

**Artículo Científico**

# La eficacia de la respuesta física total (TPR) para mejorar la retención de vocabulario y la fluidez oral en estudiantes principiantes de inglés

## *The effectiveness of total physical response (TPR) in enhancing vocabulary retention and oral fluency in beginner English learners*



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**Resumen:** La enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera enfrenta desafíos en retención de vocabulario y desarrollo de fluidez oral. La metodología de Respuesta Física Total (TPR) integra movimiento físico con aprendizaje del idioma para abordar estos desafíos. Este estudio determinó la eficacia de TPR mediante análisis de percepciones estudiantiles. Se realizó un estudio descriptivo cualitativo con 42 estudiantes de séptimo semestre que completaron 8 semanas de instrucción TPR. Los datos se recopilaron mediante encuestas en agosto 2025 y se analizaron temáticamente. Los resultados revelaron percepciones abrumadoramente positivas. La retención de vocabulario mejoró significativamente, con 90.5% identificando conexiones físico-cognitivas mejoradas. La confianza al hablar aumentó drásticamente: la comodidad en comunicación oral aumentó de 19.0% a 88.1%. Los estudiantes demostraron fuerte preferencia por TPR sobre métodos tradicionales (100% en participación). Las actividades más efectivas incluyeron juegos de Simón dice, actuaciones de rutinas diarias y canciones corporales. La resistencia inicial (64.3% por vergüenza) disminuyó a 19.0% tras experimentar los beneficios. La TPR demuestra eficacia significativa en mejorar retención de vocabulario y fluidez oral, abordando simultáneamente dimensiones cognitiva, afectiva y social de adquisición del lenguaje. Los hallazgos respaldan integración de TPR en currículos EFL como complemento valioso.

**Palabras clave:** TPR; retención de vocabulario; fluidez oral; EFL; aprendizaje kinestésico.



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**Abstract:**

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching faces significant challenges in vocabulary retention and oral fluency development. Total Physical Response (TPR) methodology integrates physical movement with language learning to address these pedagogical challenges. This study determined TPR effectiveness in improving vocabulary retention and oral fluency through analysis of student perceptions and experiences. A qualitative descriptive study was conducted with 42 seventh-semester English Teaching Program students who completed 8 weeks of TPR-based instruction. Data were collected through surveys in August 2025 and analysed using thematic analysis. Results revealed overwhelmingly positive student perceptions. Vocabulary retention improved significantly, with 90.5% identifying enhanced physical-cognitive connections. Speaking confidence increased dramatically: oral communication comfort rose from 19.0% to 88.1%. Students demonstrated strong TPR preference over traditional methods (100% for engagement). Most effective activities included Simon Says games, daily routines acting, and body parts songs. Initial adult learner resistance (64.3% embarrassment) decreased to 19.0% after experiencing benefits. TPR demonstrates significant effectiveness in enhancing vocabulary retention and oral fluency development, simultaneously addressing cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of language acquisition. Findings support TPR integration into EFL curricula as valuable complement to traditional methods.

**Keywords:** TPR; vocabulary retention; oral fluency; EFL; kinaesthetic learning.

## 1. Introducción

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching faces multiple methodological challenges, especially when dealing with beginner students who experience difficulties in retaining vocabulary and developing oral fluency. Many students show negative attitudes toward English learning, particularly in acquiring new vocabulary and oral expression, compounded by traditional methods that, in some cases, provoke disinterest, anxiety, and low academic performance. These factors significantly impact the English teaching-learning process, leaving aside innovative and kinaesthetic methodologies that can facilitate better comprehension and language retention (Inciman Celik et al., 2021).

The Total Physical Response (TPR) method represents an efficient alternative to transform English learning, especially for beginner students. Developed by James Asher in the 1960s, TPR is based on the coordination of speech and action, mirroring the natural process of first language acquisition where children respond physically to verbal commands before they begin to speak (Xie, 2021). This methodology does not merely seek for students to obtain good grades, but rather to develop natural and meaningful language acquisition. Through TPR, students develop linguistic skills while

improving their cognitive, motor, and social capacities in an integral manner, increasing their motivation and interest in the language. The method emphasizes the role of physical movement and kinaesthetic learning in language acquisition, creating a natural and stress-free environment for vocabulary retention and oral fluency development (Abdumutaljonovna, 2025).

Research demonstrates TPR's effectiveness across diverse international contexts. Ha and Hue (2020) conducted research in Vietnam on teaching English vocabulary to young learners, concluding that many educational institutions implement methodologies that do not adequately correspond to the developmental characteristics of beginner students. They emphasize that active experimentation and physical manipulation are appropriate strategies in initial stages of English learning, requiring kinaesthetic methods by teachers. Similarly, Hounhanou (2020), in a study conducted in secondary schools in Benin, identifies English teaching as one of the great concerns faced by teachers, with demotivated teachers and students experiencing anxiety and insecurity when addressing vocabulary content and oral expression. Liu et al. (2024) compared traditional and personalized TPR strategies, finding that students who received TPR-based instruction showed significantly higher vocabulary retention rates and demonstrated increased confidence in using newly acquired vocabulary in communicative contexts.

In Ecuador, studies confirm similar challenges in EFL teaching contexts. Morocho and Lojano (2024) conclude that teachers often face difficulties in capturing and maintaining students' interest in English classes, especially in vocabulary teaching and oral skills development. This problem stems from the use of traditional and routine methods that are not very interactive and do not include body movement and physical response within their activities as a means of learning. This limitation restricts students' opportunities to properly channel concepts, understand, and learn naturally and enjoyably through kinaesthetic experimentation, highlighting the urgent need for methodological innovation in Ecuadorian EFL contexts.

The current educational context demonstrates the need to implement methodologies that specifically address vocabulary retention difficulties and oral fluency development in beginner English students. The research problem lies in the need to innovate pedagogical strategies for English teaching, considering that TPR involves physical response and body movement as a promising alternative to improve linguistic skills such as listening comprehension, vocabulary retention, oral expression, and communicative confidence. Despite extensive international research demonstrating TPR's effectiveness, there remains limited empirical evidence regarding its specific impact on vocabulary retention and oral fluency among beginner English students in university-level EFL programs, particularly from the perspective of student perceptions and experiences.

Therefore, this research analyses the effectiveness of the Total Physical Response method as a strategy to improve vocabulary retention and oral fluency in beginner

English students. The general objective seeks to determine the effectiveness of the TPR method in improving vocabulary retention and oral fluency in beginner English students through analysis of student perceptions and experiences following TPR-based instruction. This study addresses three specific research questions: (1) How do beginner English students perceive the impact of TPR methodology on their vocabulary retention? (2) In what ways does TPR implementation influence students' oral fluency confidence and speaking participation? (3) What are students' comparative preferences between TPR and traditional teaching methods for vocabulary learning and oral skills development? Through examining student perceptions and experiences with TPR methodology, this research provides valuable insights into the method's effectiveness and practical applications in EFL contexts, contributing evidence-based recommendations for pedagogical innovation in English language teaching.

## 2. Materiales y métodos

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore and understand student perceptions and experiences regarding the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in English vocabulary retention and oral fluency development. The qualitative methodology was selected to gain deep insights into students' subjective experiences, attitudes, and perceived effectiveness of TPR activities following their implementation in English language instruction.

### Research Design and Approach

This research utilized a descriptive qualitative design with phenomenological elements, focusing on understanding the lived experiences of students who participated in TPR-based English instruction. The study employed a post-implementation exploratory approach, examining student perceptions after they had experienced TPR activities for an extended period. The research design was characterized as: (1) descriptive, systematically describing student perceptions and experiences with TPR; (2) phenomenological, exploring the essence of students' lived experiences with TPR methodology; (3) cross-sectional, with data collected at a single point in time after TPR implementation; and (4) exploratory, investigating student perspectives to understand TPR effectiveness from the learner viewpoint.

The study was grounded in interpretivism, recognizing that reality is socially constructed and that students' perceptions of their learning experiences are valid sources of knowledge. This philosophical stance acknowledged that each student's experience with TPR was unique and contextually influenced, making qualitative inquiry the most appropriate method for understanding these complex phenomena. An inductive approach was employed, allowing themes and patterns to emerge from the data rather than testing predetermined hypotheses.

### Population and Sample

The target population consisted of students from the seventh semester of the English Teaching Program at Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena who had completed at least 8 weeks of TPR-based English instruction. The total population comprised 65 students from seventh semester: Seventh Semester A with 28 students (11 men and 17 women) and Seventh Semester B with 37 students (12 men and 25 women). All participants were aged 20-25 years and enrolled in the English Teaching Major program.

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who could provide rich, detailed information about their TPR experiences. The inclusion criteria required participants to be: (1) enrolled in seventh semester English Teaching Program; (2) having completed a minimum of 8 weeks of TPR instruction; (3) maintaining regular attendance with minimum 80% class participation; (4) within the age range of 20-25 years; (5) willing to participate and provide informed consent; and (6) without diagnosed learning or physical disabilities that would affect TPR participation. The final sample consisted of 42 students from both sections who met all criteria and voluntarily agreed to participate, ensuring data saturation and diverse perspectives.

#### Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected through a comprehensive structured survey designed specifically for this research. The survey instrument consisted of open-ended and closed-ended questions organized into four main sections: (1) vocabulary retention experiences with TPR; (2) oral fluency confidence and speaking participation; (3) comparative preferences between TPR and traditional methods; and (4) specific TPR activities effectiveness. The survey was administered in English to align with the participants' academic program language. Questions were designed to elicit detailed responses about students' perceptions, experiences, and comparative evaluations of TPR methodology.

The instrument was validated through expert review by three English teaching specialists and pilot-tested with 5 students from a different semester to ensure clarity, comprehension, and appropriateness. Minor adjustments were made based on pilot feedback to improve question clarity and response options.

#### Data Collection Procedures

The TPR-based instruction was implemented over an 8-week period prior to data collection. During this instructional phase, students participated in various TPR activities including Simon Says games, daily routine acting, body parts songs, action verb demonstrations, and interactive storytelling with physical responses. These activities were systematically integrated into regular English classes focusing on vocabulary acquisition and oral fluency development.

Data collection occurred between August 4-7, 2025, following the completion of the 8-week TPR instructional period. The survey was administered anonymously through an online platform to ensure participant confidentiality and encourage honest responses.

Participants received detailed instructions about the survey purpose, voluntary nature of participation, and confidentiality protocols. Survey completion times ranged from 8 to 72 minutes, indicating varying levels of detail in responses. All 42 participants who met the inclusion criteria completed the survey within the designated timeframe.

#### Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis process involved six phases: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of all responses; (2) generating initial codes by systematically identifying features across the dataset; (3) searching for themes by collating codes into potential themes; (4) reviewing themes to ensure they worked in relation to coded extracts and the entire dataset; (5) defining and naming themes to refine the specifics of each theme; and (6) producing the final report with vivid examples.

For quantitative data from closed-ended questions, descriptive statistics were calculated including frequencies and percentages to identify patterns in student responses. Cross-tabulation was employed to examine relationships between different variables such as vocabulary retention perceptions and speaking confidence improvements.

#### Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to ethical principles for educational research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were clearly informed about the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Participant anonymity was maintained throughout the research process, with no identifying information collected or reported. All data were stored securely and accessed only by the research team. The study received approval from the English Teaching Program academic authorities at Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena prior to implementation.

### 3. Resultados

A total of 42 students from the seventh semester of the English Teaching Program at Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena completed the survey between August 4-7, 2025. All participants had completed a minimum of 8 weeks of TPR-based English instruction and provided anonymous responses to the comprehensive questionnaire. Survey completion times ranged from 8 to 72 minutes, indicating varying levels of detail in responses. All participants met the inclusion criteria of regular attendance (minimum 80% class participation), age range of 20-25 years, and voluntary consent to participate in the study.

### 3.1. Thematic Analysis of TPR Impact on Vocabulary Retention

The analysis of student responses regarding TPR's effect on vocabulary retention revealed five primary themes, as presented in Table 1. The most frequently mentioned benefit was the physical-cognitive connection, with 38 out of 42 students (90.5%) describing how associating words with physical actions enhanced their memory retention.

**Table 1**

*Student-Reported Benefits of TPR for Vocabulary Retention (N=42)*

Theme	n	%	Representative Quote
Physical-cognitive connection	38	90.5	Associating words with actions made vocabulary easier to remember
Multisensory learning benefits	35	83.3	Using all my senses improved my learning experience
Long-term retention improvement	33	78.6	I can recall vocabulary weeks after learning through TPR
Enhanced memory formation	31	73.8	TPR created stronger memory traces for new words
Meaningful associations	29	69.0	Physical movements created natural connections with words

Note: (Authors, 2026).

Multisensory learning benefits were identified by 35 students (83.3%), who described how engaging multiple senses simultaneously improved their learning experience. Long-term retention improvement was reported by 33 students (78.6%), with many noting their ability to recall vocabulary weeks after initial learning through TPR activities.

### 3.2 Impact on Speaking Confidence and Oral Fluency

Student responses revealed significant perceived improvements in speaking confidence and willingness to engage in oral communication activities. As shown in Table 2, substantial increases were observed across all measured dimensions of speaking confidence and oral participation.

**Table 2**

*Student-Reported Changes in Speaking Confidence and Oral Fluency (N=42)*

Dimension	Before TPR n (%)	After TPR n (%)	Change (percentage points)
Comfortable speaking English	8 (19.0)	37 (88.1)	+69.1
Willing to participate orally	12 (28.6)	39 (92.9)	+64.3
Confident using new vocabulary	10 (23.8)	35 (83.3)	+59.5
Reduced speaking anxiety	15 (35.7)	40 (95.2)	+59.5

Natural conversation initiation	7 (16.7)	32 (76.2)	+59.5
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Note: (Authors, 2026).

Before TPR implementation, only 8 students (19.0%) reported feeling comfortable speaking English, while after TPR exposure, 37 students (88.1%) expressed comfort with oral communication, representing a 69.1 percentage point increase. Similarly, willingness to participate in oral activities increased from 12 students (28.6%) to 39 students (92.9%), a change of 64.3 percentage points.

### 3.3. Comparative Preferences: TPR versus Traditional Methods

The comparative analysis revealed overwhelming student preference for TPR over traditional teaching methods across all measured aspects. As illustrated in Table 3, students demonstrated strong preferences for TPR methodology in every evaluated dimension.

**Table 3**

*Student Preferences for TPR versus Traditional Methods (N=42)*

Aspect	Prefer TPR n (%)	Prefer Traditional n (%)	No Preference n (%)
Vocabulary retention	40 (95.2)	1 (2.4)	1 (2.4)
Engagement level	42 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Learning enjoyment	41 (97.6)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.4)
Memory formation	38 (90.5)	2 (4.8)	2 (4.8)
Confidence building	39 (92.9)	1 (2.4)	2 (4.8)
Class participation	40 (95.2)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.8)

Note: (Authors, 2026).

For vocabulary retention, 40 students (95.2%) preferred TPR, while only 1 student (2.4%) preferred traditional methods. Engagement level showed complete unanimity, with all 42 students (100%) preferring TPR over traditional approaches. Learning enjoyment demonstrated strong TPR preference, with 41 students (97.6%) favoring TPR compared to 0 students preferring traditional methods.

### 3.4. Most Effective and Memorable TPR Activities

Analysis of student responses regarding memorable TPR activities revealed clear patterns in activity preferences and effectiveness, as summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Most Effective and Memorable TPR Activities (N=42)*

Activity Type	n	%	Key Benefits Mentioned
Simon Says games	28	66.7	Competitive, fun, clear action-vocabulary connections
Daily routines acting	24	57.1	Meaningful contexts, practical vocabulary
Body parts songs	19	45.2	Repetitive, memorable, engaging rhythm
Story dramatization	16	38.1	Creative expression, contextual learning

Animal movements	14	33.3	Visual connections, enjoyable activity Relatable contexts, meaningful communication
Emotional expressions	12	28.6	

*Note:* (Authors, 2026).

Simon Says games were mentioned by 28 students (66.7%) as the most memorable and effective TPR activity. Students consistently praised these activities for their competitive element, clear action-vocabulary connections, and engaging nature. Daily routines acting was mentioned by 24 students (57.1%) as particularly effective for vocabulary retention.

### 3.5. Age and Maturity Considerations in TPR Acceptance

The analysis revealed important patterns regarding how adult learners (ages 20-25) adapted to TPR methodology. Table 5 presents the changes in adult learner attitudes and comfort levels throughout the TPR implementation period.

**Table 5**

*Adult Learner Adaptation to TPR Methodology (N=42)*

Dimension		Initially n (%)	After TPR n (%)	Change (percentage points)
Comfortable	with physical activities	18 (42.9)	38 (90.5)	+47.6
Perceived	age-appropriateness	15 (35.7)	35 (83.3)	+47.6
Willingness to participate	fully	22 (52.4)	40 (95.2)	+42.8
Embarrassment/self-consciousness		27 (64.3)	8 (19.0)	-45.3
Recognition of learning value		20 (47.6)	41 (97.6)	+50.0

*Note:* (Authors, 2026).

Initially, 18 students (42.9%) reported feeling comfortable with physical activities, while by the end of the TPR period, 38 students (90.5%) expressed comfort with kinesthetic learning approaches, representing a 47.6 percentage point increase. Embarrassment and self-consciousness levels decreased significantly, from 27 students (64.3%) initially reporting these feelings to only 8 students (19.0%) maintaining such concerns after TPR implementation.

### 3.6. Social Dynamics and Peer Influence

Student responses consistently highlighted the importance of peer reactions and classroom atmosphere in their TPR experiences. Positive peer influence was reported by 39 students (92.9%), who described how seeing classmates enjoy and participate in activities enhanced their own engagement. Collaborative learning environment benefits were mentioned by 36 students (85.7%), who emphasized how shared participation created supportive atmospheres that encouraged risk-taking in language use.

### 3.7. Teacher Implementation Recommendations

Students provided specific recommendations for educators seeking to implement TPR effectively. Clear instructions and demonstration were emphasized by 35 students (83.3%) as essential for successful TPR implementation. Gradual introduction approaches were suggested by 32 students (76.2%), who recommended starting with simple activities and progressively increasing complexity. Creating safe, supportive environments was mentioned by 38 students (90.5%) as crucial, particularly for adult learners who may initially feel self-conscious about physical activities.

### 3.8. Willingness to Continue and Recommend TPR

Student responses revealed overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward continued TPR use and recommendations to other learners. When asked about continuing TPR in future classes, 41 students (97.6%) expressed strong desire to continue using the method, while only 1 student (2.4%) was uncertain. No students expressed unwillingness to continue with TPR-based instruction. Regarding recommendations to other students, 40 students (95.2%) indicated they would recommend TPR to peers, with 2 students (4.8%) expressing uncertainty.

## 4. Discusión

The findings of this qualitative study provide substantial evidence supporting the effectiveness of Total Physical Response (TPR) methodology in enhancing vocabulary retention and oral fluency development among beginner English learners. The analysis of 42 student responses reveals consistent patterns that align with and extend existing research while offering valuable insights into learner experiences and perceptions of TPR implementation in university-level EFL contexts.

### TPR's Impact on Vocabulary Retention: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives

The overwhelming majority of students (90.5%) identified the physical-cognitive connection as crucial for vocabulary retention, directly supporting the theoretical foundations established by Asher (1969) in his original conceptualization of TPR. This finding corroborates Xie's (2021) assertion that TPR mirrors the natural process of first language acquisition, where physical response precedes verbal production. The multisensory learning benefits identified by 83.3% of participants align with Liu et al.'s (2024) research demonstrating that students who received TPR-based instruction showed significantly higher vocabulary retention rates compared to those taught through traditional methods.

These results extend Poalacin Pilaguisin et al. (2024) findings on movement-based vocabulary instruction, which demonstrated 85% retention after four weeks compared to 65% with conventional methods. The long-term retention improvement reported by 78.6% of participants in the current study provides qualitative evidence supporting the quantitative findings of previous research while revealing the learner perspective on

why TPR creates more durable memory traces. Students' descriptions of meaningful associations between words and actions echo the trace theory of memory emphasized by Dongsanniwas and Sukying (2024), which posits that multiple memory traces enhance recall.

The current findings also resonate with Abdumutaljonovna's (2025) definition of TPR as creating natural and stress-free environments for language acquisition. Students consistently described TPR activities as reducing cognitive load while simultaneously enhancing memory formation through multisensory engagement. This dual benefit addresses a fundamental challenge in EFL instruction: maintaining high engagement while facilitating deep processing of new linguistic material.

### Speaking Confidence and Oral Fluency Development

The dramatic improvements in speaking confidence observed in this study align with multiple strands of previous research while providing new insights into the mechanisms underlying these changes. The 69.1 percentage point increase in students' comfort with oral communication extends Brito Arichábala's (2022) findings on TPR's effectiveness in boosting English speaking acquisition in primary school students, demonstrating that similar benefits occur with adult university learners when appropriate implementation strategies are employed.

These results support on TPR's impact on young EFL learners' speaking fluency, which revealed that TPR activities create supportive environments for oral language development by reducing speaking anxiety. The current study's finding that 95.2% of students reported reduced anxiety after TPR implementation provides strong evidence that these benefits extend to adult learners in higher education contexts. This finding is particularly significant given the well-documented challenges of speaking anxiety in EFL contexts, as highlighted by Ha and Hue (2020) and Hounhanou (2020) in their international studies.

The 64.3 percentage point increase in willingness to participate in oral activities demonstrates that TPR addresses both the cognitive and affective dimensions of oral fluency development. This holistic impact aligns with Husanović's (2022) emphasis on TPR's alignment with Krashen's Natural Approach and Input Hypothesis, which propose that language acquisition occurs most effectively when learners receive comprehensible input in low-anxiety environments. Students' descriptions of feeling "more comfortable," "less afraid," and "more relaxed" provide qualitative evidence for the affective filter reduction that theoretical frameworks predict.

### Comparative Effectiveness: TPR versus Traditional Methods

The unanimous preference (100%) for TPR over traditional methods in terms of engagement level represents a striking finding that extends Inciman Celik et al.'s (2021) meta-analysis of TPR effectiveness. While their mixed research synthesis revealed consistent positive effects across different contexts, the complete unanimity observed in the current study suggests that TPR's engaging qualities are particularly

pronounced when compared directly with traditional lecture-based approaches in the same institutional context.

The strong preferences for TPR across all measured aspects (vocabulary retention 95.2%, learning enjoyment 97.6%, confidence building 92.9%) corroborate the findings of comparative studies by Liu et al. (2024) and Yuquilema Mullo (2024), both of which demonstrated significant advantages for TPR groups in immediate acquisition, retention rates, and transfer of learning to new contexts. The current study's contribution lies in documenting these preferences from the learner perspective, revealing why students perceive TPR as superior: the method transforms learning from passive reception to active participation while maintaining high levels of enjoyment and motivation.

These findings also align with Morocho and Lojano's (2024) conclusions regarding the limitations of traditional and routine methods in Ecuadorian EFL contexts. Students' descriptions of traditional methods as "passive" and "boring" while characterizing TPR as "active" and "fun" echo the concerns raised about teacher difficulties in capturing and maintaining students' interest through conventional approaches.

#### Activity-Specific Effectiveness and Pedagogical Implications

The activity-specific findings provide practical guidance for curriculum development while extending Jones's (2022) research on TPR storytelling and interactive activities. The identification of Simon Says games as most effective (66.7%) aligns with research emphasizing the importance of clear action-vocabulary connections and competitive elements in maintaining engagement. Daily routines acting (57.1%) and body parts songs (45.2%) emerged as particularly effective for creating meaningful contexts and memorable learning experiences, supporting Nguyen et al.'s (2021) findings on TPR's impacts on young learners' vocabulary ability.

The characteristics students identified as maximizing TPR effectiveness—clear movement-meaning connections, opportunities for repetition without monotony, social interaction components, and enjoyable elements—provide evidence-based criteria for activity selection and design. These insights complement the teacher-focused implementation research while offering learner-centered perspectives on what makes TPR activities genuinely effective rather than merely novel or entertaining.

#### Adult Learner Adaptation and Age-Related Considerations

Perhaps the most significant contribution of this study lies in documenting the adaptation process of adult learners (ages 20-25) to TPR methodology. The dramatic reduction in embarrassment levels from 64.3% to 19.0% challenges common assumptions about TPR's appropriateness for adult learners and extends the predominantly youth-focused research base (Anisa, 2025; Pallo Ayala & Rosero Herrera, 2023) to higher education contexts.

This finding addresses a critical gap in TPR literature, as Jadeja (2025) and Husanović (2022) have noted the need for research on TPR implementation with different age groups and in various educational settings. The current results demonstrate that initial age-related resistance can be overcome through proper implementation strategies that include clear explanations of learning benefits, gradual introduction of activities, and creation of supportive classroom environments.

The 50.0 percentage point increase in students' recognition of TPR's learning value suggests that metacognitive awareness of the method's benefits helps adult learners overcome initial self-consciousness. This finding has important implications for teacher training and professional development, indicating that explicit discussion of TPR's theoretical foundations and empirical support may facilitate adult learner acceptance and engagement.

### Social Dynamics and Collaborative Learning

The social dynamics evident in the data reveal an underexplored dimension of TPR effectiveness: the role of peer influence and collective participation in amplifying individual learning outcomes. The finding that 92.9% of students reported positive peer influence extends beyond individual learner-material interactions to highlight how TPR creates collaborative learning environments that enhance motivation and reduce inhibitions.

This collaborative aspect addresses as critical for maintaining student interest and engagement in EFL instruction. The positive feedback loops created through collective participation help explain why TPR can achieve engagement levels (100% preference) that traditional methods struggle to match, particularly in the Ecuadorian EFL contexts where Morocho and Lojano (2024) documented significant engagement challenges.

### Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations of this study must be acknowledged to appropriately contextualize the findings and guide future research. First, the reliance on self-report data captures student perceptions rather than objective measures of learning outcomes. While these perceptions provide valuable insights into learner experiences and motivation, they should be complemented with quantitative assessments of vocabulary retention and oral fluency development in future studies.

Second, the single institutional context limits generalizability to other educational settings with different student populations, resource availability, and cultural contexts. Future research should examine TPR effectiveness across multiple institutions and countries to determine which findings are universal and which are context dependent. Third, the study's cross-sectional design provides a snapshot of student perceptions after eight weeks of TPR implementation but does not capture long-term retention or skill development. Longitudinal studies tracking students' vocabulary and speaking abilities over extended periods would strengthen the evidence base.

Fourth, while the qualitative approach provided rich insights into student experiences, mixed methods design incorporating both qualitative and quantitative measures would offer more comprehensive understanding of TPR's effectiveness. Finally, the study did not systematically examine how different TPR activities affect different types of vocabulary (concrete versus abstract, high-frequency versus low-frequency) or different aspects of oral fluency (pronunciation, intonation, discourse management). Future research addressing these specific dimensions would provide more nuanced guidance for curriculum development and teacher training.

#### Practical Implications for EFL Instruction

The findings have several important practical implications for EFL instruction in higher education contexts. First, the evidence supporting TPR's effectiveness with adult learners suggests that teacher training programs should include TPR methodology in their curriculum, dispelling assumptions that kinaesthetic approaches are only appropriate for young learners. Second, the activity-specific effectiveness data provides evidence-based guidance for curriculum developers seeking to integrate TPR into existing programs.

Third, the student-generated implementation recommendations—emphasizing clear instructions, gradual introduction, and supportive environments—offer practical strategies for teachers new to TPR methodology. Fourth, the strong preference for TPR over traditional methods suggests that institutions seeking to improve student engagement and motivation should consider systematic integration of TPR activities into their EFL programs. Finally, the social dynamics findings highlight the importance of creating classroom cultures that support collaborative learning and risk-taking in language use, extending beyond specific TPR activities to influence overall pedagogical approaches.

## 5. Conclusions

This qualitative study successfully demonstrates that Total Physical Response (TPR) methodology significantly enhances vocabulary retention and oral fluency development among beginner English learners in higher education contexts. The research achieved its primary objective of determining TPR's effectiveness through comprehensive analysis of student perceptions and experiences. The findings reveal that TPR addresses fundamental challenges in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction through interconnected mechanisms that simultaneously engage cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of language acquisition.

The study's most significant contribution to the field lies in demonstrating TPR's effectiveness with adult learners aged 20-25, extending existing research that has primarily focused on young children. These findings challenge common assumptions about TPR's age-appropriateness and reveals that initial adult resistance to kinaesthetic activities can be successfully overcome through supportive classroom

environments and clear explanations of learning benefits. The dramatic transformation in student attitudes—from initial self-consciousness to enthusiastic participation—provides evidence that age-related barriers to TPR adoption in higher education may be pedagogical rather than developmental.

The research establishes that TPR creates transformative learning experiences characterized by enhanced physical-cognitive connections, reduced speaking anxiety, and dramatically increased engagement compared to traditional methods. Students demonstrate overwhelming preference for TPR across all measured dimensions, particularly noting the method's ability to transform language learning from passive reception to active participation. The identification of most effective TPR activities—Simon Says games, daily routines acting, and body parts songs—provides practical guidance for curriculum development and teacher training programs.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings have important implications for EFL instruction in higher education. The evidence supports systematic integration of TPR into university-level language curricula, teacher training programs, and professional development initiatives. The social dynamics revealed in student responses highlight that TPR's effectiveness is amplified through collaborative learning environments where peer influence reduces inhibitions and enhances engagement. This suggests that successful TPR implementation requires attention to both methodological techniques and classroom management considerations that foster supportive learning communities.

While the study's reliance on self-report data and single institutional context limit generalizability, the consistency and depth of positive student responses across all participants provide strong evidence for TPR's perceived effectiveness. Future research incorporating objective measures of learning outcomes, longitudinal assessment of retention, and cross-cultural validation would strengthen the evidence base while addressing the limitations identified in this study.

In conclusion, this research provides substantial evidence that TPR represents a valuable and effective approach to English language instruction that addresses key challenges in vocabulary retention and oral fluency development. The findings contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting innovative, learner-centred approaches to language education while demonstrating that kinaesthetic methodologies can be successfully adapted for adult learners when implemented with appropriate consideration of social dynamics and learner needs. The study's insights provide both theoretical validation for multisensory learning approaches and practical guidance for educators seeking to implement more effective and engaging language instruction methodologies in higher education contexts.

## CONFLICTO DE INTERESES

**“Los autores declaran no tener ningún conflicto de intereses”.**

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