

4. Reflection

In this study we attempted to examine how accompanying language learning with physical activities can be of great help to language learners. Results from this study showed that our treatment, i.e. teaching English accompanied by physical activities had a significant effect on Iranian young English learners. It seems that English language teachers are so focused on the verbal nature of the language learning that many seem to underestimate or ignore the potentially useful role that non-verbal activities like physical activities can play in the language classroom.

Through the administration of such techniques, the researchers came up with some conclusions. Firstly, through accompanying physical activities with learning English, not only can learners have more opportunities to "act" and to "interact" with their peers trying to use the English language, but also their English speaking, listening, and comprehension improves. Secondly, even introvert and shy learners became interested in attending conversational interactions via role-play, which can in turn lead to improvement in their social behaviors. Last but not least, as a worthwhile teaching experience, the employment of this technique requires energetic and experienced teachers.

It is also recommended that more studies be carried out to examine the physical activities in facilitating learning, especially

in the context of teaching English to young learners. Based on the study carried out, we suggest that teachers become more familiar with the importance of balancing the use of functions of the left hemisphere with the functions of the right hemisphere and its application in their teaching methods. Action researchers are advised to expand the scope of this research to more classes with different levels of language proficiency. Additionally, the experiment can be replicated in different geographical areas with different cultural backgrounds to see if cultural factors can help or hinder the effectiveness of this approach.

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male (N=23) and female (N=21) learners who had enrolled in Adineh Language institute in Mashhad. Their ages ranged between 7 and 10 years old. They all were zero beginners and did not have any prior foreign language learning experience. At the outset of the study, we divided the students into two groups namely control (N=22) and experimental group (N=22). The mother tongue of all participants was Persian. The materials for treatment in both

3. Observation

In order to systematically examine whether teaching English accompanied by physical activities has a positive effect on young language learners, we used an independent samples T-test. The results of this analysis is presented in Table 1. As can be seen in this table, the mean score of the achievement test for the experimental group is 3.77 scores higher than the mean of the control group.

Table 1: The mean and standard deviation of post-test in experimental and control group

	Number of Students	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Experimental group	22	23.81	3.86
Control group	22	20.04	2.45

groups were the vocabulary list, sentences and phrases prepared for lesson planning. As post-test assessment we prepared an achievement test based on the materials covered in the class in written form.

This study mainly adopted an action research design, but to follow a systematic procedure in data collection, we followed a pretest-posttest randomized experiment throughout the study. The second researcher was the teacher and trainer in both experimental and control groups. The students in the experimental group were assigned some kind of role play to act out what they had learned. The activities lasted for 17 sessions during a period of two months. The learners in the control group attended ordinary classes. In addition to in - class treatment, the students in the experimental class sometimes attended a gym to have both learning English and have some physical activities. At the end of the study, both groups were given a test in written format.

The results of the independent samples t-test showed that there was a significant difference between learners' outcomes in the experimental and control groups ($P < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be said that the experimental group that was taught English accompanied by physical activities significantly outperformed the traditional class.



1. Planning

Recent reviews have paid well-deserved attention to explaining the relationship between physical activity and school learning and behavior. For example, Tomporowski, Lambourne, and Okumura (2011) report that data from large samples of children suggest strong positive relationships between the amount of students' participation in physical education and school behavior and their academic success. In other words, optimal learning in children takes place when they are motivated to discover and learn in a playful and relaxed atmosphere.

When it comes to language learning, it has been proved that young children can learn languages as naturally as they learn to run, jump and play (Baker, 2000, as cited in Griva, Semoglou, & Geladari, 2010). According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mind, language is not equal to thinking, but it shapes thinking together with other artifacts, such as, for instance, gesture. Moreover, some Neo-Whorfian scholars have tried to associate speaking and gesture as two essential tools that regulate our thinking (McNeil, 1992; Slobin, 2003). Children tend to learn language more implicitly rather than explicitly (Slatterly & Willis, 2001). Given that it is not easy for them to analyze the language as a system, language needs to be presented to them authentically within meaningful contexts (Cameron, 2001).

In view of this point, teachers should appeal to learners' abilities, aptitudes and modalities and create a promising classroom environment where learners learn the language through amusement and enjoyment (Cakir, 2004). In this connection, Total Physical Response (TPR) is a method of language teaching which enhances learners' engagement

through involving them in physical activity. One of the assumptions of this method is that both hemispheres of the brain need to become engaged when a learner learns a language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In other words, similar to a child learning its mother tongue, the L2 learner should first experience motor movements, which are controlled by the right hemisphere of the brain (Asher, 1979). Subsequently, the left hemisphere processes this information and goes on to "produce language and to initiate other, more abstract language processes" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 75). Therefore, the learners' acting out following the teachers' commands is supposed to prepare them for processing the language. Moreover, according to Larsen-Freeman (2000), role plays are quite essential in the communicative approach because "they give students an opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and in different social roles." (p. 137). In view of the above-mentioned points, in this study we planned to examine whether teaching English accompanied by physical activities have a significant effect on learning English of Iranian young learners.

It seems that English language teachers are so focused on the verbal nature of the language learning that many seem to underestimate or ignore the potentially useful role that non-verbal activities like physical activities can play in the language classroom

2. Action

The study was conducted on 44 young language learners. They consisted of both

An Action Research of the Role of Motor Activities in L2 Learners' English Achievement

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چکیده

یادگیری بهینه در کودکان زمانی اتفاق می‌افتد که آن‌ها انگیزه کافی برای کشف و یادگیری در یک محیط شاد و در عین حال آرام و دور از استرس داشته باشند. هدف از تحقیق حاضر بررسی نقش «تدریس همراه با فعالیت‌های بدنی» در یادگیری زبان انگلیسی در میان زبان‌آموزان ایرانی می‌باشد. بدین منظور، نمونه‌ای متشکل از ۴۴ زبان‌آموز جوان را انتخاب و آن‌ها را به دو گروه کنترل و آزمایش تقسیم‌بندی کردیم. زبان‌آموزان گروه کنترل، زبان را به روش سنتی آموختند، اما زبان‌آموزان گروه آزمایش آن را همراه با انجام فعالیت‌های فیزیکی، در کلاسی شبیه باشگاه ورزشی و از طریق نقش‌آفرینی بود، و به اجرا در آوردن جملات و عبارات انگلیسی یاد گرفتند. در پایان از زبان‌آموزان هر دو گروه امتحان کتبی گرفته شد. نتایج این مطالعه نشان داد که آزمایش فوق تأثیر معناداری در ارتقای یادگیری زبان‌آموزان داشته است. در انتهای این مقاله نیز نتایج مزبور مورد بحث قرار گرفته و نکاتی آموزشی در این رابطه ارائه گردیده است.

کلیدواژه‌ها: یادگیری بهینه، زبان انگلیسی، فعالیت‌های فیزیکی، زبان‌آموزان جوان ایرانی

Abstract

It is widely acknowledged that optimal learning in children takes place when they are motivated to discover and learn in a playful and relaxed atmosphere. The purpose of this action research was to investigate the role of teaching accompanied by motor activities in the English achievement of Iranian learners. A sample including 44 young language learners were placed into a control group and an experimental group. The learners in the control group were taught in the traditional way, but those in the experimental group were taught English accompanied by physical activities in a gym-like class and through playing roles and acting out. At the end, a written exam was administered to both groups and the results were analyzed. Results from this study showed that the treatment had a significant effect on learners' achievement. This finding is discussed and some pedagogical implications are provided.

Key Words: optimal learning, English language, physical activities, Iranian English learners



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Guidelines for Publishing in Action Research

We have recently specified a special column in *Roshd FLT Journal* for publishing small-scale research studies that teachers conduct in their own classes. We intend to publish at least one action research report in each issue of *Roshd FLT Journal*. Thus, we encourage you to submit the reports of your classroom research to be published in our “Action Research Column”.

We accept papers on the basis of their relevancy to our readers, simplicity, readability, and freshness of viewpoint. Your papers do not have to follow the standards of scholarly, academic research papers. We do not use complicated statistical analyses, technical terms or footnotes. Thus, write in a simple, plain and easy to understand manner. Please cite all of your sources within the text, and provide a list of references at the end of your article. When writing your paper, please include the following information in your report:

- Your research questions and your plan for answering the research questions
- The actions that you did over a period of time in order to answer the questions
- Your evaluation of the effects of the actions and any evidence that support your evaluation
- Your conclusion and suggestions for other teachers

To be accepted for publication, your articles need to:

- Be maximum 2500 words, including references
- Be on a topic of relevance or interest to Iranian language teachers
- Include an abstract of no more than 200 words, and a list of references

We are looking forward to your action research reports. Should you have any inquiries about how to prepare a report of your action research, you can send an email to Dr. Mehrani at the following address: meh.mehrani@gmail.com