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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Performance Verification of Foreign Language Activity Using TPR for the Elementary Students with Intellectual Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

TPR (Total Physical Response) can be the teaching method for the foreign language activity in the special needs education. One of the representative characteristics of TPR is that the student is not asked to respond with verbal language and they can respond with whole-body actions instead. Therefore, during the foreign language activities, students can respond with actions instead of striving to respond with verbal language. TPR method may be the most suitable method for the students who need special supports when learning foreign language and would reduce their burden during the foreign language activities.

This study aimed to verify the effects of TPR method using the SNEAT by participating in the foreign language activity that employed the TPR method in special needs schools and analyzing the classes, since the TPR method would play the great role for the foreign language activity in the special needs education.

＜Key-words＞
foreign language activity, intellectual disability, Special Needs Education Assessment Tool (SNEAT), Total Physical Response (TPR)

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Ⅰ. Background

Pursuant to the Teaching Guidance for Elementary Students, which was revised in March, 2008, it became mandatory to provide 35 credit hours (one credit hour = 50 minutes) of foreign language activity to fifth and sixth graders that became mandatory nationwide in 2011 (MEXT, 2009). 35 credit hours of foreign language activity also became to be mandatory in the special support schools, but various problems came out including the lack of the experiences for teaching students with special needs foreign language, the lacks of supports and demonstration classes for how to teach and the reason to teach them foreign language (Nakayama, 2010; Hayashida & Ishida, 2012; Ito & Kobayashi, 2011; Muarakami, 2009).

According to the Teaching Guidance, the foreign language activity aims to deepen the understanding of the language and culture while learning foreign languages, to help students have the attitude for active communication with people and to enable them to develop the communication ability by having them practice the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages. The Teaching Guidance for Elementary Students in Special Support Schools also stipulates two things that should be considered during classes in the 4th chapter (Foreign Language Activity); 1) the contents and the way of teaching need to be carefully selected according to the degrees of students' abilities and 2) the foreign language activity should be closely related with the teaching of independent activity (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2009). The foreign language activity in the special support schools is supposed to be taught effectively and step by step while taking account of the conditions of region, schools and students and the degree of disabilities and development stages of students (Chapter 1, General Provision 4.1.).

Yasuda, Iwasaki, Ushiro (2001) suggested that the foreign language activity in special support schools does not just aim to enable the students with disabilities to acquire the four skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing by having them practicing patterns and phonics and memorizing dialogues does not fit into that in special support schools. Moreover, foreign language activity is not officially given credits, but is reported only in writing.

Because of the above-mentioned reasons, the foreign language activity in special support schools may be flexibly provided according to the types and degrees of disabilities of students just like other courses. Moreover, it may be assumed that the foreign language activity can be conducted according to the tailored goals of individual students and the performance of students during the activity can be evaluated without worrying the score, because it is not officially given credits.

Total Physical Response (TPR) is one of the teaching methods for foreign language activity of special needs education. One of the representative characteristics of TPR is that the student is not asked to respond with verbal language and they can respond with whole-body actions instead (Asher, 1966). Therefore, during the foreign language

activities, students can respond with actions instead of striving to respond with verbal language. It has been reported that TPR method can reduce the anxiety and stress of learners and help improving their memory retention. TPR method may be the most suitable method for the students who need special supports when learning foreign language and would reduce their stress during the foreign language activities.

The foreign language activity that has been conducted in elementary school and special support schools has focused on listening and speaking. However, according to the studies on the foreign language anxiety, students feel the highest level of anxiety in the activities of listening and speaking (Yashima, 2003).

Masaki (2013) suggested that foreign language activity using songs is effective to ease the students' mind and to lead them to feel stable and pleasant. Since the foreign language activity that employs TPR method would create synergy effects using songs, picture cards and textbooks that are made of ICT and animations (Kashiwagi, 2007), it is needed to review whether the method would be also useful for the students with special needs.

Preparation of Teaching Plan and Contents of Classes 2 of the Teaching Guidance for Elementary Students emphasizes the importance of the nonverbal communication to the students with special needs, prescribing that gestures should be used during foreign language activity, because non-verbal language is also the way of communication. Because TPR method has students respond with whole-body actions for the commands that were given verbally, it also provides the opportunities that students can acquire the non-verbal communication ability. Furthermore, it would eventually heighten the quality of life of students owing to the increasing communication between students and teachers and ALT (alternative learning teachers) via the foreign language activity that employs TPR method.

In this context, this study aimed to analyze the foreign language activity in the special support schools in the Okinawa Prefecture and to verify the effects of that activity using the SNEAT (Special Needs Education Assessment Tool), since it is expected that the foreign language activity that employs TPR method would be very effective for the special needs education.

Ⅱ. Methods

1. The Subjects of Study

This study was conducted for the 29 students with intellectual disabilities in 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th graders who attend 'A' Special Support School in Okinawa Prefecture and 20 homeroom teachers was designated as the evaluators using the SNEAT.

2. Procedure

The foreign language activities that were conducted in 2nd and 3rd classes on Mondays between October and December, 2015 were observed. The SNEAT questionnaires were

distributed to homeroom teachers after classes. The survey was conducted three times in the beginning, midterm and final stages during the period of such survey. The SNEAT questionnaires were filled and evaluated anonymously. The study plan was explained to all the homeroom teachers through the school officials prior to the observance of classes.

3. Items of Questionnaire

The SNEAT, which was developed by Han, Kohara, Yano (2014), enables to objectively evaluate the educational performance in the aspects of independent activities and the quality of life of students. The reliability and validity of the SNEAT have been verified (Kohara, Han, Kwon, et al., 2015). The SNEAT is composed of a face sheet (age, gender, period of teaching, special teaching certificate) and 11 items of three domains such as physical functioning, mental health and social functioning (Table 1).

The homeroom teachers evaluate the performance of students during classes with five-level scale for 11 items. The SNEAT can be used for every student who satisfies following two conditions regardless of the types of disabilities; 1) the students who can express their thoughts or feelings with non-verbal or verbal communication; and 2) ones who have the possibility that their posture or movements may be improved.

The perfect score of the SNEAT is 100, which was made to be easily used in the education field. The scores of all questions except the scores of Q1 and Q2 of the domain of physical functioning were doubled, so the scores of five become to be ten, four to eight, three to six, two to four and one to two except the scores of Q1 and Q2. The items of each domain were lined in the order of the level of difficulty to accomplish the class goals of each domain. To make the perfect score become 100, the lower weights were added to Q1 of physical functioning and Q5 of mental health that showed the lowest level of achievement.

<Table 1> The SNEAT

Special Needs Education Assessment Tool (SNEAT)
❶ Physical Functioning
Q1. Were the activities during the class appropriate for the physical conditions of the student?
Q2. Have the posture, motor ability and motions of student been improved?
Q3. Has the ability of student to independently manage daily living been improved?
Q4. Has the degree of student's understanding his/her condition of diseases (disabilities) been improved?
❷ Mental Health
Q5. Has the feelings of student changed positively?
Q6. Did the student participate in class (learning/activities) in concentration?
Q7. Has the will of student to learn been improved?
Q8. Could the student respond to the changes of place and situation (the changes of environment) during class?
❸ Social Functioning
Q9. Could the student form a relationship with others during class (interactions)?
Q10. Could the student express him/herself by choosing appropriate communication ways?
Q11. Did the student participate in the class activities with understanding class rules and controlling his/her behaviors?

Ⅲ. Results

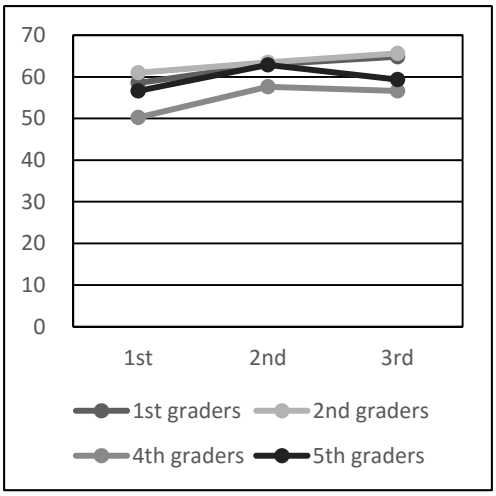
1. Basic Information

The collection rate of questionnaires was 100 percent (20 out of 20 teachers). The average period of teaching experience of the evaluators was 18.6 years. Only one (5.0%) out of 20 teachers had the license for teaching English.

2. The Changes of Average Scores

1) Changes of the Average of Total Scores

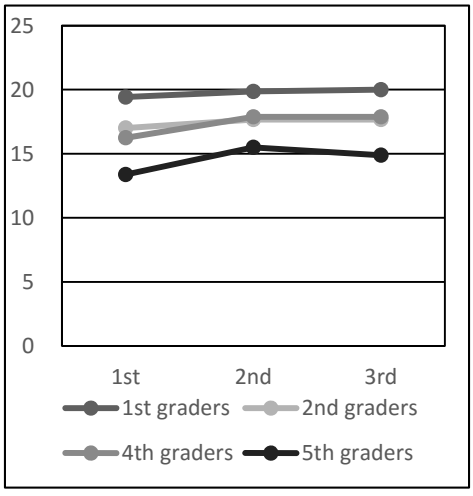
The scores of 1st and 2nd graders had ascended from 1st evaluation to 3rd evaluation. The scores of 4th and 5th graders had greatly increased in the 2nd evaluation and their scores in the 3rd evaluation decreased to the lower scores than 2nd evaluation. However, the scores in the 3rd evaluation were higher than those in the 1st one (Figure 1).



<Figure 1> Changes of Total Scores

2) Changes of the Scores of the Domain of Physical Functioning

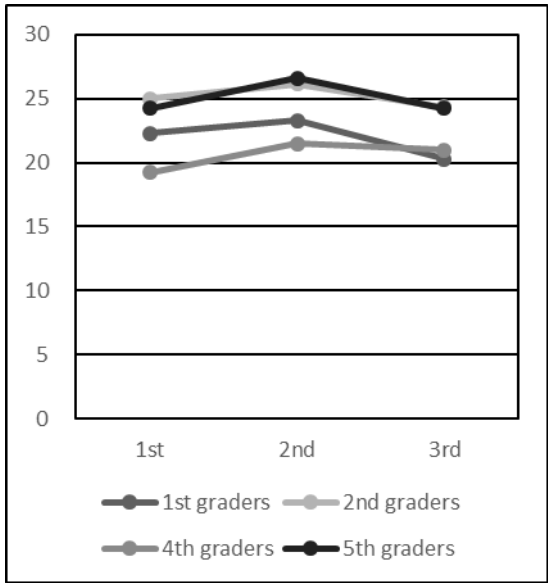
In all the grades, the scores had increased from 1st to 3rd evaluation. The scores of 1st and 4th graders had increased from 1st to 3rd evaluation little by little. The scores of 2nd graders had increased from 1st to 2nd evaluation, but there was no change in the 3rd evaluation. The scores of the 5th graders had greatly increased in the 2nd evaluation, but their scores decreased in the 3rd evaluation (Figure 2).



<Figure 2> Changes of the Scores of the Domain of Physical Functioning

3) Changes of the Scores of the Domain of Mental Health

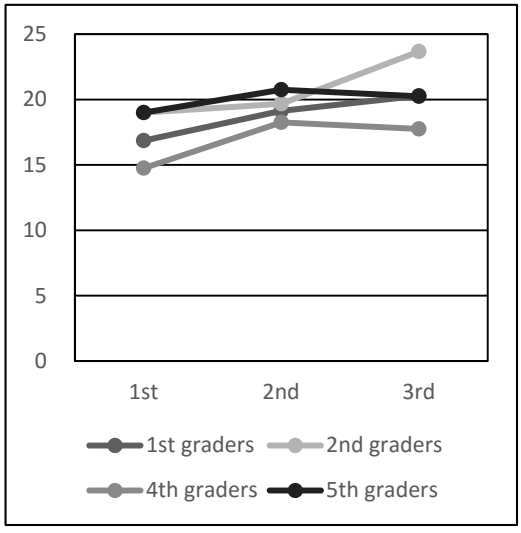
The scores of the 1st and 4th graders had increased from 1st to 3rd evaluation. The scores of the 2nd graders had increased from 1st to 2nd evaluation, but decreased in the 3rd evaluation. The scores of the 5th graders had also increased in the 2nd evaluation, but decreased to the almost same score with 1st ones in the 3rd evaluation (Figure 3).



<Figure 3> Changes of the Scores of the Domain of Mental Health

4) Changes of the Scores of the Domain of Social Functioning

In all the grades, the scores had increased from 1st to 3rd evaluation. The scores of 1st and 2nd graders had continually increased to 3rd evaluation. The scores of 4th and 5th graders had increased in the 2nd evaluation, but slightly decreased in the 3rd evaluation (Figure 4).



<Figure 4> Changes of the Scores of the Domain of Social Functioning

3. Total Scores, Variance analysis and multiple comparison of Each Domain

1) Average Scores of All the Subjects

There were significant differences by main effects in the total scores. There were significant changes between 1st and 2nd evaluation and between 1st and 3rd evaluation.

There were significant changes by main effects in the total scores of the domain of physical functioning. There were significant changes between 1st and 2nd evaluation and between 1st and 3rd evaluation. There were significant changes by main effects in the scores of the domain of mental health. There was also a significant change between 1st and 2nd evaluation.

There were significant changes by main effects in the scores of social functioning. There was a significant change between 1st and 3rd evaluations (Table 2).

<Table 2> Results of Variance Analysis (Average Total Score of All the Subjects)

	1st evaluation n = (29)	2nd evaluation n = (29)	3rd evaluation n = (29)	*P-value*	Significance
Physical Functioning	16.51 ± 2.49	17.72 ± 1.78	17.60 ± 2.10	0.01	*
Mental Health	22.69 ± 2.43	24.39 ± 2.43	22.46 ± 2.12	0.03	*
Social Functioning	17.40 ± 2.03	19.45 ± 1.04	20.49 ± 2.43	0.02	*
Total Scores	56.61 ± 4.63	61.75 ± 2.76	61.63 ± 4.35	0.005	**

$^{**}P < 0.01$ $^{*}P < 0.05$ $\dagger P < 0.1$

2) SNEAT— Scores of 1st and 2nd Graders

There were significant changes by main effects in the total scores. In the results of multiple comparisons, there was a significant change between 1st and 3rd evaluation.

There were significant changes by main effects in the scores of the domain of physical functioning. In the results of multiple comparisons, there was a greatly significant change between 1st and 3rd evaluation.

There were significant changes by main effects in the scores of the domain of social functioning. In the results of multiple comparisons, there was a significant change between 1st and 3rd evaluations (Table 3).

<Table 3> Results of Variance Analysis (The 1st and 2nd Graders)

	1st evaluation n = (13)	2nd evaluation n = (13)	3rd evaluation n = (13)	*P-value*	Significance
Physical Functioning	18.31 ± 2.89	18.85 ± 3.07	18.92 ± 2.98	0.02	*
Mental Health	23.53 ± 4.17	24.61 ± 4.51	24.46 ± 4.37	0.43	*n.s.*
Social Functioning	17.84 ± 5.19	19.38 ± 4.11	21.84 ± 4.86	0.0005	**
Total Scores	59.69 ± 9.45	63.23 ± 8.98	65.23 ± 8.39	0.005	**

$^{**}P < 0.01$ $^{*}P < 0.05$ $\dagger P < 0.1$

3) SNEAT— Scores of 4th and 5th Graders

There were significant changes by main effects in the total scores. In the results of multiple comparisons, there were significant changes between 1st and 2nd evaluations and between 1st and 3rd evaluations.

There were significant changes by main effects in the scores of the domain of physical functioning. In the results of multiple comparisons, there were significant changes between 1st and 2nd evaluations and between 1st and 3rd evaluations.

There were significant changes by main effects in the scores of the domain of mental health. In the results of multiple comparisons, there was a significant change between 1st and 2nd evaluations.

There were significant changes by main effects in the scores of the domain of social functioning. In the results of multiple comparisons, there were significant changes between 1st and 2nd evaluation and between 1st and 3rd evaluations (Table 4).

<Table 4> Results of Variance Analysis (4th and 5th graders)

	1st evaluation n = (16)	2nd evaluation n = (16)	3rd evaluation n = (16)	*P-value*	Significance
Physical Functioning	14.81 ± 4.03	16.68 ± 3.30	16.43 ± 3.68	0.008	**
Mental Health	21.75 ± 5.33	24.06 ± 5.14	23.25 ± 4.97	0.07	†
Social Functioning	16.87 ± 4.95	19.50 ± 3.22	19.00 ± 4.32	0.006	**
Total Scores	53.43 ± 11.89	60.25 ± 8.99	58.00 ± 10.98	0.001	**

$^{**}P<0.01$ $^{*}P<0.05$ † $P<0.1$

4. Self-observance

In the SNEAT questionnaire, there was the section where the evaluators can freely write how they felt, what they thought and what they observed after finishing the classes.

1) The 1st Evaluation with the SNEAT

There were three opinions in the 2nd grade and two opinions in the 4th grade (Table 5).

2) The 2nd Evaluation with SNEAT

There were two opinions in the 1st grade, five in the 2nd grade and three in the 5th grade (Table 6).

<Table 5> Self-observance (1st Evaluation)

【2nd grade】
・In the beginning of the class, the student showed the mental fluctuation and some unpleasant feelings, but smiled when English song started and showed the interest in the songs.
・The student showed the interest in English songs and could follow the motions.
・Even though the student had difficulty in understanding English, the student enjoyed singing songs and following the motions.
【4th grade】
・Even though the student seemed to be nervous, the student could focus on the TV.
・While the student participated in the class together with other students, the student could calmly did to the end.

<Table 6> Self-observance (2nd evaluation)

【1st grade】
・During the morning assembly, the student say hello looking at the English play cards.
・When the student saw the English play cards during the morning assembly, the student smiled pronouncing 'angry' and mimicking the motions.
【2nd grade】
・When comparing with the participation in other classes, the student tended to participate in the English class much more calmly.
・The students can be interested in the videos and music.
・The student became to use the words or motions that the student had learned during the class, for example, Pick-a-boo!, etc.
・The student occasionally seemed to be overwhelmed, but in the later part of the class, the mood of the student seemed to be changed positively when all the students stood up and moved their bodies.
・The student could freely move his/her hands while following the movements of ALT teacher's hands and could focus on watching TV.
【4th grade】
・The student became to be familiar with ALT teacher and participated in the class calmly.
・Because the student liked music, the student could finish the class sitting down together with other classmates.
・Even though the student participated in the middle of class, the student answered the questions of the ALT teacher with a big voice and mimicked the gestures smiling.
・The student was amused at singing songs together with teachers with dancing.
・The student enjoyed singing songs while mimicking ALT teacher who moved like the animals, e.g., penguin.

3) The 3rd Evaluation with SNEAT

There were four opinions in the 1st grade, six in the 2nd grade and two in the 4th grade (Table 7).

<Table 7> Self-observance (3rd evaluation)

【1st grade】
・The student showed the interests in the Santa and snowman in the Christmas season.
・The student could become to show some interests in the class activities.
・The student became to calmly sit down and to focus on the activities more.
・The student asked for the first time, "'A' teacher is coming?"
【2nd grade】
・The student became to be interested in the English songs and hummed the songs frequently.
・Since the class activities that made the student use his/her hands were related with the Christmas that the student liked, the student focused on them.
・It seemed that the student couldn't keep up with the song, because its tempo was too fast for the student to follow, but the student could sing the funny parts (e.g., the part like doing a lip trill).
・'M' enjoyed the songs with fast tempo. The song might be difficult for the student to sing and the student just smiled while listening to music.
・Because the activity that was conducted in English was long, the student didn't show the great interests (The student seemed that he or she could not follow the activity). When the activity that was conducted with sitting down, the student could make something and seemed to enjoy it.
・The student enjoyed the activities following the hand movement of ALT teacher and looking at the face of the homeroom teacher.
【4th grade】
・The song was difficult, which made the student hard to sing, but the student danced with smiling, clapping his or her hands and marching in place.
・The student felt the delight mood and stamped his or her foot with clapping his or her hands.

Ⅳ. Considerations

This study aimed to verify the effects of TPR method on the foreign language activity for the students with intellectual disabilities via the SNEAT. In results of the study, it was concluded that the foreign language activity using the TPR is effective for the students with intellectual disabilities.

Given the results that there were significant changes in all the scores of the items of the SNEAT in all the four grades (1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th grades), it can be said that foreign language activity using TPR heightens the quality of life of children.

Considering the results that there was a significant change between 1st and 3rd evaluation, it is expected that the effects of the TPR method would increase in the process of repeating the activities. However, it may be right to conduct the foreign language activity using the TPR method in the medium or long-term, because its effects do not tend to appear quickly.

Since there were significant changes in the scores of the 4th and 5th graders between 1st and 2nd evaluations and between 1st and 3rd evaluations, it is assumed that the effects of the TPR method appeared more quickly than in that of the 1st and 2nd graders.

As for the scores of each domain, even though it is assumed that the relevance to the TPR method was not found in the physical functioning, it can be said that the contents of the classes with more active motions more positively affected the students.

There were significant changes among the total scores of the 4th and 5th graders in the domain of mental health. According to the self-observance of evaluators, "the student felt the delight mood and stamped his or her foot with clapping his or her hands" and "in the beginning of the class, the student showed the mental fluctuation and some unpleasant feelings, but smiled when English song started and showed the interest in the songs." The positive responses of the students from the self-observance of evaluators may be derived from the active and various activities such as saying hello in English, chatting with ALT, watching video, following motions, sitting down and standing up and expressing oneself freely following music, which made the student motivated and maintain the concentration. The opportunity with one to one talk with ALT was given to the student without exception in the end of the class. Furthermore, when the student completed the assigned tasks, the ALT gave the student stamps that could be added to the student's card. The opportunities that the student enjoy the sense of accomplishment were provided, which would lead the student to repeat the activities.

There were significant changes among the average total scores of all the graders in the domain of social functioning. There were several elements that were effective to enable the students to express themselves and to build the relationship with others; a) the foreign language activity using the TPR have the teachers, ALT and classmates become together; b) it makes the students take advantage of their whole body actions, which was different from the existing lecture-style classes; and c) the students could respond using body actions freely in the class mood without stress that would be derived from the activities that require the verbal responses.

There were several students whose average SNEAT scores were low. It was found that they could not regain the rhythm at the school since their foreign language activity was scheduled on Monday; they were late for classes or they couldn't attend the class because they didn't feel good It is assumed that those factors affected the low scores. If the foreign language activity had been scheduled in the second period of other days, not in the second period of the Mondays, the scores would have been different. The scores in the domain of mental health increased from 1st to 2nd evaluations, but decreased in the 3rd evaluation.

According to the self-observance, "because the activity that was conducted in English

was long, the student didn't show the great interests (The student seemed that he or she could not follow the activity)" and "it seemed that the student couldn't keep up with the song, because its tempo was too fast for the student to follow." The high level of class contents on December 21 would demotivate the students and eventually their SNEAT scores stagnated.

According to the self-observance, "in the beginning of the class, the student showed the mental fluctuation and some unpleasant feelings, but smiled when English song started and showed the interest in the songs", "the student enjoyed singing songs while mimicking ALT teacher who moved like the animals, e.g., penguin", and "since the class activities that made the student use his/her hands were related with the Christmas that the student liked, the student focused on them." This study as well as the studies of Masaki (2013) and Kashiwagi (2007) suggested that the combination TPR with songs, animation and videos had created the synergy effect on the foreign language activity.

In the meantime, according to the self-observance, which is different from the study of Yashima (2003), "while the student participated in the class together with other students, the student could calmly participate in the class to the end" and, "even though the student participated in the middle of class, the student answered the questions of the ALT teacher with a big voice and mimicked the gestures smiling." Senda (2012) had pointed out that the students with low level of English speaking skill would be afraid to be asked to speak out in English. But, it was useful that the stress from it would be decreased by the TPR method. Conclusively the foreign language activity using the TPR method rather than the foreign language activity not using it may decrease the burden of students from foreign language activity or get rid of the anxiety from it.

Conclusively this study confirmed the effects of the TPR methods on the elementary students and needs to be expanded to the middle and high school students. Currently there is no study with scientific proof about the foreign language activity in special needs education and there are no clear teaching methods or teaching guidance for it, which may be considered as the tasks to be explored. Therefore, the guide book with specific guidance that enables the TPR method to be immediately used for the foreign language activity in the schools should be prepared. In the near future, it is expected that the foreign language activity using the TPR method in the special support schools will be an excellent teaching method.

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