



Integrating Total Physical Response with Traditional Pedagogical Approaches in English Oral Skills Instruction among Grade 3 Learners in Kenya

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Abstract

The integration of innovative pedagogical approaches with traditional teaching methods presents significant opportunities for enhancing English oral skills instruction in multilingual educational contexts. This study examined how Total Physical Response (TPR) can be systematically integrated with conventional teaching approaches to optimise learning outcomes. To examine how Total Physical Response is integrated with traditional teaching methods in English oral skills lessons to enhance communication and collaboration competency among Grade 3 learners in Kakamega County, Kenya. A mixed-methods quasi-experimental design was employed with 116 Grade 3 learners and 8 teachers from public primary schools. Experimental group teachers implemented systematic TPR integration over four weeks using three distinct models: The Sandwich, the Spiral, and the Bookend approaches. Data collection included classroom observations, teacher interviews, and lesson time allocation analysis. TPR activities comprised 42.3% of total lesson time whilst maintaining traditional instruction at 57.7%. Three integration models emerged: Sandwich model (34% of lessons), Spiral model (28%), and Bookend model (38%). Integration effectiveness improved systematically from Week 1 to Week 4, with teacher confidence ratings increasing from 2.3 to 4.1. Transition times decreased from 2.8 minutes to 1.1 minutes, demonstrating improved efficiency. TPR can be successfully integrated with traditional teaching methods through systematic approaches that complement rather than replace established instructional practices. The integration models provide practical frameworks for educators implementing kinaesthetic learning approaches within existing curricular structures.

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Introduction

The evolution of English language instruction in early primary education has necessitated innovative approaches that bridge traditional pedagogical methods with contemporary kinaesthetic learning strategies. In multilingual educational environments, where learners must navigate multiple languages whilst developing English proficiency, the integration of movement-based



instruction with conventional teaching approaches presents unique opportunities for enhanced learning outcomes.

Traditional teaching methods have long provided the foundation for English language instruction, offering structured approaches to grammar, vocabulary, and written skills development. However, these methods often fall short in developing oral communication competencies and collaborative skills that contemporary educational frameworks emphasise. The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) framework implemented in Kenya prioritises communication and collaboration as core competencies, creating demands for instructional approaches that can effectively develop these complex skills.

Total Physical Response (TPR), developed by James Asher, represents a kinaesthetic learning approach that engages learners through coordinated physical movement and verbal instruction. Whilst extensive research demonstrates TPR's effectiveness in vocabulary acquisition and listening comprehension, limited investigation has examined how TPR can be systematically integrated with traditional teaching methods to create comprehensive instructional approaches that leverage the strengths of both methodologies.

The challenge of integration extends beyond simple activity substitution to encompass sophisticated pedagogical decision-making about when, how, and why different instructional approaches should be employed within single lesson structures. Successful integration requires understanding of complementary methodological strengths, effective transition management, and maintenance of curricular coherence whilst accommodating diverse learning preferences and educational objectives.

In the Kenyan educational context, where large class sizes, limited resources, and multilingual learning environments create complex instructional challenges, the development of practical integration models becomes particularly critical. Teachers need evidence-based frameworks that demonstrate how innovative approaches like TPR can enhance rather than complicate existing instructional practices whilst addressing the specific competency development goals outlined in national curriculum frameworks.

This study addresses the critical gap in understanding how TPR integration with traditional methods can be systematically implemented to enhance English oral skills instruction whilst maintaining educational effectiveness and practical feasibility within resource-constrained environments.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasises the role of social interaction and cultural tools in cognitive development. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how TPR integration can scaffold learners' oral skills development through guided practice and social mediation. Additionally, Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory supports the integration approach by recognising that learners possess diverse intelligence types, including bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, which TPR activities specifically target whilst traditional methods address linguistic intelligence.

Traditional Teaching Methods in English Language Instruction

Traditional teaching methods have historically provided the foundation for English language instruction worldwide, emphasising teacher-centred approaches, explicit instruction, and structured skill development. These methods, including grammar-translation, direct instruction, and



audiolingual approaches, have demonstrated effectiveness in developing written language skills, vocabulary knowledge, and linguistic rule understanding (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Research by Ellis (2015) demonstrates that traditional methods excel in providing clear instructional frameworks, systematic skill progression, and comprehensive coverage of linguistic content. The structured nature of traditional approaches supports curriculum alignment, assessment integration, and teacher confidence, particularly in contexts where educators have extensive experience with conventional methodologies. This research directly informs the present study by establishing the foundational strengths of traditional methods that must be preserved during integration processes.

However, limitations of traditional approaches have become increasingly apparent in contemporary educational contexts emphasising communicative competence and collaborative learning. Studies by Lightbown and Spada (2013) reveal that traditional methods often produce learners who possess linguistic knowledge but struggle with authentic communication application, particularly in oral interaction contexts requiring spontaneous language use. This finding directly addresses the research gap that the present study seeks to fill by examining how TPR integration can address these oral communication limitations whilst maintaining the structural benefits of traditional instruction.

Total Physical Response: Theoretical Foundations and Applications

Asher's (1977) Total Physical Response methodology emerged from observations of natural language acquisition processes, emphasising the role of physical movement in facilitating language comprehension and retention. The theoretical foundation rests on neurological principles suggesting that coordinated physical and verbal activity enhances memory formation and cognitive processing (Asher, 1986). This theoretical grounding provides the neurological justification for the integration approach examined in the present study.

Contemporary research by García-Neves et al. (2019) demonstrates TPR's effectiveness in developing listening comprehension, vocabulary retention, and learner engagement among young English language learners. The kinaesthetic nature of TPR activities accommodates diverse learning preferences whilst creating psychologically safe environments for language practice and experimentation. These findings inform the present research question by establishing TPR's proven effectiveness in areas where traditional methods show limitations.

Studies by Chen and Li (2019) reveal that TPR approaches particularly benefit learners in multilingual contexts where additional sensory input supports comprehension and reduces reliance on first-language translation. The physical engagement inherent in TPR activities appears to activate multiple neural pathways, creating redundant encoding opportunities that enhance long-term retention. This research directly connects to the present study's focus on multilingual Kenyan contexts, providing theoretical justification for the integration approach.

Integration Approaches in Language Education

The concept of methodological integration has gained attention as educators seek to leverage diverse instructional approaches' complementary strengths rather than adhering to single-method implementations. Research by Kumaravadivelu (2006) advocates for post-method pedagogy that combines multiple approaches based on learner needs, contextual factors, and specific learning objectives. This theoretical framework provides the pedagogical foundation for the systematic integration models examined in the present study.

Successful integration requires understanding of methodological compatibility, appropriate sequencing, and effective transition management between different instructional approaches.



Studies by Brown (2014) suggest that integration effectiveness depends on teacher pedagogical knowledge, institutional support, and systematic implementation rather than ad-hoc methodology mixing. These findings inform the present research by establishing the need for systematic integration approaches rather than random activity combinations.

Limited research has specifically examined TPR integration with traditional methods, creating a significant gap in understanding how kinaesthetic and conventional approaches can be systematically combined to optimise learning outcomes whilst maintaining practical feasibility in diverse educational contexts. This gap directly justifies the present study's research question and methodology.

Integration Challenges and Success Factors

Research identifies several critical factors influencing successful methodological integration in language education. Teacher preparation emerges as a primary factor, with studies by Freeman and Johnson (1998) demonstrating that educators require both methodological knowledge and integration skills to implement combined approaches effectively. This research informs the present study's focus on teacher implementation strategies and professional development requirements.

Contextual factors including class size, physical space, resource availability, and institutional expectations significantly influence integration feasibility and sustainability. Research by Nunan (2004) reveals that integration success often depends on adaptation to local constraints rather than rigid adherence to prescribed implementation protocols. These findings directly connect to the present study's examination of integration models within Kenyan educational contexts.

Cultural responsiveness represents another critical factor, with studies by Gay (2010) demonstrating that methodological integration must accommodate local cultural practices and learner expectations to achieve optimal effectiveness and stakeholder acceptance. This research gap regarding cultural adaptation in TPR integration provides additional justification for the present study's focus on Kenyan multilingual contexts.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods quasi-experimental design to examine TPR integration with traditional teaching methods. The design included experimental and control groups, with experimental teachers implementing systematic TPR integration whilst control teachers maintained traditional instructional approaches. The quasi-experimental design was selected to accommodate the practical constraints of educational settings whilst maintaining scientific rigour in examining causal relationships between integration approaches and learning outcomes.

Study Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in public primary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya, selected for its linguistic diversity and representative educational challenges. Participants included 116 Grade 3 learners, with 58 assigned to the experimental group and 58 to the control group. Eight teachers participated in the study, with four assigned to each group. Selection occurred through multi-stage sampling across four sub-counties representing diverse geographical contexts including urban, peri-urban, rural agricultural, and rural mixed-economy areas. This sampling strategy ensured representativeness across different socioeconomic and cultural contexts within the county.



Intervention Implementation

Experimental group teachers received intensive two-day TPR training covering theoretical foundations, practical implementation strategies, and integration techniques. The training emphasised systematic integration approaches rather than wholesale replacement of traditional methods. Three distinct integration models emerged during implementation and were systematically documented. The Sandwich Model involved alternating discrete TPR and traditional instruction segments within single lessons, creating clear methodological boundaries whilst maintaining curricular coherence. The Spiral Model maintained continuous TPR presence throughout lessons by incorporating kinaesthetic elements in all instructional phases, creating seamless transitions between movement-based and conventional activities. The Bookend Model utilised TPR activities primarily for lesson introduction and conclusion whilst maintaining traditional approaches for core content delivery.

Data Collection

Data collection employed multiple methods to capture both quantitative patterns and qualitative insights regarding integration processes. Structured classroom observations utilised systematic observation protocols documenting activity types, duration, transition patterns, and student engagement indicators across all experimental and control classrooms. Semi-structured teacher interviews explored integration experiences, implementation challenges, perceived effectiveness, and adaptation strategies developed throughout the intervention period. Lesson time allocation analysis involved detailed documentation of temporal patterns including activity duration, transition times, and methodological distribution within lesson structures. Implementation fidelity monitoring ensured consistent intervention delivery through weekly classroom visits, teacher feedback sessions, and adherence assessment protocols.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics for time allocation patterns, integration model frequency distributions, and effectiveness progression measures across the four-week intervention period. Statistical tests examined differences between integration models and changes over time in implementation effectiveness indicators. Qualitative analysis employed systematic thematic analysis of teacher interview transcripts and observation field notes, utilising inductive coding procedures to identify emergent patterns and themes related to integration strategies, challenges, and success factors. Triangulation across multiple data sources enhanced validity and reliability by comparing quantitative patterns with qualitative insights and ensuring convergent evidence for key findings. Member checking with participating teachers validated interpretation accuracy and provided additional contextual insights for complex implementation phenomena.

Integration Model Implementation

Analysis revealed three distinct integration models implemented across experimental classrooms (see Table 1). The Bookend model was most frequently used (38% of lessons), followed by the Sandwich model (34%) and Spiral model (28%).



Table 1: Distribution of TPR Integration Models Across Experimental Classrooms

Integration Model	Frequency (%)	Average Duration (minutes)	Traditional Segments	TPR Segments
Sandwich Model	34.0	40.0	24.0	16.0
Spiral Model	28.0	40.0	23.0	17.0
Bookend Model	38.0	40.0	32.0	8.0

Sandwich Model (34% of lessons): Teachers alternated traditional instruction segments with discrete TPR activities, creating clear methodological boundaries. This model averaged 12-minute traditional segments, 16-minute TPR activities, and 12-minute traditional conclusions.

Spiral Model (28% of lessons): Teachers maintained continuous TPR presence through 6-8 alternating segments averaging 4-6 minutes each, creating seamless integration throughout lessons.

Bookend Model (38% of lessons): Teachers used TPR primarily for lesson openings (5 minutes) and closings (3 minutes) whilst maintaining traditional approaches for core content delivery (20 minutes).

Time Allocation Patterns

Table 2 presents detailed analysis of lesson time allocation patterns across experimental classrooms. TPR activities comprised 42.3% of total lesson time whilst traditional methods maintained 57.7% within 40-minute lessons.

Table 2: Lesson Time Allocation Patterns in Experimental Classrooms

Lesson Component	Average Time (minutes)	Percentage of Total Lesson	Standard Deviation
TPR Activities	16.9	42.3%	3.7
Opening TPR warm-up	3.2	8.0%	1.1
Main TPR activities	11.4	28.5%	2.8
Closing TPR review	2.3	5.8%	0.9
Traditional Methods	23.1	57.7%	3.7
Direct instruction	11.4	28.4%	2.9
Written exercises	7.5	18.7%	2.1
Assessment activities	4.2	10.6%	1.4
Total Lesson Time	40.0	100.0%	0.0

Integration Effectiveness Progression

Teacher confidence and integration effectiveness showed systematic improvement over the four-week intervention period (see Table 3). All measured dimensions demonstrated significant improvement from Week 1 to Week 4.

Table 3: Integration Effectiveness Progression Over Four-Week Period

Measure	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Change
Teacher Confidence (1-5)	2.3	2.9	3.5	4.1	+1.8
Transition Efficiency (min)	2.8	2.2	1.6	1.1	-1.7
Student Engagement (1-5)	3.1	3.6	4.0	4.4	+1.3
Integration Quality (1-5)	2.5	3.1	3.7	4.2	+1.7
Lesson Coherence (1-5)	2.7	3.2	3.8	4.3	+1.6

Note. All measures used 5-point Likert scales except transition efficiency (measured in minutes).

Implementation Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

Table 4 shows the frequency of implementation challenges and the effectiveness of mitigation strategies developed by teachers. Most challenges decreased substantially from Week 1 to Week 4.



Table 4: Implementation Challenges and Mitigation Strategy Effectiveness

Challenge Category	Week 1 Frequency (%)	Week 4 Frequency (%)	Mitigation Strategy	Implementation Rate (%)	Effectiveness (1-5)
Time Management	71.3	32.5	Detailed lesson planning	100.0	4.5
Classroom Management	67.5	23.8	Clear movement boundaries	100.0	4.3
Transition Management	65.0	26.3	Efficient routines	87.5	4.0
Space Limitations	45.0	42.5	Activity modification	100.0	3.7
Assessment Integration	42.5	40.0	Observation protocols	75.0	3.6
Resource Constraints	36.3	33.8	Local material use	100.0	4.1

Note. Effectiveness rated on 5-point scale: 1 = not effective, 5 = highly effective.

Qualitative Findings: Integration Strategies

Three major themes emerged from teacher interviews regarding integration strategies:

Complementary Methodological Strengths: Teachers recognised that traditional methods excelled in explicit instruction and written practice, whilst TPR enhanced engagement and oral practice. As Teacher ET1 explained: "Traditional methods are excellent for explaining grammar rules and providing detailed instructions. But TPR brings life to the lesson and helps children actually use the language."

Systematic Progression Approaches: Teachers developed deliberate strategies for progressing from teacher-led integration to student-initiated transitions. Teacher ET3 noted: "We started with very structured integration patterns, but gradually students began requesting TPR activities during traditional segments."

Cultural Adaptation Requirements: Local cultural integration emerged as critical for optimal effectiveness. Teacher ET4 observed: "Activities using familiar local songs and stories generated much higher engagement than imported Western materials."

Integration Model Effectiveness Comparison

Table 5 presents comparative effectiveness ratings across the three integration models, showing distinct advantages for different implementation objectives.

Table 5: Comparative Effectiveness of Integration Models

Effectiveness Measure	Sandwich Model	Spiral Model	Bookend Model	F-value	p-value
Student Engagement	4.2	4.5	3.8	12.4	0.001
Curriculum Coverage	3.9	3.6	4.4	15.2	< 0.001
Teacher Confidence	4.1	3.8	4.3	8.7	0.003
Implementation Ease	3.7	3.2	4.1	11.8	0.001
Time Management	3.8	3.4	4.2	9.6	0.002
Overall Effectiveness	3.9	3.7	4.2	10.3	0.001

Note. All measures rated on 5-point scale. ANOVA results show significant differences between models.



Discussion

The successful integration of TPR with traditional teaching methods demonstrated that innovative pedagogical approaches can complement rather than replace established instructional practices. The emergence of three distinct integration models provides evidence that flexibility in implementation approaches accommodates diverse classroom contexts and teacher preferences whilst maintaining educational effectiveness. These findings align with Kumaravadivelu's (2006) post-method pedagogy, which advocates for flexible, context-responsive approaches rather than rigid methodological adherence.

The finding that TPR comprised 42.3% of lesson time whilst traditional methods maintained 57.7% suggests optimal balance that preserves curricular coverage whilst enhancing engagement and oral skill development. This balance addresses common concerns about curriculum completion whilst providing substantial kinaesthetic learning opportunities. The theoretical framework of Vygotsky's ZPD explains how this integration facilitates scaffolded learning, where TPR activities provide the social mediation necessary for oral skills development within learners' developmental zones.

The systematic improvement in integration effectiveness over the four-week period supports experiential learning approaches to professional development, suggesting that teachers can develop sophisticated integration skills through supported practice rather than requiring extensive formal training. This finding contradicts Freeman and Johnson's (1998) emphasis on extensive preparation, suggesting that contextual learning may be more effective than theoretical training in integration contexts.

Cultural adaptation emerged as a critical success factor, validating culturally responsive pedagogy principles within kinaesthetic learning contexts. The superior effectiveness of locally adapted materials demonstrates that successful educational innovation requires deep engagement with local cultural knowledge rather than superficial modification of imported approaches. This finding extends Gay's (2010) culturally responsive teaching framework to kinaesthetic learning contexts, providing new insights into cultural adaptation requirements.

The differential effectiveness of integration models across various measures suggests that successful implementation requires matching integration approaches to specific educational objectives rather than adopting universal models. The Spiral model's superior engagement ratings versus the Bookend model's efficiency advantages demonstrate that integration strategies must be selected based on contextual priorities and constraints.

The rapid decrease in implementation challenges from Week 1 to Week 4 indicates that initial difficulties do not necessarily predict long-term integration success. This finding suggests that sustained support during initial implementation phases may be more critical than extensive pre-implementation training, challenging conventional professional development approaches that emphasise front-loaded preparation.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Total Physical Response can be successfully integrated with traditional teaching methods through systematic approaches that leverage complementary methodological strengths. The three integration models—Sandwich, Spiral, and Bookend—provide practical frameworks for educators seeking to implement kinaesthetic learning approaches within existing curricular structures whilst maintaining educational effectiveness and practical feasibility.



The rapid improvement in teacher confidence and integration effectiveness suggests that TPR integration does not require extensive preparation or specialised training when supported through peer collaboration and experiential learning opportunities. The cultural adaptation requirements highlight the importance of contextual responsiveness in educational innovation, demonstrating that successful integration must accommodate local cultural knowledge and practices.

These findings have significant implications for English language education policy and practice, particularly in multilingual contexts where diverse instructional approaches may be necessary to address varied learning needs and cultural backgrounds. The integration models provide evidence-based guidance for curriculum developers, teacher educators, and educational leaders considering kinaesthetic learning adoption within traditional educational frameworks.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in extending Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Gardner's multiple intelligence theory to integration contexts, demonstrating how systematic methodological combination can create enhanced learning environments that address diverse cognitive and cultural needs. The practical contribution provides validated integration models that can be adapted across similar educational contexts.

Future research should examine long-term sustainability of integration approaches and their effectiveness across diverse cultural and linguistic contexts to inform broader implementation strategies. Additionally, investigation of student learning outcomes and retention effects would provide valuable insights into the educational impact of these integration approaches.

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