

Let's Play It! Improving First Graders' Oral and Listening Skills through Songs and Videos

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Abstract

This action research project aimed to explore the usefulness of implementing songs, videos and Total physical Response (TPR) instruction to enhance oral and listening skills of first-grade students at a public school in Medellin. Data collection instruments used in this project included teacher journals, two surveys and students' artifacts. In general, data suggest that students gained confidence to pronounce English words in class, their oral and listening skills improved significantly during the implementation, their interest and motivation on the different topics increased, and their engagement in classroom activities was enhanced.

Keywords: English language teaching, developing oral and listening skills, total physical response, using songs and videos

Degree Requirement

This action research project is submitted as a requirement of the Bachelor of Education in Teaching Foreign Languages (English-French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellín, Colombia.

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Preface

This document depicts the implementation and results of the action research project I carried out in my practicum as a pre-service teacher of English as a foreign language. The project explored the benefits of using songs and videos in the classroom along with TPR strategies and instruction, to improve students oral and listening skills and enhance their attention and motivation. This implementation was conceived during the observations I carried out on my first semester of the practicum process where I identified some difficulties related to students' learning process and their attitude towards English, and I proposed an adequate strategy of intervention in order to improve this situation.

The project was planned and developed around three main stages, each of them based on the syllabus of the institution and the main topics of the scholar year. The first stage was focused on students' introduction and personal information, including family members and some professions. Here, students were familiarized with the phases planned for each session, including the presentation of the videos, brief questions and commands using TPR instruction, and short presentations of the students' activities and homework to the class. The second stage included the topics of 'my house' and 'my neighborhood', in which students learnt about parts and objects of their surroundings, along with basic forms of description by using the topics of sizes, colors and shapes. The same structure of the previous unit was kept: Students observed and listened to the song or video, they followed and answered the questions of the teacher and participated with the brief presentations of the homework to the rest of the class. The third stage was connected to a school project each grade was assigned to develop during the school year. In the case of first grade, the school project was about nature and animals. Here, students' learnt about domestic and wild animals in the form of pets, farm animals and forests animals, along with some added

vocabulary of nature, plants and fruits. A final session was devoted to short presentations of student's favorite songs, videos or topics; being the videos about the family, professions, colors and animals, which were the students' favorite ones.

The development of this project enabled me to explore the use of videos and songs in the EFL classroom in public schools, as alternative and valuable tools for vocabulary building and pronunciation practice, thus going beyond more traditional teaching practices that rely merely on the board and the sole input of the teacher, especially in early stages of schooling. In this regard, the use of songs and videos proved to be of great benefit for drawing students' attention towards the topics, and for giving them a rich and reliable source of authentic pronunciation. The inclusion of TPR as a supporting method and source of strategies also helped students in the process of integration to the class, becoming a joyful and dynamic process where all of them were able to collaborate, ask, guess and participate.

Description of Context

This action research proposal took place in Antonio José Bernal, a public school located in Castilla, Medellín city, Between Hector Abad Gomez and Plaza Colon Neighborhoods, and next to Acevedo metro station. The student population mostly comes from these two neighborhoods and other surrounding neighborhoods such as Villa Niza, La Francia, and Toscana, which range from stratum one to three.

The School offers kindergarten, primary and secondary educational levels. Its educational model is founded in principles of social integration, coexistence and development of the human beings as citizens capable of assuming academic, technological and professional challenges. Its vision focuses on the recognition and internationalization of its academic and technological processes by means of formative research, diversity, and engagement of the family as a vital support for the transformation of the context.

The school English syllabus includes the specific objectives, problematizing questions, content, performance indicators, and evaluation criteria for each grade, Kindergarten to 11th. It also shows the dates for the development on each of the three periods of the school year. The general objective for 1st grade, that is the focus of this practicum implementation, is to motivate students to learn the target language in an environment of confidence, and through classroom strategies such as games, songs and child plays. Some of the problematizing questions for this grade are the following:

- Am I capable of introducing myself to my classmates using expressions in English?
- Can I name the different surrounding objects of my classroom and my school?
- Can I express my preferences orally and in English?

The resources suggested by the syllabus to successfully achieve the goals of each grade are textbooks, dictionaries, flashcards, and didactic material as well as audiovisual resources such as TV sets and tape recorders.

The school had three groups of first grade: A, B, and C, of which group A was the target group of this project. The group had 38 students whose ages ranged between five and six years old. It had one teacher for all the subjects, as it is common with groups of kindergarten, first and second grades. The classroom in which these group of students took classes is located in the main building of the institution. It is decorated with several images, texts and different visual resources that help teachers and students to develop the activities of each subject. The classroom also has a TV set and a locker with all the didactic materials such as adhesive tapes, pencils, scissors, colors, glue, etc. The English class took place in the same classroom as the rest of the subjects.

Statement of the Problem

By the observation and participation in the English classes of the target group of first graders, I identified some tools and strategies employed in the classroom in order to teach the different topics suggested in the course syllabus. Among those tools and strategies, worksheets and written exercises are predominantly employed to guide the teaching process, which is not surprising since public school teachers of kindergarten and first grade in Colombia are usually in charge of teaching all the subjects in a group. Most of these teachers are prepared in Early Childhood Education and have a low level of English proficiency and limited knowledge of how to teach it. Hence, the lack of emphasis on listening and speaking skills can be seen in the English class due to teachers' low confidence and lack of accuracy when trying to develop

listening and oral activities. Besides, I could notice that this situation is reflected in the instruction of the English class I observed, which it is mostly focused on written exercises, depriving the children of a significant exploration of listening skills, a reliable source of pronunciation, and opportunities to develop oral skills.

Another aspect identified through my observations was the lack of use of technological aids to improve the different activities. In spite of the possibility of using the TV set located in the classroom, most of the lesson relies entirely on the board, which not only makes it longer to develop the class agenda, but also overlooks the possibility of using audio files, videos and other materials that can be rich in vocabulary, structure, and pronunciation. Video songs, for example are an important tool in English teaching since they are appealing to children. Most of the students in the target group, as I could observe, had a positive response to some video songs that I used in class during this first part of my practicum. I noticed that they paid attention to these video songs, which were about greetings, leave-takings, and body parts, and were able to follow commands and make movements according these videos. Most of the students were attracted by the video songs, their images and characters, and by the physical exercises they required to perform. They also tried to follow and keep along the rhythm of the songs even though their pronunciation was not accurate.

Therefore, for this action research project I proposed to use videos and songs in the classroom, along with principles and strategies drawn from Total Physical Response approach (TPR) to help students improve their English oral and listening skills. This implementation allowed to explore how video and songs combined with TPR can enhance students' motivation and participation as to improve their oral and listening skills.

Theoretical Framework

In this section, I introduce three main strategies that are fundamental to this action research project, and the benefits each of them can provide to EFL instruction: the use of songs in the classroom, the use of video materials, and the integration of Total Physical Response (TPR) principles.

Songs in the English Classroom

Songs have always carried an important role in our culture, from simple ways of entertaining to elaborated forms of passing tradition to the next generations. As stated by Davis (2017), “oral histories existed well before written speech, and were used as a way to remember and convey large amounts of information, perhaps supported by the memory-enhancing features of rhythm and sound” (p. 446). The inclusion of songs in education is something common and useful when guiding the learners process. This becomes more relevant when teaching young learners as songs have proved to be specially benefit at these early ages:

The overall pattern of findings from this review of studies of songs used in young learner classrooms is quite positive, suggesting that songs have pedagogical value and may promote both receptive and productive vocabulary acquisition, increase motivation, and improve pronunciation, communicative abilities, and literacy. (Davis, 2017, p. 452)

As mentioned in the previous excerpt, songs have shown positive effects, one of the main being the motivational effects it has when teaching young learners. It results in a good strategy to use in cases where a group of students might have difficulties concerning motivation towards learning. Along with the increase of motivation, the use of songs has also shown positive results when the development of oral skills is a need. For example, Castro and Navarro (2014) used

“songs as a teaching strategy and a source to motivate these young learners to develop oral skills” (p. 14).

The Use of Video Materials

Technological advancements are an important aspect to consider when thinking our practice so teachers cannot be indifferent to the ongoing changes that society is bringing constantly. Instead, they need to be aware of those changes and best use the tools we get in order to improve our teaching practice. As stated by Bajrami and Ismaili (2016), “video materials nowadays are not only part of everyday life activities, but they are shown as an effective method in teaching English language as a foreign language for all learners both inside and outside classroom” (p. 503).

Videos, if properly used in the classroom, can be a source of unlimited information that teachers can use to address their students’ specific needs since “video materials and films greatly contribute to understanding of another culture and mentality” (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016, p. 503). Similar to the benefits of using songs in the classroom, according to Bajrami and Ismaili (2016), video materials provide a motivational effect on the students while being an interesting, relevant and beneficial experience.

Total Physical Response (TPR)

TPR is a method developed by professor James Asher, at San Jose State University, California. It claims that verbal expressions can be combined with motor activity in order to create a trace that can be recalled easily by the physical movement. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), TPR is linked to the *trace theory* of memory in psychology, stating that with an

intense memory connection traced, the stronger the memory association will be and the more likely it will be recalled.

The initial focus of TPR is to enhance listening comprehension in an initial stage called the silent period. During this stage, students will receive the commands and instruction of the teacher but their only answer will mostly consist on physical movement, gesture and pointing their finger at something as a way of answering and reacting to the instruction. “This method was designed to accelerate listening comprehension of a foreign language by having subjects give a physical response when they heard a foreign utterance” (Asher, 1969). A subsequent set of stages involves the initial utterances of students when they feel comfortable to do so, and a more confident oral participation in later sessions. In this regard, the process of TPR turns out to be a similar process to the one a child experiences when developing a first language.

In the past decades, James Asher theory has been of less use as emerging studies and theories have given new insights concerning the main claims of TPR. However, the method is still of use and its benefits, while reduced, have proved to be a good support when employed alongside other methods or activities. For instance, Canga (2012) affirms that TPR should be complemented with other activities in order to avoid fatigue and exalts the usefulness of implementing TPR along with songs and games that allow students to practice the words and expressions they have learnt through the use of commands.

Research Question

The question I will address in this research project is the following: How to improve first graders’ oral and listening skills using songs and videos following Total Physical Response (TPR) principles?

General Objective

To explore how the use of songs, videos and Total Physical Response (TPR) instruction can improve students oral and listening skills in the classroom.

Specific Objectives

- To design a TPR-based unit plan that includes songs and videos to work on the topics suggested in the school English syllabus.
- To implement this unit plan to promote oral participation of the students in the classroom.
- To examine students' response to the use of songs and videos.
- To analyze how TPR instruction help promote students' oral skills.

Action Plan

In order to achieve the desired objectives, I designed a plan to be developed during the third academic period of the institution in the group of first grade A. The design consisted of three instructional units covering topics taken from the suggested syllabus of the institution for the mentioned grade. With the help of the cooperating teacher, the topics would be selected and carefully prepared around corresponding songs and videos. Supporting activities would also be designed to be carried out after the main practice phase of the sessions, and would aim to further strengthen the language skills the students were meant to develop.

The introduction of TPR came as a supporting strategy that the students seemed to be comfortable with. It was designed to be a set of activities and dynamics connected and articulated with the main topics and the subsequent questions or instruction derived from the songs and videos. Each session would be developed following a similar structure in order to make it easier and more comfortable for the students to understand. An introduction of the topic

would be done in the beginning of the session by means of videos or songs. A second phase was planned, supported by TPR instruction, where students would participate by guessing, answering questions, working with other students and actively presenting selected topics to the class. Sometimes, occasional homework would also be given to the students in order to practice at home and share in the subsequent session.

A final stage of the implementation project was initially aimed to be a set of presentations after each of the units would be concluded. It would be conceived as a source of students' production and a way for the teachers to observe students' pronunciation and listening improvements during the whole process.

The collection of data would come from three main sources: 1) teacher journals with entries of the different sessions to be implemented; 2) two surveys conducted before and after the implementation; and 3) students' artifacts on the final presentations done in the classroom, which would be collected in the form of video recordings.

Development of Actions

The implementation was carried out in seven sessions. Three units were developed, each unit consisting of two topics and two class sessions. The implementation began with a unit centered in students' personal information, family members and some professions they were familiar with. A video about personal introduction was displayed along with the depiction of common professions. After an initial play of the video some questions were made to the students. A second display of the video was done, this time pausing on each word I wanted them to learn and exhorting students' participation. This included the names of the professions and some objects related to this topic such as car, uniform, airplane, driver, policeman, pilot. After a pair of

repetitions, I moved to a segment of questions and commands. In this part of the lesson, students had to find out the word or the name of the object I was presenting. This was done by using mimicry and gesture related to the video or any useful object in the classroom. To close the session, I gave some copies with images related to the topic for students to color and fill at home, along with the sentence *I want to be...* for them to study.

The second session started by reviewing the homework left in the previous session. Students showed what they did and the colors they used. A group of volunteered students came in front and pronounced some of the words, such as colors, desired professions and objects, related to their homework. Some students did not pronounce the words at first, but guided others by pointing at similar objects or colors of the classroom. A new topic, family members, was introduced in this same session as part of the same unit. To do this, a video about family fingers was played and students tried to follow the song. This was done twice and pauses were made on important words or expressions. After this, the stage of questions was done. I did some commands and questions like *what is the name of this finger?* or *show me the father finger*. After a couple more repetitions of the song, an activity was done in pairs. Students had to help each other trace the shape of a hand on the notebook and, as homework, they had to name each finger after a family member and add some distinctive objects.

The third session started by reviewing the homework pending. Similar to previous sessions, students showed what they did. This time, more students participated by doing some gesture to exhort their classmates to try to guess. A third topic *my house* was introduced as an initial part of the second unit. A video song depicting the basic parts of the house was played. Students then proceeded to answer questions and follow commands by pointing at the parts of the house we had in the classroom. Words like window, door, roof and wall were implemented

and sentences and questions like *what is this part?* or *is this a door?* were employed. Each student was handed a basic sketch of a house. They had to add extra parts they would find in their neighborhood's houses and buildings.

The fourth unit was developed working with the topic of sizes and shapes. We introduced this topic by playing the second part of the video of the house, which contained some comparisons and images related to different shapes. We reviewed the pending homework by using words from the topic of sizes and shapes. Students named and shared the parts of the new house they added and words like chimney and garden were introduced along with some games of comparison where students had to look for bigger, smaller, tall, short objects in the classroom. To finish the session, a sketch with a small farm was handed to the students and they were asked to draw and name the pets they had at home or animals they had contact with in the past.

The session number five was introduced by connecting the topic developed in a previous session of Natural Sciences. Students named the animals they had seen in the session and compared them with the ones they drew in the sketch. A video about farm animals was presented to the students. We drew a comparison by bringing other animals students identified but were not part of the farm. I then proceeded to ask students about the habitat of certain animals giving the options of both the farm and the forest. Students had to draw two squares write the word inside according to the habitat they belonged to. To finish this session, the cooperating teacher and I conducted a written survey in which students showed their preferences and general opinion for the current English course and methodology.

During the implementation of the sixth session, students expressed certain confusion with the written form of some words in English, as they did not identify them easily because of the pronunciation. I opted for letting the written form out of the video and focus only on the

pronunciation and physical identification of them. Then, as a separate activity, we practiced the pronunciation and the different letters forming the names of those animals in the notebook. Before finishing the session, we devoted time to practice and review some of the topics and songs of the previous sessions. We also looked for and agreed on singing the song about family fingers as it was the one they said they enjoyed the most. We did some drills and practiced the oral presentations before leaving.

The final session of implementation was carried out by replaying some of the videos already studied in class. We proceeded to sing the song of family fingers and record it despite the initial fear of being filmed. Students also did small presentations while answering some questions related to the different topics, likes and professions. Some of them also agreed to be individually recorded on this part.

During the course of this implementation, different instruments for the collection of data were employed. The journals, containing valuable information of each of the sessions, along with the reflection about the development of the activities, homework, presentations and the session in general. Two surveys were also conducted: The first one, before the beginning of the implementation, was meant to collect data about the initial perception of the students about the English course in general. The second one was done during the fifth implementation session and was meant to cover a wider spectrum of preferences, likes and dislikes, and general perception of the English class, after those months of implementation. Raw data is presented in a chart in the Findings and Interpretation section. Finally, some artifacts were collected in the form of video recordings of the song students chose to present; and some of the brief questions answered by them in the form of presentations. They were aimed to give evidence of students' fluency in the target language as well as their improvement in their listening skills.

Findings and Interpretation

The purpose of this action research project was to explore how the use of songs and videos, supported by Total Physical Response (TPR) strategies, in a first-grade classroom helped students in their learning process, more specifically their proficiency in oral production and listening skills. Data suggest that, in general, students gained confidence to pronounce English words in class, their oral and listening skills improved significantly during the implementation, their interest and motivation on the different topics increased, and their engagement in classroom activities was enhanced. In this section I present evidence of these findings along with my interpretation of them.

Enhancing Students' Confidence to Pronounce English Words

Each lesson of the implementation period was prepared around a song or a video, a total of six, related to topics such as professions, my family, parts of my house, shapes and sizes, wild and domestic animals. Although students' initial reaction to the videos was mostly silent and attentive, they quickly started to hum and follow the rhythm of the song, producing utterances while trying to mimic the sounds they heard. An example of this occurred when I played a video about professions and "students paid careful attention and tried to pronounce following the video" (Journal entry 1). I also noticed that "with the support of different gestures and the reference of the videos, they managed to demonstrate fast learning and sometimes the willingness to try to pronounce in English" (Journal entry 1). Besides, by playing the videos a second time and pausing them after important parts I wanted them to learn, such as words, expressions, questions, were displayed, students felt more confident to venture and try to pronounce by themselves. "Students seemed comfortable while pausing the video only a couple

of times during the repetition. More questions were asked but also more students participated or helped their classmates with the different names and words” (Journal entry 4)

This finding might indicate that students’ participation was not halted by being afraid of making mistakes. Instead, as more skilled students were trying to pronounce the target words, others started to feel more confident to participate, even if it was just by guessing. Sometimes phonemes originated from words in Spanish were heard when students were trying to guess a word. For example, I noted down in my journal that “students are eager to participate and they seem to enjoy talking, even if they give a wrong answer. The understanding of sentences is improving as the context and proper gesture is also implemented” (Journal entry 3).

Finally, by establishing and giving a proper name to the segment of small presentations, students were more encouraged to freely participate and try to pronounce the words they looked for at home. Most of the students wanted to be the center of attention when bringing unknown words to the classroom and pronouncing the name of objects that were not mentioned during the lesson time but were connected to the topic. Most of the time “students were eager to participate and share the profession they found at home. They also looked for and greeted those students who did the same profession while comparing the objects they drew.” (Journal entry 2)

Improving Oral and Listening Skills through Songs and Videos

Few of the students of first grade A received previous lessons in English. For most of them this was the first time they were in an English session. Nonetheless, students showed knowledge of some basic English words that are of common use in our culture. Some animals, objects and colors were among the words students were familiar with.

As the first and second lessons were carried out, students began to show better understanding of the listening exercises. Their pronunciation was also showing improvement as they were more exposed to the audios, videos and general conversations in English with the teacher. The implementation of the topic “My family” showed good results as many of these words are of common knowledge. Students listened, identified them easily and pronounced them with a decent accuracy as showed in the following journal excerpt:

Students pronunciation of the different words has shown good progress in the course of these two lessons. They showed good understanding and improved fluency when pronouncing the different names of the family members, introduced during this second part of the session. Some repetitions of the video were done but just as a form of practice, since most of the students listened, understood and pronounced the words easily. (Journal entry 2)

When basic sentences were present in the videos or used by the teacher, students had difficulty understanding them. The findings showed that, by pausing the videos and guiding students through a set of repetitions, this situation would improve. Also, the emphasis on specific words of the lesson showed to be key factor in the students understanding of the whole sentence:

The understanding of sentences is improving as the context and proper gesture is also implemented. Students rely heavily on key words to understand what they are asked for. We can corroborate this when I gave the instructions to draw a house. “Draw a roof color red”, “draw a door color blue”. Students tend to repeat the words “roof, red, door, blue” looking for approval from the teacher before drawing. Other students remain silent but they point at the respective object in the classroom as a way of answering questions they are not sure about. (Journal entry 3)

Nevertheless, the written words that appeared in the videos, seemed to have posed some difficulties to students as they found the pronunciation of words to be different to the written form they read on the videos. In a lesson about animals I could observe this occurrence as can be seen in the following excerpt:

Students show problems when reading words from the TV or the board. They show difficulty connecting the word they read with the animal or object it refers to. Words like “Lion” are being pronounced as in Spanish and students lose the connection with the actual animal. (Journal entry 5).

Although most of the lessons were focused on the videos and songs; different activities and homework required students to write the actual word. The situation gave better results when the video and song segments were separated from any written word, at least until later in the lesson, when it was more beneficial to retake the written forms:

Separating the possible written words from the main oral (song / video) exercises seemed to work better for improving this situation. The pronunciation without written guide, but with enough oral reference, for those words that are of different pronunciation in Spanish, seem to work better. (Journal entry 5)

As a sum of the different lessons developed in the classroom, students performed an oral presentation of a topic they chose. Evidence of the progress in students oral and listening proficiency can be found in the journals, artifacts and recordings of this session. The following is an excerpt of the journal and analysis of the activities of that day:

The final assignments were carried out according to the project, and students presented their part with great accuracy and fluidity in their pronunciation. The improvement on the

listening skill is also notorious. A quick review of the topics showed easy understanding of the words from videos and songs, as well as the words pronounced by the teacher.

Many students still tend to misunderstand longer questions. It is the case of -what I want to be/what is my favorite color-. Here I had to elaborate on some of the words and expressions like “grow up”, or give examples with “likes and dislikes” to guide students in order to exalt an adequate answer. Nonetheless, they participated and spoke in English every time they had the opportunity, even if they sometimes gave a wrong answer.

(Journal entry 7)

Drawing Students' Attention through Videos, Songs and TPR instruction

During the course of the current action research project, the implementation of songs, videos and TPR instruction proved to be beneficial for enhancing students' oral and listening skills of the target language. This improvement came along with another important finding concerning the effect of said songs and videos on the motivation and attention of the students. This result was shown not only during the final assignments of the implementation but was also a consistent and notorious feature of each of the sessions developed.

Since the drilling sessions and the initial implementation lessons, students showed an immediate and strong enjoyment of the videos played. The colorful content of the images and the attractive characters shown in the different videos proved to be of great benefit on environments where it is difficult to draw students' interest in the topics developed.

Students were really attentive to the video and looked for the professions they were more interested in. It helped them focus on specific professions and the memorization of them.

They were eager to do the homework and some of them started it right away in the classroom. (Journal entry 1).

The song about the family fingers seems to have a great impact on them. It gets their interest immediately and it moves them to sing along. They asked for multiple repetitions of it and started singing and moving their fingers almost instantly. (Journal entry 2).

In adverse situations that are common in the teaching practice, the use of songs and videos also proved to be of great support to the students. It was the case of delays and cancellations of school days that moved some sessions and forced the students to spend several days without practicing the target language with the teacher. The following excerpt of the teacher's journal exemplifies such situation and how well it was handled with the support of the mentioned tools.

In spite of the long time between the previous and current session, students seemed to retake the topics and key words easier while repeating the song more than once and listening to the teacher when pronouncing some hint words. The rhythm of the song seems to act as a guide to help students in this "bring up to date" process. (Journal entry 4).

Students were also encouraged to share their insights and opinions of the process that was being developed in the classroom. In this regard, two surveys were conducted with the support of the cooperating teacher. The surveys were aimed to collect varied information concerning the motivation, likes, dislikes and feelings of the students concerning the use of songs, videos, and the English course in general. They consistently showed an increase in their positive perception

of the English course, something that was achieved due to the playful approach of the songs / videos and the supporting dynamics of physical expression and gesture.

The following chart shows some results from the surveys, which reflect the change in perception of the students concerning the English class in general, and their perception of the use of songs and videos.

Survey 1	Survey 2
Total of students who responded: 32 out of 38	Total of students who responded: 34 out of 36
1: ¿Te gusta la clase de inglés? -Si 15 -No 13 -Sin respuesta 4	1: ¿Te gusta la clase de inglés? -Sí 33 -No 1

As can be seen in the chart, a considerable number of students did not like the English class before the implementation. Some of the reasons provided by dt8ufenst were for example “No sé inglés” and “Es difícil”. The second survey, however, showed that students’ interest in English increased.

Using Movements, Physical Expressions and Commands to Engage Students in Activities

As mentioned before, this action research project was prepared using the methodology of total physical response (TPR) as a supporting method and activity to complement the main focus of songs and videos in the classroom. James Usher’s method proved to be of great help while working with children in early ages and early stages of English level of proficiency. The teacher and the students profited the different objects, colors and persons of their surroundings by using

questions and commands guided by physical gesture, mimicry, actions, sounds and expressions that came to light in the implementation period. As noted in the journals, during the initial sessions of implementation “the use of gesture, physical commands and movement proved to be very effective when guiding the students in the topic. They enjoy trying to guess and participating in general” (Journal entry 1).

The inclusion of TPR to develop the different topics gave good results since the beginning. Lessons about isolated words, questions and answers, comparisons; were easily complemented and developed by using TPR strategies. “The topic about sizes and shapes is introduced by making comparisons through physical gesture and asking questions to the students” (Journal entry 4).

Finally, TPR also gave the opportunity to make the classroom a place where all the students could participate, not only observing and answering questions and commands but also leading some exercises and guiding classmates in the activities. Students had the opportunity to present their homework to the rest of the class by using physical expressions. In this segment, that became a loved one, students did mimicry, gesture, gave hints and did guiding sounds; exhorting their classmates to follow them.

“An activity involving physical gesture and commands is done to exhort students to name the professions of their classmates. Students share their homework by giving hints about the names. They used expressions and gestures as classmates tried to guess the profession” (Journal entry 2)

Conclusion

Findings in this study suggest that songs and videos were of great help and enhanced students' ability to understand different words and expressions in the target language. Their pronunciation also improved significantly during the presentations of songs, homework socializations and varied activities held in the classroom. With the support of the TPR strategies, students also became more confident to actively participate and try to speak in English in every opportunity they had; turning the sessions a space for questions, opinions, physical movement, songs and children's voices in general.

These findings are of great importance to the students' current and future contact with English as they managed to explore a different perception of it. They had a more playful and dynamic approach to the learning process of the language and enjoyed being active part of the sessions through the physical expressions, gestures, songs and videos.

As teachers, we could find the use of these supporting methods and techniques something of great help in our practice; as students' attention, specially at this early age, can be sometimes difficult to appeal and captivate with the mere topics, homework and basic instruction. In this regard, approaches like TPR, that is a method generally underappreciated for its limitations, can be brought into the classroom by the hand of other methodologies and different complementing techniques as videos and songs to ensure a positive outcome, a significant learning process and a good experience for the students.

There were, however, some challenges in this implementation that had to do with lack of time. A significant number of sessions were moved or cancelled as consequence of extra-curricular activities or unfortunate events, that forced to the rearrangement of the project

planning and the delay in the agenda proposed. If I had had more time, I would have dedicated extra sessions to the preparation and final presentations; and the possibility of including the creation of a separated artifact for each of the units. Another challenge I faced was the high number of students in the group as well as the frequent absences during some of the sessions. These situations made the implementation difficult and rendered the individual feedback and accompanying of students an accidented process.

Reflection

During this practicum year, I had wonderful and enriching experiences concerning my teaching practice. I had the opportunity to work with a challenging yet interesting and lovely group of students who were always active and full of energy. I discovered how much a student could be fascinated for a cartoon, a character in a screen and a new song to follow; and how these fascinations could be turned in favor of the teaching process.

This experience also gave me the opportunity to explore the advantages and disadvantages of certain methodologies and strategies when working with kids of this age, and learned how their attention can be drawn in a second and then lost in the next one. I also experienced first-hand the difficult situations we as teachers have to face every day in our profession. How we have to become guidance, confidants, mediators of conflicts and friends while finding the time for specific instruction. I also found out that English could be fun to learn and teach as long as we are not afraid of trying different things. Students learn not only from the teacher, they learn from other students, from the environment, and their surroundings.

I had a bittersweet sensation due to the amount of sessions public school students may be missing along their school year. In this case, those missing sessions directly affected my

practicum process and the adequate developing of it. In a general term, they could affect the whole process students have in the institution. Nonetheless, I feel happy I dedicated all my effort to the students and how they equally corresponded by actively participating in this process, with enthusiasm and desire to learn.

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