

# Research on the breakthrough path to stimulating the intrinsic motivation of primary school students for English learning

Zihan WANG

Lingnan University, Hong Kong 999077, China

**Abstract:** Primary school students frequently perceive English learning as tedious, underscoring the need to stimulate their autonomous and proactive engagement with the language. The core focus of this study lies in the intrinsic motivation that empowers primary school students to engage in English learning with autonomy, proactivity, and enthusiasm. This study explores five key approaches: 1. creating attractive teaching materials to spark students' interest in learning; 2. simulating practical scenarios to recreate real-life situations; 3. using body language to aid students' comprehension of knowledge; 4. fostering intrinsic motivation through achievement and enhancing positive experiences; 5. integrating game-based learning to activate children's natural liveliness.

**Keywords:** intrinsic motivation; primary school students; positive; English teaching

## 1 Introduction

Intrinsic motivation, as an internal factor influencing primary school students' learning, is one of the essential prerequisites for learning motivation [1]. In current teaching practice, some teachers are aware of the importance of internal drive, but there are shortcomings in the use of methods. This study will build upon existing teaching experiences to explore effective pathways for stimulating intrinsic motivation in primary school English learning. The research aims to assist teachers in using these five specific methods to make English learning vivid and interesting for students, enabling them to understand knowledge and experience a sense of accomplishment. This will ultimately achieve the long-term stimulation of intrinsic motivation, enhance the quality of English classroom teaching, and cultivate students' autonomous learning abilities.

## 2 Exploring breakthrough ways to stimulate intrinsic motivation in primary school English learning

Stimulating intrinsic motivation in primary English learning is vital for students' long-term development, teaching efficiency, and educational philosophy. However, challenges like insufficient method application and short-lived effects persist. Therefore, exploring concrete and actionable teaching strategies becomes crucial. This study will explore how to mobilize students' intrinsic motivation through specific teaching behaviors, focusing on five aspects: creating attractive teaching materials, simulating practical scenarios, using body language, leveraging a sense of accomplishment, and integrating game-based learning.

### 2.1 Creating attractive teaching materials to spark students' interest in learning

The integration of information technology and multimedia in courseware production has revolutionized primary English classroom teaching models. For instance, when learning the word "dragon", multimedia presentations can vividly illustrate its cultural symbolism across cultures. Through these videos, primary students will intuitively grasp the cultural contrasts between the East and West, finding the differences fascinating and thereby enhancing their comprehension. They learn that while the dragon symbolizes power in China, it represents a monstrous, malevolent creature in Western culture. Practice demonstrates that using multimedia presentations to showcase English language can effectively stimulate students' interest in learning.

### 2.2 Simulating practical scenarios to recreate real-life situations

Simulating authentic life scenarios in classroom instruction can make teaching content vivid and engaging. These simulated situations may involve conversational exchanges or familiar everyday life segments. Such practical contexts cultivate students' oral communication skills and comprehensive language application abilities [2]. For example, when teaching vocabulary related to food or beverage names, teachers can simulate a restaurant scenario where several students act as waitstaff. They wear uniform attire and carry trays of various food or beverage items. They then engage in dialogue: "What would you like?" "I would like.....". Through such exchanges, "customers" receive their desired items. Students then swap roles to practice oral communication, reinforcing textbook content through fluent practice.

### 2.3 Using body language to aid students' comprehension of knowledge

Research indicates that teachers' body language can effectively support instructional activities. During knowledge explanations, teachers can employ gestures to help students grasp concepts, thereby enhancing learning outcomes. For example, when teaching the chant "father and mother help each other, sister and brother play together!" in "Unit 4 My Family" of the Grade 3 English textbook, the teacher clenches both fists during instruction. The left thumb represents "father", the right thumb represents "mother"; the left pinky represents "sister", and the right pinky represents "brother". When chanting "father and mother", the teacher extends the corresponding thumbs in sequence. When chanting "help each other", both thumbs are extended and brought together; when chanting "play together", both pinkies are bent and moved together to mimic playing. This way, students attentively listen while chanting the rhyme and express themselves through actions, mastering the knowledge in an engaging atmosphere. Practice demonstrates that integrating body language throughout instruction optimizes teaching outcomes. Furthermore, employing gestures during oral communication clarifies ambiguous points, significantly enhancing the effectiveness of spoken exchanges.

### 2.4 Fostering intrinsic motivation through achievement and enhancing positive experiences

In the process of English instruction, priority should be given to encouraging students to express themselves freely in English, with the classroom serving as the primary venue for cultivating and honing their English language proficiency. If a student makes a mistake, the teacher should avoid criticism, instead patiently correcting the error, prompting the student to repeat it, and offering necessary encouragement. When a student performs well, the teacher should also offer appropriate praise and encouragement [3]. For example, when teaching the lesson "Our Dreams", after guiding students through the text, the teacher invites them to share their own aspirations: "My dear boys and girls, I believe everyone has his or her dream. What do you want to be in the future?" Students begin speaking freely. Some might say, "I want to be a teacher, just like you. I can teach my students a lot of knowledge". The teacher might respond, "Wow, that's a wonderful aspiration. You should study hard to achieve it". This affirming feedback allows students to feel validated and encouraged, experience a sense of accomplishment in expressing themselves in English, and develop a positive emotional engagement.

### 2.5 Integrating game-based learning to activate children's natural liveliness

Children are naturally drawn to games, which fully unleash their ingenuity. Incorporating games into primary English instruction not only enhances the appeal of language learning but also boosts children's engagement, allowing them to experience the joy of successful learning through play [4]. For example, when teaching the words "apple, pear, banana", a game-based activity was conducted. Three pre-prepared fruits were placed on the podium, sliced into small pieces with a knife, and skewered individually with toothpicks. After preparation, a "pass the flower" game was played: whoever received the flower had the chance to eat a piece of fruit. After eating, students stated the fruit's name and silently wrote it on the blackboard. Primary students love to show off and eagerly anticipated getting a piece of fruit. Consequently, the learning atmosphere during the game was exceptionally lively.

## 3 Conclusion

Stimulating intrinsic motivation in primary students' English learning is central to overcoming the challenge of "late-stage boredom" in primary English education. It holds irreplaceable value for cultivating students' English learning habits and enhancing classroom teaching efficiency. To effectively stimulate intrinsic motivation, this study proposes five specific approaches tailored to the practical needs of primary English education: 1. creating attractive teaching materials to spark students' interest in learning; 2. simulating practical scenarios to recreate real-life situations; 3. using body language to aid students' comprehension of knowledge; 4. fostering intrinsic motivation through achievement and enhancing positive experiences; 5. integrating game-based learning to activate children's natural liveliness. Research indicates these five pathways are not isolated but form an organic whole that complements and synergizes with each other. In this sense, incorporating fun into classroom teaching is an effective pathway to achieving instructional goals.

### Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

### References

- [1] Shan, BL. 1995. A brief discussion on students' learning internal drive. *Liaoning Higher Education Research*, 3.
- [2] Niu PZ, Li C. 1995. Carefully creating teaching situations to stimulate students' learning internal drive. *Shandong Education*, 12.
- [3] Dang WJ. 2005. The relationship between praise and criticism. *Education Art*, 5.
- [4] Zhu XJ. 2020. Integrating education with pleasure: Happy English—A brief discussion on strategies of integrating game-based teaching into primary school English teaching. *Anhui Education Research*, 20.

### About the author

Wang Zihan (born February 2002), Han Chinese, from Panzhihua, currently pursuing a master's degree. Her research interests focus on pedagogy.