also acceptable in gameplay in which the player strikes the ball from below the waist in an upward swinging motion.

**Attack**

![Attack](image)

The attack is typically the third form of contact the team has with the ball. The main objective is to send the ball into the opponent’s court in a way so that it cannot be defended. To attack, the player approaches the ball, jumps, and at their highest point hits the ball over the net with the force of his/her hand.

**Bump**

![Bump](image)

Also known as a forearm pass, this is generally the team’s first contact with the ball when they receive it from the opponent’s court. The first responsibility of the person who bumps the ball is to reach it before it hits the ground, but it is also crucial that they handle it in a way that makes it easy for the person setting the ball to receive it.

**Conclusion**

The design of bilingual Physical Education is based on promoting communication situations in English, transversely uniting subjects which fall under Physical Education and also English language. The TPR method motivates students to learn independently, and improve their fitness while improving their English fluency. It also allows opportunities to emphasize the important role that movement plays in learning and, in general, the learning of a standard vocabulary.

Bilingual Physical Education provides simulations of daily activities as well as an avenue to celebrate different cultures. Ortiz Calvo, (2013) affirms so when he says, “the area of Physical Education is one of those that is, although little by little, gaining importance among the subjects to be taught in bilingual projects”. The reasons to consider are a positive predisposition towards learning by students and responding with motor actions to the verbal commands given by the teacher, which makes this learning meaningful, functional, and interdisciplinary. Listening is also a valuable skill because it relates back to the student’s interests and everyday life situations in which you could integrate a second language.
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