

Practical Application of CLT, TPR and Phonics Theories in Conjunction with *Hi, friends! 1* and *Hi, friends! 2* English Materials in Elementary School Classrooms

Kent SCOTT and Mitsuaki HAYASE

Introduction

MEXT 2020 goals for English education indicate a preference for implementing the common and popular pedagogical theories of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Total Physical Response (TPR) and Phonics into elementary school English class curriculum. Using “*Hi, friends! 1*” and “*Hi, friends! 2*”, which are standard English materials for elementary schools across the country, we will show how these theories can be used in class to maximum benefits to teachers and students.

1. How to teach children second languages?

1.1 Procedure

When teaching English to children, it is important to be familiar with how children learn second languages. Emery & Rich (2015, p. 8) suggest in their own words the following procedure to teach:

- (1) building from what children already know to introduce new ideas,
- (2) embedding new learning in familiar classroom routines and activities,
- (3) using questioning techniques and activities to help children notice new learning points,
- (4) showing children how to complete a task, and
- (5) suggesting alternative ways of doing things.

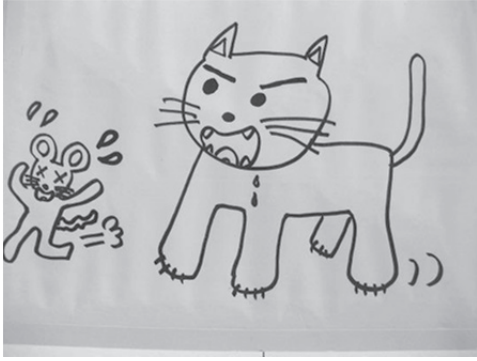
In order to understand the procedure, let us put it in teaching “Making a lunch menu” in *Hi, friends! 1* (pp. 38-39), where a variety of items such as hamburgers, omelets, hot dogs, pizza, etc. are drawn colorfully.

- (1) Students review what they had for school lunch in the last five days.
- (2) Looking at the menu pictures, students choose five items they like best.
- (3) Out of those five items chosen, students create one menu for lunch following questions from the teacher.
- (4) Students draw their menu.
- (5) Students think of one item not shown in the pages, and add it to their drawing.

As each student has their own likes and dislikes, this activity is carried out individually listening to the directions from the teacher. However, as an additional activity, students can share their final drawings with students sitting near them.

1.2 A first story to tell to elementary school students

In order for elementary school students to be aware of the importance of learning English, it may be a good idea to tell an amusing story like the following. (The source of the story is unknown. The drawing was made by Michiyo Yamashita.)



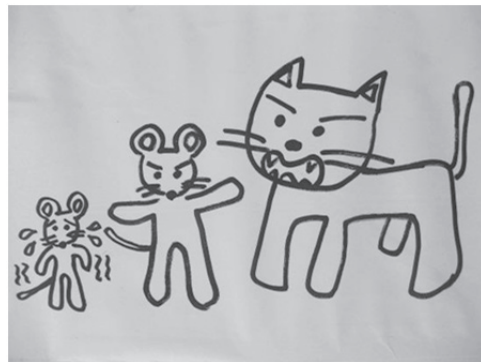
(1) One day, a little mouse was being chased by a big hungry cat.



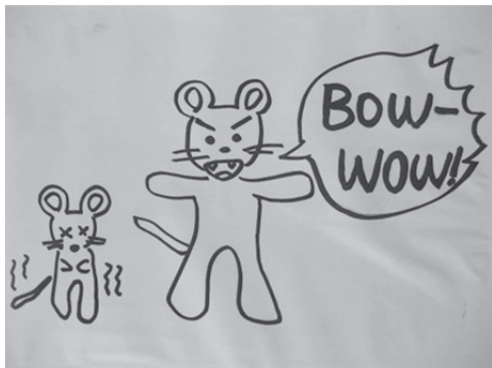
(2) The little mouse saw his big brother.



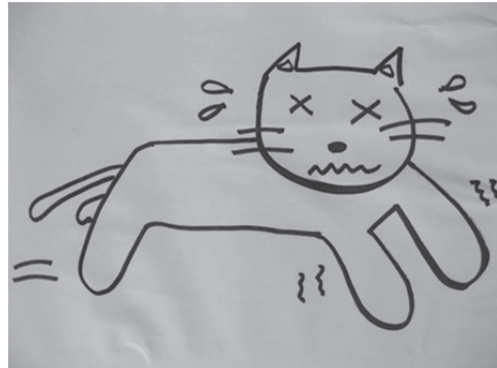
(3) The big brother said to his younger brother, "Please hide behind me."



(4) The hungry cat came, and the little mouse was scared.



(5) Then the big brother said to the cat, "Bow-wow!"



(6) The cat was frightened and ran away.



(7) The big brother said to his younger brother, "Knowing a foreign language can even save a life."

Even though the students know very little English, by looking at the pictures and listening to the teacher's narration of the story with a lot of bodily movements, they can understand most of the story. The narration should be done realistically and with some exaggeration to keep the interest on the part of the students. Also, we can think of one additional activity before the teacher tells the story. The slides are shown one by one without any words and let the students imagine the storyline.

2. Communication and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

2.1 What is communication?

We communicate with other people in our lives and it can be said that each person has their own definition of communication consciously or unconsciously. In this respect, elementary school students also have some ideas about what communication is and they engage in communication in one way or another at school, home, etc.

Here it must be useful to review how different sources define what communication is.

- (1) Merriam-Webster online: "a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior"
- (2) Mudd & Sillars (1975, p. 4): "It (communication, Hayase's note) is a *human activity*. It is *interpersonal*. It is *purposive*. It is a *process*."
- (3) Monroe & Ehninger (1969, p. 3): In communication, a speaker, finding himself or herself in a certain situation, originates a message which is transmitted over a channel to one or more listeners who then respond by sending feedback to the speaker in the form of visual or verbal signals.
- (4) Wikipedia-a: "The act of conveying intended meanings from one entity or group to another through the use of mutually understood signs and semiotic rules"

Also, Canale (1983, pp. 3-4) claims that the main characteristics of communication involves social interaction, unpredictability in form and message, that communication takes place in discourse and sociocultural contexts, and that communication is carried out under psychological conditions, with a purpose, in an authentic language, and with actual outcomes. Through the examination of the four definitions and Canale's claim it is possible to conclude that the key words of communication are information exchange, interpersonal, purpose, channels, and process.

In teaching English in primary school, we consider it imperative to understand what communication is as shown above.

2.2 Communicative competence

We can safely say that the main purpose of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is to develop students' communicative competence. According to Canale & Swain (1980, pp. 29-31), communicative competence includes (1) grammatical competence, (2) sociolinguistic competence, and (3) strategic competence as follows:

- (1) grammatical competence: "This type of competence will be understood to include knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology."
- (2) Sociolinguistic competence: "This competence is made up of two sets of rules: sociocultural rules of use and rules of discourse."
- (3) Strategic competence: "This component will be made up of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence."

Then in 1983, Canal (1983, p. 9) added the fourth component as follows:

- (4) Discourse competence: "This type of competence concerns mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres."

As examples of genres, Canal (1983, p. 9) gives "oral and written narrative, an argumentative essay, a scientific report, a business letter, and a set of instructions." We hope that primary school students will be equipped with these four types of communicative competence through studying English.

3. The Total Physical Response (TPR)

3.1. What is the Total Physical Response (TPR)?

TPR was originally developed by Asher (1982). In *What IS TPR?* Asher himself explains about TPR as follows:

“Language-body conversations, the basis of TPR, is the most powerful tool in your box of linguistic tools. It will not solve all problems, but it will prepare your students for a successful transition to speaking, reading and writing. I call this stress-free tool, the Total Physical Response, known worldwide as TPR. It has stood “the test of time” for over 50 years in thousands of language classrooms worldwide.”

As Asher says, TPR is “stress-free” as students do not need to produce language; they just listen to the directions carefully and intently and express the content of the directions in bodily movements. Though they listen to the directions carefully and intently, the atmosphere should not be tense. Students should feel relaxed so that they can express themselves as they like.

Let us see an example of TPR (Gebhard, 1996, p 159).

“*Teacher Command* : Stand up.
Student Response: (Students stand up)
Teacher Command: Go to the blackboard.
Student Response: (Students walk to the blackboard.)
Teacher Command: Write your name on the board.
Student Response: (Students write their names.)”

A more complicated example is possible as shown below in “Let’s Go to the Zoo” in *Classroom Strategies: How to Use the Total Physical Response*.

1. Let’s go to the zoo. Open the door and get in your car.
2. Turn on the engine in your car.
3. Drive to the zoo.
4. Park the car.
5. Get out of the car.
6. Buy your ticket with a \$5.00 dollar bill.
7. Hold out your hand for your change.
8. Walk to the entrance.
9. Give your ticket to the person at the gate.
10. Open the gate and go in.
11. Wave at the giraffes.
12. Walk like a giraffe.
13. Wave at the monkeys.
14. Laugh like a monkey.
15. Wave at the elephants.
16. Wave your trunk like the elephants (sic).

Naturally, it is also possible to make original order statements suitable to students, and it is frequently done. Depending on the level of students, it is important for the teacher to change the pace of giving orders and to show actual movements so that students can enjoy the activity.

4. Phonics

4.1. Three stages of reading and spelling development

According to Frith (as cited in Emery & Rich, 2015), children go through three stages of reading and spelling development, and they are the logo-graphic stage, the alphabetic stage, and the orthographic stage. In the logo-graphic stage, “children recognize words as wholes by salient shapes within them.” (p. 23). In the alphabetic stage, “children learn to decode words, reading them aloud letter-by-letter as an aid to pronunciation and thus word recognition (accessing meaning via the lexicon).” (p. 24) In the last orthographic stage, “a reader recognizes words visually, but this stage differs from the earlier logo-graphic stage in that by this time a reader is equipped with the knowledge of letter-sound relationships, spelling rules, and patters.” (p. 24)

In the alphabetic stage, Phonics dominates. “Phonics teaching is a required component of English language teaching in many countries of the world, as learning to read in alphabetic languages is dependent upon the ability to decode words. This is a skill that readers will rely on all their lives: When encountering a new word, they will have to read it letter-by-letter as an aid to pronunciation.” (pp. 26-27)

4.2. What is Phonics?

A definition of Phonics (Wikipedia-b) goes as follows: “Phonics is a method for teaching reading and writing of the English language by developing learners’ phonemic awareness—the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate phonemes—in order to teach the correspondence between these sounds and the spelling patterns (graphemes) that represent them.” Since it is said that there is a regularity in spelling patterns of about 75% of the words, Phonics has been used in English-speaking countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. Phonics has also been indispensable in teaching English to young learners in Japan in primary school as well as junior high school. Now that English will be taught as an official subject for the fifth graders and six graders and Foreign Language Activities will be taught for the third and fourth graders from 2020, Phonics will surely be taught in most or all primary schools.

5. Application of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

CLT is particularly applicable to English classrooms with young students. Most students of this age don’t have the cognitive ability to wrestle with grammar and benefit more from communication. One of the important points of CLT is to leverage the students’ understanding and interest in the world they know to help and motivate them to use English. For example, if a story is being presented in class, it’s better to use a scenario that the students are familiar with. A story set in a Japanese town might be better than one set in an American town. Or a dialog presented dealing with a train schedule might be better than a dialog about setting the agenda for a business meeting.

Hi, friends! applies this principle in many places, but one good example is page four of *Hi, friends! 2* introducing vocabulary of local institutions.

The book is careful to use places that the students will be familiar with, such as an ice cream shop, a bookstore, and a hospital. Teachers might want to take this a step further and use local landmarks making an even stronger association



Activity 1 見たことがあるアルファベットの表示を書き写そう。

| | |
|--|--|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

4

among the students. Rather than a generic ice cream shop, if teachers can reference a local ice cream shop that the students are likely to have visited the chance of retention and recall is increased.

Another important point of CLT is using things learned in the classroom to actually communicate with your classmates. The months and dates lesson of *Hi, friends! 2*, which is Lesson 2, provides a good example. After teaching the months vocabulary and explaining ordinal numbers used for dates, including a series of listening and repeat-after-me exercises, the book provides an opportunity to use the learned vocabulary in a group activity. The chart on the right is from page nine, *Hi, friends! 2*.

Students must ask their classmates' birthdays and write the answers on the page in the textbook. Busy teachers might be tempted to keep this part of the lesson short, but it's actually a vital chance to give students time to test their ability to communicate in English. The exercise could even be expanded to include family members or other teachers as homework.

Opportunities to use CLT in the classroom present themselves throughout the *Hi, friends!* series.

Lesson 2

Activity 友だちの誕生日を調べよう。

● 友だちの誕生日はいつか、名前と日付を書こう。

| 友だちの名前と日付 | |
|-----------------|--|
| January 1月 | |
| February 2月 | |
| March 3月 | |
| April 4月 | |
| May 5月 | |
| June 6月 | |
| July 7月 | |
| August 8月 | |
| September 9月 | |
| October 10月 | |
| November 11月 | |
| December 12月 | |

6. Application of the Total Physical Response (TPR)

Incorporating physical movement into an English class is standard practice all over the world. For the very youngest learners, it's easy to use dance moves with English songs to reinforce understanding and retention.

Another popular method to incorporate physical movement into the class is to use gestures to practice vocabulary. Teachers can illustrate vocabulary with body motions and create strong associations in the students' minds.

Both of these methods are used early on in *Hi, friends! 1* on page eight introducing feeling vocabulary.

First each vocabulary word is associated with an illustration, then those illustrations are imitated by the teacher and students to evoke the vocabulary. Also there is a song and simple gesture/dance to help students remember the method and meaning of common greetings. Although students become reluctant to dance as they become older, the dance presented here is sufficiently gesture-like to not offend the students' sense of humility.

Lesson **2** I'm happy.

Let's Listen だれがどんな様子が、線で結ぼう。

Sakura

Ai

Taku

Hikaru

Let's Sing Hello Song

Hello.

Hello.

Hello, how are you?

I'm good.

I'm good.

I'm good, thank you.

And you?

7. Application of Phonics

7.1 Application of Phonics

Phonics is the skill set that is most laborious for teachers to integrate into the *Hi, friends!* series. The alphabet is introduced in Unit six of *Hi, friends! 1* and here is where teachers should begin Phonics. Phonics should be introduced hand in hand with the alphabet, and must continue far past when students stop singing the ABC song.

In addition to teaching the names of the letters of the alphabet, teachers should also teach the phonemes associated with each letter, and an easy to recognize and recall example of the phoneme in use. These three pieces of information are a set and should be taught together.

| Name | Phoneme | Example |
|------|---------|----------|
| A | /a/ | apple |
| B | /b/ | book |
| C | /k/ | cat |
| D | /d/ | dog |
| E | /e/ | elephant |
| F | /f/ | fish |
| G | /g/ | gorilla |
| H | /h/ | hat |
| I | /i/ | insect |

Songs and chants practicing the phonetic alphabet should be added to the lessons frequently until the basic phonemes are mastered. Further, teachers should never miss a chance to practice learned phonemes. Page thirty-eight of *Hi, friends! 1* introducing English words for food could be used to practice Phonics.

While it might be too much to expect the students to remember how to spell words like ‘hamburger’ they can undoubtedly apply the Phonics they have learned to know that the first letter is ‘h’.

With continual practice and introduction of higher level Phonics concepts, students’ ability to spell and pronounce English words should grow steadily.

7.2 More application of Phonics

Here we will consider Phonics from the point of the course of study to be implemented from April 2020 in elementary school. First of all, in the Course of Study (2017) for “Foreign Language Activities” for third- and fourth-year grades, there are guidelines only for listening and speaking, and not for reading and writing as reading and writing are to be taught in “Foreign Language Teaching.”



In the Course of Study for fifth- and sixth grades where English is to be taught as an official subject, even though there is no mention of the word Phonics, it is possible Phonics can play an important role according to the following wordings in the Course of Study:

Reading: To be able to distinguish the letters written in block style.

Writing: To be able to write small as well as large letters in block style.

Also, the Division of Foreign Language in the Explanation of the Course of Study for Elementary School (2017, p. 19) gives the following useful information related to Phonics:

For example, letters such as “a” and “c” has names like “/ei/” and “/si:/” respectively, and at the same time, in words they have sounds like “/æ/” (Examples: bag, apple), “/ei/” (Examples: station, brave) ,”/s/ (Examples: circle, city) and “/k/” (Examples: cap, music).

We can tell that these pieces of information are helpful for young learners. Takebayashi (1988, revised ed., p. 18) created 20 rules of Phonics, and “Rule 1” says that “consonant letters such as b, d, f, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z are pronounced regularly.” He also gives following examples with Japanese translation of words.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| b: <i>boy, job</i> | p: <i>park, ship</i> |
| d: <i>day, sad</i> | r: <i>rice (in front of a vowel)</i> |
| f: <i>five, golf</i> | s: <i>six</i> |
| h: <i>hall (in front of a vowel)</i> | t: <i>time, hat</i> |
| j: <i>jet (in front of a vowel)</i> | v: <i>very</i> |
| k: <i>kiss, book</i> | w: <i>way (in front of a vowel)</i> |
| l: <i>large, feel</i> | x: <i>box (in front of a vowel)</i> |
| m: <i>make, room</i> | y: <i>yes (in front of a vowel)</i> |
| n: <i>night, coin</i> | z: <i>zoo, quiz</i> |

Even though just showing this list of many letters and words once or twice does not help students remember them, it is at least helpful for students to be familiar with Phonics.

Let us observe another example of teaching Phonics. Heilman’s (1981, p. 41) “Practice 55”, which is for native children speakers of English, goes as follows:

Step 1: The following list will be given out to students.

| | | | |
|-----|----------|------|------------|
| top | _____top | mile | _____mile |
| lid | _____lid | wing | _____swing |
| pot | _____pot | lick | _____lick |
| nap | _____nap | nail | _____nail |
| tar | _____tar | well | _____well |

Step 2: Students read the words in the first column.

Step 3: Students put “s” in all the blanks.

Step 4: Students will read the completed words.

The aim of this practice is that students can focus on the spelling and sound of the letter “s” in an interesting way. As mentioned above, this exercise is for native children speakers of English, and it includes some difficult words. When applied to foreign young students, easier words can be used.

Of course, those students who think the Phonics rules are too difficult to follow can try to recognize, if not memorize, the pronunciation of each word as they encounter it. Initially, this method is not easy in its own way;

the more input students get, the more familiar they get with the pronunciation. We do not mean to contradict ourselves; actually there is a very simple Phonics rule according to Takebayashi (1988, pp. 110-112). It is Rule 14, which says that double consonant letters are pronounced the same as single consonant letters. The example words are as follows:

bell, chess, doll, hill, ill, kiss, Miss, sell, tell, well, will

It might be a good idea to teach this rule first to students so that they are not frightened of Phonics.

8. Conclusion

The teaching material series *Hi, friends! 1* and *2* provides many chances for teachers to incorporate the most modern teaching methods to the classroom, such as CLT, TPR and Phonics. It's not an effortless task, but can be done with a minimum of fuss by any teacher interested in using the most modern and respected ESL teaching methods.

References

- Asher, J. 1982. *Learning Another Language through Actions*. Los Gatos, CA: Sky Oaks Productions.
- Canale, M. 1983. 'From communicative competence to language pedagogy' in Richards, J. and R. Schmidt (eds.). *Language and Communication*. London: Longman.
- Canale, M. & Swain, M. (1980). 'Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing' in *Applied Linguistics*, 1, pp. 1-47.
- Classroom Strategies: How to Use Total Physical Response*. Retrieved on July. 3, 2016 from <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/oral-language-development-beginners>
- Course of Study (2017) Retrieved on September 6, 2017 from http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a_menu/education/micro_detail/_icsFiles/fieldfile/2017/05/12/1384661_4_2.pdf
- Emery, H. & Rich, S. 2015. *Teaching English to Young Learners*. Alexandria, Virginia: TESOL International Association.
- Explanation for the Course of Study for Elementary School. 2017. Retrieved on September 6, 2017 from http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/1387014.htm
- Gebhard, J. G. 1996. *Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language: A Self-Development Guide*. Ann Arbor: University Michigan Press.
- Heilman, A. W. (author), Matsuka, Y. (translation supervisor) 2008. *フォニックス指導の実際 (Actual Teaching of Phonics)*. Tokyo: Tamagawa University.
- Merriam-Webster online. Retrieved on August 22, 2017 from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communication>
- Monroe, A. H. & Ehninger, D. 1969. *Principles of Speech Communication*. Glenview: Illinois: Scott, Foresman, and Company.
- Mudd, C. S. & Sillars, M. O. 1975. *Speech: Content and Communication*, 3rd ed. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
- Takebayashi, S. 1988. *英語のフォニックス (English Phonics)*, revised ed. Tokyo: The Japan Times.
- What Is TPR?* Retrieved on August 24, 2017 from <http://www.tpr-world.com/>
- Wikipedia-a. Retrieved on August 22, 2017 from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communication>
- Wikipedia-b. Retrieved on August 25, 2017 from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonics>