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Interaction Patterns and Verbal Development in a TPR-Based Preschool EFL Classroom: A Qualitative Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the development of classroom interaction patterns and students' verbal ability in a Total Physical Response (TPR)-based English classroom for young learners. Conducted as a qualitative case study at Excellent Academy (pre-school EFL classroom), the research involved eight students aged 4 to 6 years with diverse characteristics. Data was collected through classroom observations, field notes, interviews, and verbal coding rubric across six instructional meetings, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that interaction patterns initially followed a highly teacher-centered Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) structure, with students responding primarily through physical actions. Over time, interaction evolved into a more dynamic and participatory process, marked by the emergence of peer interaction and student-led activities, although the IRF framework remained dominant. In terms of verbal development, students demonstrated gradual progression from pre-verbal to emerging, developing, and advanced stages. This development was supported by repeated exposure, multimodal input, scaffolding, and opportunities for pushed output. The study supports key theoretical perspectives, including TPR, Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and Swain's Output Hypothesis, highlighting the importance of structured input and interactive learning environments in early language acquisition. Despite variations in learners' backgrounds, all students showed improvement in verbal production. The findings suggest that TPR is an effective approach for fostering both interaction and early language development in young learners, although integrating more communicative strategies may further enhance peer interaction and language use.

1. Introduction

Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) requires transitioning from passive instruction to active engagement, as children learn most effectively through meaningful interaction. This research is grounded in Sociocultural Theory, which asserts that language acquisition is a socially mediated process occurring within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD delineates the gap between a learner's current autonomous capabilities and those attainable through structured guidance or collaboration, identifying an optimal learning domain in which tasks are sufficiently challenging to promote growth without inducing excessive frustration. Within this framework, the classroom functions not merely as a site for information transmission, but as a space for collaborative meaning-making (Z. Liu et al., 2025)

To further conceptualize how interaction unfolds in classroom discourse, this study also draws on the Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) model (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) in(Ghufran Hashmi, 2025), which explained how teacher–student exchanges are typically structured. In this pattern, the teacher initiates interaction (e.g., giving commands or asking questions), students respond either physically or verbally, and the teacher provides feedback in the form of correction, repetition, or reinforcement. Within a TPR-based classroom, this IRF sequence is not static; rather, it evolves from teacher-controlled interactions toward more student-centered exchanges. Initially, the teacher dominates the initiation phase through commands, while students respond physically. However, as learners develop confidence and linguistic resources, they begin to take on the initiator role, particularly in student-led activities, thereby transforming the interactional pattern into a more dialogic and participatory process.

This interactional shift aligns with Long's Interaction Hypothesis, which posits that language acquisition is facilitated through negotiation of meaning during communicative exchanges (Long, 1996). Complementing this, Swain's Output Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of "pushed output," where learners are encouraged to move beyond comprehension toward active language production (Swain, 2005). In this sense, the IRF structure provides a practical discourse framework through which both interaction and output can be observed and analyzed, particularly in identifying how feedback stages "push" learners to refine and produce language. In the context of TEYL, a teacher can operationalize these theories through a "Student-Led TPR" activity. Initially, the teacher models commands such as "Touch your toes" or "Hop like a rabbit," providing essential physical scaffolding. To push output, the teacher then invites a student to assume the role of "teacher," thereby shifting the initiation phase of the IRF sequence to the learner. This role requires the child to transition from responding physically to producing verbal commands. For instance, when a student initiates an action but struggles to recall the word "jump," peers or the teacher may provide scaffolding, enabling the learner to successfully produce the target language. This moment exemplifies how pushed output occurs within the learner's ZPD through collaborative interaction.

Despite these benefits, many EFL contexts remain dominated by teacher-centered models that limit opportunities for such interactional development. To address this, Total Physical Response (TPR) is often employed to lower the affective filter and mirror the natural progression of first-language acquisition (Asher, 1969; Krashen, 1985). TPR provides comprehensible input through physical movement, allowing learners to build a receptive foundation during the "silent period" before engaging in verbal production (Putri, 2016; Xie, 2021). However, while recent studies highlight TPR's effectiveness in improving vocabulary retention and motivation (P. L. Liu et al., 2024; Zhao, 2025) these studies tend to treat TPR as a static instructional tool rather than an evolving interactional system

Notwithstanding its popularity, a critical gap remains in understanding how interaction patterns develop within TPR-based classrooms, particularly the transition from physical response to verbal discourse. Most existing research focuses on outcomes rather than the interactional processes themselves. There is limited evidence on how IRF sequences are enacted, modified, and redistributed between teachers and students, or how physical scaffolding supports the emergence of verbal "pushed output." Therefore, this study seeks to examine how teacher–student and peer interaction patterns are constructed within TPR, and how these patterns facilitate learners' progression from comprehension to spoken English within their ZPD.

Therefore, this qualitative case study aims to investigate the interactional patterns and verbal development trajectories within a TPR-based preschool EFL classroom, specifically focusing on the transition from kinesthetic mimesis to verbal production. To achieve this, the study was employed to identify the diverse interaction patterns that emerge between the teacher and students, as well as among peers, during the implementation of TPR activities. Additionally, the research explores the procedural mechanics of how young learners leverage physical scaffolding to bridge the gap between receptive movement and the generation of verbal output. By addressing these objectives, the study intends to answer two primary research questions: (1) What interaction patterns emerge between the teacher and students during TPR sessions? and (2) How does verbal development occur in TPR based classroom?

2. Method

This study adopted a qualitative case study design, drawing on the framework proposed by Robert K. Yin. This approach is considered appropriate as it facilitates an in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly in situations where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly delineated (Yin, 2015). The selection of a case study design was based on its suitability for examining naturally occurring classroom practices in a bounded (Coombs, 2022) . In contrast to ethnography, which typically requires prolonged engagement to explore broader cultural patterns (McLeod, 2024), the present study is limited to the investigation of instructional practices within a specific classroom over a defined period. Furthermore, while classroom discourse analysis tends to focus primarily on the linguistic aspects of interaction (Skukauskaite et al., 2015), this study seeks to encompass both verbal and non-verbal dimensions of communication, including the physical responses that are fundamental to the implementation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method.

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how classroom interaction patterns are constructed and how verbal development emerges in a TPR-based English classroom for young learners (Mezmir, 2020). A case study approach is appropriate because it allows for an in-depth examination of naturally occurring classroom practices, particularly the dynamic interaction between teachers and students during TPR implementation. Accordingly, the case study approach provides a comprehensive framework for capturing the complexity of classroom interaction patterns and for examining the processes through which young learners' verbal development emerges in a TPR-based instructional context. The study was conducted at Excellent Academy, a private preschool-level educational institution located in Balaraja, Kabupaten Tangerang, Indonesia. The school focuses on early childhood education and provides foundational learning experiences for children aged 4 to 6 years. English is introduced as part of the daily learning program, with an emphasis on interactive and activity-based instruction suitable for young learners. The classroom environment is designed to be child-friendly and supportive, incorporating visual aids, movement-based activities, and play-oriented learning to enhance engagement.

In addition, the observed class consisted of eight students aged 4–6 years, representing beginner-level English learners with limited prior exposure to formal English instruction. The classroom was facilitated by one English teacher and one teacher assistant, allowing for closer guidance and individualized support during activities. The teaching approach in this setting predominantly applied the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, where students responded to teacher instructions through physical movement before gradually producing verbal responses. In terms of participant selection, the participants were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability technique commonly used in qualitative research to obtain rich, context-specific data (Tajik et al., 2024). The selection criteria included: (1) teachers who actively implement TPR as the primary instructional method, (2) students who are beginner or early-stage English learners, and (3) a natural classroom setting without experimental manipulation.

Table 1. Participants Demographic

Participant	Role	Age	Gender	Learning Background	Characteristics
T1	Teacher	Adult	Female	Experienced in TPR instruction	Directive, supportive
A1	Assistant	Adult	Female	Classroom support	Facilitative, attentive
S1	Student	5.5	Male	Experienced	Confident, active
S2	Student	5	Fermale	Experienced	Responsive, engaged
S3	Student	5	Male	Experienced	Active, participative
S4	Student	4.5	Female	Moderate	Slightly shy
S5	Student	4.5	Female	Moderate	Needs guidance
S6	Student	4	Male	Beginner	New student
S7	Student	4	Male	Beginner	Limited exposure
S8	Student	5	Female	Special case, experienced	Verbal difficulty (autistic)

To address the research questions, data is collected through classroom observation, video recording, and supplementary interviews. To answer the first research question related tp what interaction patterns emerge between the teacher and students during TPR sessions, the observation and interview were conducted. Following this, to answer the second research question related to how verbal development occured in TPR based classroom, the observation including the use of verbal coding rubric and interview were also employed.This study employed a non-participant observation to systematically documenting classroom interactions and students' verbal development during the implementation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method. The researcher remained detached from the instructional process, ensuring that all behaviors and interactions occurred naturally without intervention (Emilio Martinez Barrios et al., 2022).

The observation was conducted over six classroom sessions, each lasting approximately 60 minutes. All sessions were video recorded to allow for repeated viewing and in-depth analysis. In addition to video recordings, field notes were taken to capture contextual details that may not be fully represented in the recordings, such as classroom atmosphere and spontaneous events (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). The observation protocol consisted of two main instruments: (1) field notes and (2) a structured observation checklist, designed based on established classroom interaction frameworks. The checklist included the following categories:

Table 2. Observation Protocol Framework

Category	Focus	Indicators / Aspects Observed
Teacher–Student Interaction	Instructional practices used by the teacher	- Commands (e.g., giving instructions using TPR) - Modeling (demonstrating actions or language use) - Feedback (corrections, praise, reinforcement)
Student–Student Interaction	Peer interaction patterns	- Peer responses (verbal or physical reactions to classmates) - Imitation (replicating peers' actions or speech)
Students' Responses	Learners' reactions to instruction	- Physical responses (body movements reflecting TPR engagement) - Verbal responses (words, phrases, simple sentences)
Interaction Patterns and Discourse Features	Structure of classroom communication	- Turn-taking patterns - Interaction sequences (e.g., Initiation–Response–Feedback) - Scaffolding strategies used by the teacher

Attention was also given to the transition from physical responses to verbal production, as an indicator of students' emerging language development. In addition to support the observation and see the development of verbal coding rubric is developed to categorize students' language development into some stages (Demircan et al., 2023). First, pre-verbal which describes only physical responses (no speech production). Second, emerging verbal that explains single word or repetition. Third stage is developing verbal which shows short phrases or formulaic expressions. Lastly, advanced independent verbal, from students, who were able to produce some complete sentences with minimal prompting To ensure clarity and consistency in coding, examples of each category.

Table 3. Verbal Coding Rubric Usage

Stage	Description	Coding Indicators	Example of Student Response
Pre-verbal	Physical response only (no speech)	Following commands through actions; gestures only	Student stands up, claps, or points without speaking
Emerging verbal	Single word or repetition	Produces isolated words; repeats teacher's model	"Run", "Jump", repeats "Sit down" after teacher
Developing verbal	Short phrases or formulaic expressions	Produces 2–4 word phrases; uses memorized expressions (still with prompts)	"I can jump", "Open the door", "Teacher, look!"
Advanced Independent Verbal	complete sentences	produce some full sentences with minimal prompting.	Able to answer some qestions. T: " What do you do in the morning?" , S: "I study in the morning".

To support all the instrument, semi-structured interviews are also applied in this research. The interview is conducted with the teacher after the observation. The aim of the interview is to explore teacher's rationale for using TPR, perceptions of students' verbal development, and strategies to encourage speaking from the teacher (Mashuri et al., 2022). The interview used open-ended questions that focus on instructional strategies, student progress, and challenges in promoting speaking. In establishing the content validity, the rubric, observation sheet, and the interview questions were reviewed by two experts in English for Young Learners. Content validity refers to the extent to which an instrument adequately represents the construct being measured (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The experts evaluated the relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness of each indicator. Revisions were made based on their feedback to improve the accuracy and clarity of the instrument. They evaluated the clarity, relevance, and representativeness of each category in capturing young learners' verbal development, classroom interaction, and the teachers' insight to support the teaching process.

Furthermore, to ensure reliability, the study employed an inter-rater reliability procedure (Cole, 2024). Two independent raters were trained using the rubric and a set of sample classroom observation data. In the case of inter rater, training process involved (1) jointly reviewing the rubric criteria, (2) practicing coding on selected excerpts, and (3) discussing discrepancies to reach a shared understanding. After training, both raters independently coded 20–30% of the observation data. The level of agreement between raters was then calculated using Cohen's Kappa coefficient to determine consistency (Cohen, 1960). A Kappa valued above 0.75 was considered indicative of strong agreement. Any disagreements were resolved through discussion, and the rubric was further refined if necessary before proceeding with the full data coding.

3. Procedures

The research procedure began with obtaining formal permission from the school and the classroom teacher, following the case study protocol (Yin, 2015). Ethical considerations were implemented in accordance with guidelines from Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi and institutional ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians, clearly outlining the study's purpose, procedures, and the voluntary nature of participation, including the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Additionally, verbal assent was sought from the students to ensure their willingness to participate. Confidentiality and data protection were strictly maintained. Participants were assigned pseudonyms (e.g., S1, S2) to ensure anonymity, and all video and audio data were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. These procedures reflect the ethical principles of respect for persons and beneficence, while also aligning with Yin's emphasis on maintaining a systematic case study database. Such measures are necessary to protect participants, particularly young learners, and to ensure the credibility and integrity of the research.

Following ethical approval, a pilot observation was conducted to refine the case study protocol and familiarize the researcher with the classroom setting. The main data collection then involved six TPR-based classroom sessions, using multiple sources of evidence including video recordings, field

notes, and a semi-structured teacher interview. All data were transcribed, labeled, and organized systematically to maintain a clear chain of evidence, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness and transparency of the study.

The data analysis in this study employed a qualitative approach using thematic analysis, following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke, supported by triangulation techniques to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings (Guion et al., 2024). The six-phase framework includes data familiarization, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and report writing (Ahmed et al., 2025; Clarke et al., 2013) . All classroom observations and teacher interviews were transcribed verbatim and repeatedly reviewed to achieve data familiarization. The analysis began with initial coding, where meaningful units such as teacher instructions, students' physical responses, emerging verbal expressions, and interaction sequences were identified and labeled. This process was followed by focused coding, in which similar codes were grouped into broader categories. These categories were then examined to generate themes, particularly those reflecting classroom interaction patterns (e.g., initiation, response, feedback, teacher-led commands, and student participation structures) and stages of learners' verbal development.

To systematically capture students' language progression, a verbal coding rubric was applied, consisting of four levels: (1) pre-verbal (physical response only), (2) emerging verbal (single-word production or repetition), (3) developing verbal (short phrases or formulaic expressions), and (4) advanced independent verbal (production of complete sentences with minimal prompting). Each observed student response was classified according to these levels during the coding process. The rubric functioned as an analytical framework that guided both the initial and focused coding stages, enabling the researcher to consistently categorize and track learners' progression from non-verbal comprehension to independent spoken production across sessions. The results of this classification contributed directly to theme development, particularly in identifying how interaction patterns support different stages of verbal growth.

Furthermore, to ensure trustworthiness, this study applied methodological triangulation by integrating multiple data sources, including video recordings, field notes, and teacher interviews. Data from these sources were systematically compared and cross-checked to confirm consistency and identify discrepancies. For instance, students' observed behaviors in video recordings were supported by field notes and further interpreted through teacher perspectives obtained from interviews. In addition, the researcher acknowledged their positionality as an observer involved in the classroom context, which may influence data interpretation. To minimize potential bias, several strategies were employed, including maintaining reflective field notes, applying consistent coding procedures through the verbal rubric, and incorporating inter-rater reliability, in which an additional coder independently analyzed portions of the data to ensure consistency of coding decisions. Any discrepancies between coders were discussed and resolved through consensus. This combination of triangulation, inter-rater validation, and reflexivity strengthened the credibility, dependability, and overall rigor of the analysis, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of how TPR facilitates young learners' language development.

4. Resultsand Discussion

Results, Interaction Patterns emerge between Teachers and Students during the TPR-based sessions. First Meeting, on February 10, 2026. The first meeting was held at Excellent Academy for 8 students using the 'daily activities' theme materials. At this time, the teacher introduced the new vocabularies to students such as "eat, study, drink, wake up, etc". During the first session, interaction was highly teacher-centered, dominated by imperative commands and physical demonstrations. Students primarily responded through body movements enthusiastically without verbal output, indicating a strong presence of the pre-verbal stage. Most learners relied on imitation, following instructions such as "eat" or "drink" without attempting to speak. There were only two learners who were able to say the words introduced by the teacher. The interaction pattern strictly followed the IRF structure, with minimal variation. No significant peer interaction was observed, and students depended entirely on teacher modeling. This session reflects the initial stage of comprehension, where learners focus on understanding input through physical engagement.

Second meeting, on February 24 2026: In the second meeting, the While-Teaching phase goal was to introduce simple sentence patterns such as "I wake up" through gesture-based modeling (e.g., pointing to self for "I," mimicking waking up). While physical responses remained dominant, some learners began to produce single-word utterances or partial repetition, indicating a transition into the emerging verbal stage. In addition, interaction patterns remained largely teacher-led; however, students showed increased responsiveness and engagement. Moreover, occasional code-mixing began to appear, with students combining English words and Bahasa Indonesia when attempting to participate. During the post-teaching phase, a few students attempted to repeat vocabulary verbally alongside actions, suggesting early attempts to bridge comprehension and production. This reinforces the idea that verbal development in TPR contexts emerges gradually through repeated exposure, scaffolding, and opportunities for low-pressure participation.

Third meeting, March 3 2026: By the third session, students demonstrated greater familiarity with classroom routines established during the Pre-Teaching phase. In the While-Teaching phase, the teacher expanded the sentence structure to include time expressions (e.g., *"I wake up in the morning"*) supported by visuals and gestures. More learners began to participate verbally, producing repeated words and short expressions. The emerging verbal stage became more prominent across the class, although many responses still required prompting. Code-mixing was frequently observed, indicating that students were drawing on L1 to support meaning-making. Notably, peer interaction started to emerge. Students occasionally imitated each other's responses or reacted collectively during group activities. Although the IRF pattern remained dominant, interaction became slightly more dynamic, with brief moments of student-to-student engagement. The Post-Teaching phase reinforced learning through both physical and limited verbal recall.

Fourth meeting, March 10 2026: In the fourth meeting, a clearer progression toward the developing verbal stage was observed. During the While-Teaching phase, the teacher introduced question-and-answer patterns such as *"What do you do (time)?"* and guided students in responding. Some students began producing short phrases such as "I can jump" or "open the door," particularly when supported by prompts, modeling, and visual cues. Others relied on peer imitation or required additional scaffolding, often still mixing Bahasa Indonesia with English. Interaction patterns showed slight diversification. While teacher–student interaction remained dominant, emerging student–student interaction became more visible, especially when students followed or responded to peers. The Post-Teaching phase continued to reinforce both vocabulary and sentence structures through actions, verbal recall, and songs.

Fifth meeting, March 17 2026: A significant shift occurred in the fifth session during the While-Teaching phase when the teacher incorporated student-led activities. Learners were invited to take on the role of the "teacher," giving commands to their peers as the part of review activity for daily activity theme, This resulted in increased verbal production and more varied interaction patterns. Students demonstrated greater confidence in producing language, although many utterances were still incomplete or supported by gestures. This stage reflects the influence of "pushed output," as learners were required to actively produce language rather than merely respond. Peer interaction became more visible, with students responding to each other's commands and occasionally assisting peers. In the Post-Teaching phase, more students were able to recall vocabulary and short phrases verbally, indicating improved retention and confidence.

Sixth meeting, March 24 2026: By the sixth meeting, the While-Teaching phase reflected a consolidation of previous learning. Several students showed progression into the developing and, in some cases, advanced independent verbal stage. Learners were able to produce short phrases and simple sentences with less prompting, particularly during interactive and question-and-answer activities. Across the six meetings, the classroom interaction pattern was predominantly structured around a teacher-centered IRF (Initiation–Response–Feedback) model, particularly in the early stages. In Meetings 1 and 2, interaction was almost entirely controlled by the teacher, with students responding mainly through physical actions and minimal verbal participation. Moving into Meetings 3 and 4, although the IRF pattern remained dominant, there was a slight emergence of peer interaction, as students began to imitate and respond to one another during activities. By Meetings 5 and 6, interaction became more varied and dynamic, with increased student participation and occasional student-led exchanges. However, despite this growing diversity, the IRF structure continued to serve as the underlying framework that guided classroom interaction throughout the learning process.

The teacher stated that the students still needed to be controlled since they were still on the early stage of learning, so they still needed a lot of guidance. In addition, this class students' level and characted varied. The teacher had done several things to still encourage the learners to have more peer to peer interaction, such as giving more prompts, guiding the students to talk, playing games, and so on. The teachers also implemented multiple teaching approach and strategies such as differentiated teaching and scaffolding to teach the students with different abilities. Despite the obstacle that teacher found in the classroom, it had shown that TPR still contributed a lot of benefit towards the improvement to the interaction patterns which gradually improve from teacher's dominant control to student-led exchanges although it still showed limited peer to peer interaction.

Students Verbal Development occured in TPR-based Classroom

Tabel 4. Referring to verbal coding rubric, the students' verbal development could be seen as follows.

Participant	Background	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
S1	Experienced	Emerging	Developing	Developing	Developing	Advanced	Advanced
S2	Experienced	Emerging	Emerging	Developing	Developing	Developing	Advanced
S3	Experienced	Pre-verbal	Emerging	Developing	Developing	Developing	Advanced
S4	Moderate	Pre-verbal	Emerging	Emerging	Developing	Developing	Developing
S5	Moderate	Pre-verbal	Pre-verbal	Emerging	Emerging	Developing	Developing
S6	Beginner	Pre-verbal	Pre-verbal	Pre-verbal	Emerging	Emerging	Deveg
S7	Beginner	Pre-verbal	Pre-verbal	Pre-verbal	Emerging	Emerging	Emerging
S8	Special case, Experienced	Pre-verbal	Pre-verbal	Emerging	Emerging	Emerging	Developing

On the first meeting, there were only two students who were on the emerging stage. The rest of the classes were still pre-verbal stage.

(Transcript, February 3, 2026)

T1 : "Eat!" (demonstrates)

Ss : (all perform action)

T1 : "Say: eat"

S1, S2 : "eat"

S3, S7 : (moves only)

S4, S8, S5 : (perform action)

S6 : (smile only)

This excerpt shows that most students relied on physical responses, indicating the pre-verbal stage. Only a few learners (S1 and S2) attempted verbal production, suggesting early emergence of spoken language. At the second meeting, progress was shown. There were three students who started to emerge the words. The first student moved up to level developing stage while the rest of the students were still on the pre-verbal level. It could be seen from the excerpt as follows.

(Transcript, February 10, 2026)

T1 : "I wake up" (gesture)

Ss : (follow)

T1 : "Say: wake up"

S1 : "wake up"

S2 : "wake"

S3 : "up, wake"

S5, S8, S6, S7 : (silent, gestures only)

T1 : "Good!"

S4 : "wake up" (after delayed)

At the third meeting, the verbal development started to vary. The S1, S2 and S3 were on developing stages. S4, S5, and S8 were on emerging stages. The rest of students were still on pre-verbal stages although they had showed more understanding when given more prompts.
(Transcript, February 24, 2026)

T1 : "I wake up in the morning"

S1 : "I wake up morning"

S2, S3 : "wake up morning"

T1 : "Good!"

S8 : "morning"

S4 : (whispers) "wake up"

S5 : (follows S1) "wake up"

S6, S7 : (silent, only action)

At the fourth meeting, all students produced the language gradually. There were four students on developing stages and there were four students on the emerging stage. It could be seen from the excerpt below.
(Transcript, March 3, 2026)

T1 : "What do you do in the morning?"

S1 : "I wake up"

T1 : "Good!"

S2 : "I eat"

T1 : "Good!"

S4 : "eat the morning"

T1 : "I eat in the morning"

S5 : "I... eat"

S6, S7, S8 : (silent, looking at others) eat.. makan

S3 : "I wake up, makan, terus"

Following the fourth meeting, the fifth meeting was held. At the fifth meeting, S1 was the first one to be more advanced than others, followed by four people on the developing stages, and three people on the emerging state.
(Transcript, March 17, 2026)

S1 : "Drink the water in the morning!"

Ss : (follow)

S2 : "Wake up!"

Ss : (follow)

S3 : "Open door! Pintu yes."

S4 : (laughs, follows action) “open the door!”

S5 : "eat..."

T1 : "Say: I eat!"

S7 : "eat!"

S6 : (quiet, follows peers)… “e.. eat!”

S8 : (only action) then after 2 minutes say “eat.”

Lastly, on the sixth meeting, there were three students who got in the advanced (independent stage), four people on developing stages, while one person on emerging stage.

(Transcript, March 10, 2026)

T1: "What do you do in the morning?"

S1: "I wake up and drink milk"

T1: "Excellent!"

S2: "I eat breakfast"

T1: "Good!"

S3: "I wake up and ke school"

T1: "Go to school, good!"

S4: "I wake up"

S5: "I eat"

S6: "wake up"

S7: (silent, action only) then said “to school”

S8: "I... eat break..fast" (slow, supported)

5. Discussion

Interaction Patterns Emerging Between Teacher and Students in TPR-Based Class. The findings indicate that classroom interaction patterns in the TPR-based sessions evolved gradually from highly teacher-centered to more interactive and participatory forms. In the early meetings (Meetings 1–2), interaction was strongly dominated by the teacher through the IRF (Initiation–Response–Feedback) structure. Students primarily responded through physical actions, with minimal verbal engagement. This reflects the fundamental principle of Total Physical Response (TPR), where comprehension is developed through motor activity before speech production. This pattern is consistent with previous studies (Chiluisa Chicaiza & Guamán Luna, 2025; Putri, 2016; Zhao, 2025) which found that TPR classrooms tend to begin with teacher-controlled interaction, as learners require clear modeling and structured input. Similarly, Asher’s TPR theory emphasizes that early language learning should reduce pressure on learners by allowing them to respond physically rather than verbally(Asher, 1969). As the sessions progressed (Meetings 3–4), interaction patterns began to diversify. Although the IRF structure remained dominant, peer interaction started to emerge, with students imitating and responding to each other. This shift supports Long’s Interaction Hypothesis, which suggests that interaction facilitates language acquisition by providing opportunities for meaning making. It also aligns with findings that reported that even limited peer interaction in young learner classrooms can enhance engagement and comprehension (Celik et al., 2021; Chiluisa Chicaiza & Guamán Luna, 2025; Xie, 2021).

By Meetings 5–6, a notable transformation occurred when student-led activities were introduced. Interaction became more dynamic, with students taking active roles in initiating communication. This indicates a partial shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered interaction, although the IRF framework still underpinned classroom discourse. This finding is in line with (Ghufran Hashmi, 2025), who found that incorporating student-led tasks in TPR contexts increases participation and interactional variety.From a sociocultural perspective, this progression reflects Vygotsky’s concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners gradually move from dependence on teacher support toward more independent and collaborative interaction(Vygotsky, 1978). The teacher’s role as a facilitator and scaffold provider remained crucial throughout the process. As the research result explained, the teacher had done several strategies and approaches in order to improve the peer’s interaction and verbal development. However, despite these improvements, interaction patterns did not fully shift into collaborative or negotiation-based discourse, as suggested by more communicative approaches. This suggests that while TPR is effective in early stages, it may need to be combined with other interactive strategies to further develop communicative competence and add more student-to-students interaction patterns. Students’ Verbal Development occurred in TPR-based Classroom

The results demonstrate a clear progression in students' verbal development, moving from pre-verbal to emerging, developing, and advanced stages over the six meetings. In the initial stage, most students relied solely on physical responses, indicating that they were still in the pre-verbal stage. Only a small number of students attempted verbal production.This finding supports Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which states that language acquisition begins with comprehensible input, and production emerges only after sufficient exposure. It also aligns with TPR theory, where silent periods are considered natural and beneficial in early language learning.

In Meetings 2–3, students began producing single words and partial utterances, marking the transition to the emerging verbal stage. The presence of code-mixing suggests that learners used their first language as a cognitive resource, which is supported by (Xu, 2014), who argue that L1 can facilitate L2 learning rather than hinder it. By Meetings 4–5, more students reached the developing stage, producing short phrases and simple sentences, although often with errors or reliance on prompts. This development reflects Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding, where learners gradually internalize language structures through guided support.A significant improvement was observed in Meeting 5 when students engaged in student-led activities, which required them to produce language actively. This supports Swain's Output Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of pushed output in language development. When learners are required to speak, they become more aware of linguistic gaps and attempt to refine their language use. By the final meeting, several students reached the advanced stage, producing short sentences with greater independence. This progression reflects the process of internalization, where external support is transformed into autonomous language use.These findings are consistent with previous studies, which found that TPR-based instruction can significantly improve young learners' vocabulary acquisition and early speaking ability (P. L. Liu et al., 2024; Syafei et al., 2025). However, like this study, they also noted that progress varies depending on learners' background and prior exposure.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the implementation of Total Physical Response (TPR) contributes significantly to the gradual development of both interaction patterns and students' verbal ability in young learner classrooms. The findings reveal that interaction initially followed a highly teacher-centered IRF structure, where students relied primarily on physical responses. However, across the six meetings, interaction evolved into a more dynamic and participatory process, marked by the emergence of peer interaction and student-led exchanges. Although the IRF model remained the underlying framework, the quality of interaction improved as students became more engaged and responsive. This progression confirms that TPR, supported by scaffolding and structured input, can effectively facilitate a shift from passive to more active classroom participation.

In terms of verbal development, students showed clear progression from pre-verbal to emerging, developing, and advanced stages, supporting key theories such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and Swain's Output Hypothesis. The findings indicate that repeated exposure, multimodal input, and opportunities for pushed output play a crucial role in fostering language production. While learners with prior experience progressed more rapidly, all students demonstrated improvement, highlighting the adaptability of TPR across different proficiency levels. Overall, the study confirms that TPR not only supports comprehension but also creates a foundation for gradual and meaningful verbal development. Future research is recommended to address several limitations of this research by involving larger and more diverse participant groups, as well as extending the duration of observation to examine long-term effects. Further studies could also explore the integration of TPR with communicative language teaching (CLT), task-based learning, or game-based approaches to enhance peer interaction and promote more dialogic communication. In addition, affective factors could also contribute to produce the language in teaching English for Young Learner.

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