

# Application of behavioral learning theory in teaching English vocabulary for the students at Bac Hong primary school in Hanoi

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to identify how much vocabulary learning at Bac Hong Primary School is facilitated by behavioral learning-based activities. For four months, 84 pupils from classes 5A and 5B at the school will participate in the study. The experimental investigation uses a pre-test, four posttests, and class observation as its data gathering tools. The study's findings demonstrated that, in contrast to the control group, the students in the treatment group, where the researcher used the TPR approach based on behavioral learning theory, had positive attitudes and were making progress in their vocabulary acquisition of English. Finally, it is highly anticipated that the study's findings will contribute to the advancement of vocabulary instruction in English.

**Keywords:** Behaviorism, behavioral learning theory, behavioral learning-based activities, learning vocabulary

## 1. Introduction

Individual study, work, and internal components are all part of the process of learning. Learning can be defined as a process of adapting to someone else's basic cognitive stimulus through accommodation and simulation, according to Skinner (1976).

It is evident how behaviorism theory differs from other ideas. This is evident in regular classroom instruction. Leahey (2000) identifies many assumptions and perspectives on behaviorism theory. According to behaviorism theory, learning involves changing students' behavior, whether through oral or written products. The teacher's role is to control the stimulus and learning environment to achieve this goal. Students who demonstrate significant changes are rewarded, while those who demonstrate significant changes are punished.

### Research Questions

- To what extent does the implementation of behavioral learning-based activities help students learn language at Bac Hong Primary School?

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. An overview of behaviorism

According to behaviorism, children acquire languages primarily via repetition, imitation, and the building of habits. Offering the Innate Hypothesis, Chomsky (1959) departs from behaviorism's core

principles. According to Chomsky (1993), language learning occurs when a child is placed in an appropriate environment, similar to how a child's body matures with proper nutrition and stimulation (p. 519).

As a result, what the teacher provides (stimulus) and what the students take (reaction) should be watched and measured (Fauziati, 2016). It focuses on measurement theory, as measuring is essential for determining whether or not changes in behavior occur.

### 2.2. Vocabulary teaching activities basing on behavioral learning theory

#### 2.2.1. Total Physical Response approach

The language instruction approach known as Total Physical Response (TPR) places a strong emphasis on voice and movement coordination. It teaches language through motor activity.

TPR teaching methods has following characteristics:

1. The teacher gives directions, and the students "act" in response.
2. Before speaking, it's important to understand the spoken language.
3. Effective understanding and retention require students to move their bodies in response to commands.
4. Emphasis is placed on listening and bodily responses rather than oral production.
5. Pupils shouldn't be forced to talk before they're

prepared. Speaking the target language will come easily when it has been absorbed.

6. Grammar and vocabulary are prioritized above other lengthy topics. Spoken language is prioritized over written language.

TPR teaching approaches use four steps for an English lesson:

- First, teachers provide teaching and take appropriate actions. Students simply watch, listen, and observe.

- Second, professors provide instructions and physical acts, and students mimic them.

- Third, professors provide instructions without performing any physical activities, while students act accordingly.

- Finally, some pupils provide directions while others perform physical tasks.

### 2.2.2. TPR activities used for primary school learners in the study

TPR can be simply integrated into daily teaching routines. The instructor guides the class in understanding and reacting to basic cues and signs like hands up, stand up, sit down, wave farewell, etc... She can create visual links with words that the youngsters can learn and reproduce, particularly descriptive words. Children engage in such activities by first listening to messages, interpreting them, determining if they are good or negative, and acting appropriately (Pinter, 2006).

#### \* **Commands**

The most common TPR activities involve teachers issuing commands to which pupils physically respond, indicating comprehension. For example:

Depending on the lesson's theme, the teacher can prepare commands to increase vocabulary learning by manipulating any group of photos or flashcards: Point to, touch, or pick up (apple, pear, orange, strawberry). Individual kids from two groups of kids run to the whiteboard to touch or pick up the picture that corresponds to the word the teacher says in the instruction. The team with the most flashcards wins. You can use this exercise as a warm-up before introducing new language or as a drill to review existing vocabulary.

#### \* **Games**

Depending on their psychological makeup, children may find it difficult to focus for extended periods of time and may find it difficult to pay attention to their teachers. A welcoming classroom environment will help certain pupils engage with teachers and other

students while keeping their focus. The teacher can also create some of the game's pertinent content in this mode.

Prepare some commands: *touch your nose, touch your lips, touch your eyes etc.*

The teacher showed the students part of the body by mentioning and touching.

Give the commands to touch part of their body according to what the teacher says.

To know students' understanding, the teacher can do miss-direction technique for example when saying "*touch your nose*" the teacher touches his/her lips.

Repeat this technique several times.

This game can help students develop their sense of English and English thinking skills in a comfortable and enjoyable setting.

#### \* **Storytelling**

Storytelling is also a technique to highlight the individuality of each individual's imagination, which can develop language. TPR storytelling is another style that employs pantomime and physical activity: each word in a story is represented by a unique gesture. Furthermore, because teachers contextualize and act out the acquired language, their pupils will be able to hear, see, retell, revise, and rewrite it (Marsh, 2000).

#### \* **Miming and role-playing**

By means of dramatization and simulation, kids perform classic melodies such as "The Mulberry Bush." Children hold hands and run in a circle while the song plays, and then they stop to imitate doing their hair, cleaning their shoes, washing their hands, and getting ready for school. Another popular action song is "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes," in which kids touch their individual body parts and engage in physical activity that involves bending over and crouching.

Based on the period of authority or control, the teacher might declare which group has won, and then give them prizes or presents.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1. Participants**

#### **3.1.1. The Researcher**

The researcher is also the teacher of English in Bac Hong primary school and is also the observer in the study. During the first two weeks of the second semester of school year 2018-2019, the teacher-observer taught and observed the class to collect initial data. During the experimental research, she invited two English teachers to follow the class when the new set of activities was conducted to elicit data

on the effectiveness of the action adopted.

### 3.1.2. The Students

The participants of the study are eighty - four students who were selected from class 5A and 5B at Bac Hong primary school, each class accounted for forty - two. They were local and about eleven years old. Two groups were formed out of them: the control group and the experiment group. Utilizing the TPR method was the experiment group. The control group started using conventional teaching strategies.

The target students were in the third year of obligatory English education, in the fifth grade, and had no prior knowledge of word form. The experiment lasted four months from the middle of January, 2019 to the middle of May, 2019. The teacher gave two lessons each week, ten lessons each month. Every class lasted forty minutes.

## 3.2. Data collection instrument

### 3.2.1. Pre- test

In order to learn about the students' English ability, the pretest was conducted in the first day of the second semester of school year 2018 -2019. There were twenty questions totally in the pre-test; each question was worth 0.5 point. The questions were divided into four types. Students do the test in 20 minutes. Then the teacher divided eighty-four students into two groups based on the unit of the class 5A and 5B.

### 3.2.2. Post test

To quantify and compare the outcomes of the two groups, a post-test was administered. Since only the experimental group received the therapy, any differences in outcomes between that group and the control group can be interpreted as evidence of the TPR method's efficacy. The 4 posttests in this study were carried out for both groups after each of the 4 months of the experiment. After the data of the two groups' results had been collected, the effectiveness of the treatment was measured through the two groups' mean scores. The contents of the post-test were about the vocabulary of ten lessons in the second semester of the fifth grade.

The form of the posttests was the same as the pretest. The only difference was the test contents. There were twenty questions in each test, time allowance for each test was 20minutes. Each question valued 0.5 point. The contents of the posttest were based on the teaching material during the experiment from February 2019 to May 2019. The results and data of these tests were calculated and compared.

## 3.3. Methods of data analysis

One of the key components of every research project is gathering data, which is a crucial activity. In this study, for the tests, the scores from the pre-test and post-test were computed, calculated and converted into mean scores based on the total number of participants.

The formula of calculating the score is:  

$$\text{Students' score} = \frac{\text{total number of correct answers}}{2}$$

The formula of calculating the mean of the scores is:

$$M = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

M = mean score of the test

$\sum X$  = the total scores of the pupils

N = the number of the pupils

For the classroom observation, the researcher as well as the teacher can observe students' enthusiasm and attitude toward TPR method applied in the English lessons. After that, a descriptive and interpretive analysis was applied to synthesize those data.

To sum up, the information was presented, examined, and interpreted in order to arrive at the study's conclusions. Pre- and post-test results, along with classroom observations, served as the foundation for the analysis and interpretations.

## 4. Findings and discussions

### 4.1. Data analysis from the tests

#### 4.1.1. The Scores and Analysis of the Experiment Group

The table 4.1 below indicates the mean scores in pre-test, three posttests and the average point of students in experiment group. The experiment group's students produce excellent outcomes. Put differently, not only are students assessed at the conclusion of every month, but there are also no significant variations amongst the posttest results. Furthermore, there is a noticeable improvement in the post-test mean score per month. These outcomes support our hypothesis that the experiment group use a TPR technique that yields consistently excellent findings. The atmosphere for learning and the chance to utilize language are free from pressure. They'll study more effectively in such a relaxed environment.

Table 4.1: The scores of the experiment group

	Pre-test	Post test 1	Post test 2	Post test 3	Post test 4	Average point
Mean Score	8.3	8.5	8.7	8.8	9.0	8.8

#### 4.1.2. The Scores and Analysis of the Control Group

Table 4.2: The score of the control group

	Pre-test	Post test 1	Post test 2	Post test 3	Post test 4	Average point
Mean Score	8.2	8.2	8.2	8.2	8.5	8.3

The students in the experiment group had higher average scores than the pupils in the control group. There are obviously glaring disparities in the kids’ results. These findings demonstrate that the control group used the conventional teaching approach, which yields inconsistent memory outcomes. It lightly grows up in the final test because of being seen as the students’ results in all school year and therefore students must try their best to revise and do the test. Stressful learning environment and the lack of language skills are affecting students’ learning.

4.1.3. The comparison of the mean scores between two groups

The chart below will show the different mean scores in pre-test and four posttests of the two groups in the experiment.

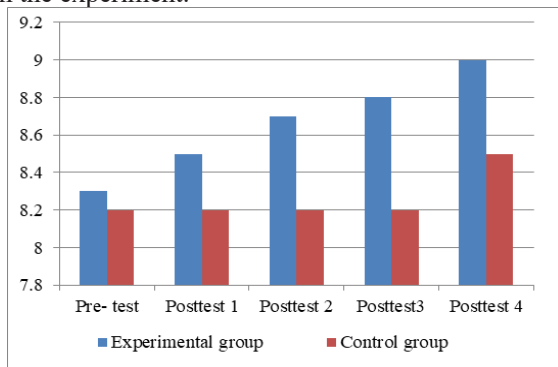


Figure 4.1: Mean score of the two groups

As we see from the figure, the mean scores of two groups, the experimental group and the control group, are extremely different. By dividing the entire sample score by the total number of individuals, the researcher would like to compare two groups’ mean scores. The figure shows that pre-test mean scores of both groups in the study are quite similar. However; the mean score of the experimental group becomes higher and higher through each posttest and much higher than the control groups. While the mean score of students who were taught with GTM rises slowly or not at all, the mean score of students who were taught with TPR is dramatically raised. The data indicates that students taught with TPR had a higher mean score than students taught with GTM. It is clear that employing TPR rather than GTM produces superior results when it comes to improving pupils’ vocabulary mastery. However, TPR appears to be a more effective way to improve kids’ vocabulary mastery.

5. Conclusion

In order to figure out the answers to the research question, the researcher studied the behavioral learning theory and the related language teaching methods.

The students in experiment groups sat down face to face and enjoyed the English lessons with TPR method while the students in control group sat down in the face of the teacher and the blackboard and their seats are fixed. As demonstrated by the results of the study, the students in experimental group gave positive response towards the lessons; however, the students in control group felt more stressful and got the lower results than the experiment group. There was obvious improvement in the students’ English vocabulary in experiment group.

Being aware of the fact that education is not offered with individual teaching methods, the author is willing to experience non-traditional teaching practices (TPR) that was implied from behavioral learning theory as powerful tools for the achievement of teaching aims such as increased learning motivation, interest, and English vocabulary quality in the context of teaching English as a foreign language.

Additionally, the study is being conducted in the hopes that it may be helpful to English teachers who wish to include behavioral learning theory into their instruction.

In conclusion, TPR approach is regarded as an effective tactic that outperforms alternative approaches for expanding pupils’ vocabulary in English. Given its advantages for both students and teachers, it ought to be a cutting-edge component of English instruction.

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