

INSPIRING YOUNG MINDS: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING CHILDREN

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Abstract. This paper explores effective strategies for teaching English to young learners by focusing on motivation, interaction, and the inspiring role of the teacher. Drawing from personal classroom experience and academic research, it highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation, creative teaching methods, and a communicative approach. The study uses a qualitative method through a case study of a previously unmotivated student, showing how targeted support and engaging techniques can lead to transformation in language learning behavior. The article concludes with practical recommendations for educators to improve engagement and achievement in young language learners.

Key words: young learners, English teaching, intrinsic motivation, child-centered learning, communication, classroom strategies.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqola bolalarga ingliz tilini o‘rgatishda samarali usullar va yondashuvlarni ko‘rib chiqadi. Unda motivatsiya, o‘zaro muloqot va o‘qituvchining yosh avlodni ilhomlantirishdagi roli asosiy e‘tiborda bo‘ladi. Maqola shaxsiy tajriba va ilmiy manbalar asosida yozilgan bo‘lib, ichki motivatsiya, kommunikativ yondashuvlar va darsdagi ijodkorlikning ahamiyati haqida so‘z yuritiladi. Tadqiqot sifat jihatidan olib borilgan bo‘lib, motivatsiyasi past bo‘lgan bir o‘quvchining darsdagi ishtiroki va faolligini oshirishga qaratilgan usullar tahlil qilinadi. Ushbu maqola o‘qituvchilar uchun amaliy tavsiyalar va pedagogik yondashuvlarni taklif etadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: yosh o‘quvchilar, ingliz tili o‘qitish, ichki motivatsiya, bolalar markazidagi o‘qitish, kommunikatsiya, dars strategiyalari.

Introduction. The foundation of language learning is established in early childhood, a critical period when children are highly receptive to acquiring new languages (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Unlike adults, children require instructional methods that align with their emotional, cognitive, and developmental needs. Effective language teaching at this stage not only focuses on linguistic input but also seeks to foster a supportive, enjoyable, and motivating environment (Brown, 2007).

This paper explores strategies for motivating young learners in English language classrooms through personal teaching experiences and theoretical analysis. For instance, in my own classroom, I encountered a 9-year-old student who initially showed minimal interest in learning English. However, through the use of engaging and individualized teaching methods—such as storytelling and choice-based learning—her motivation grew noticeably. She transitioned from passive observer to active participant, demonstrating that when a teacher taps into a child’s internal motivation, language acquisition becomes significantly more effective. As Vygotsky (1978) posited, social interaction in a meaningful context

plays a vital role in cognitive development and learning. Thus, this paper investigates the impact of motivational strategies and learner-centered teaching on children's English language development.

Methods

This study follows a qualitative, case-based approach grounded in classroom observation and reflective teaching practice. The central case focuses on a 9-year-old girl who exhibited low engagement in English class during the early months of instruction. Initial informal assessments included observation of her participation, homework completion, and readiness to use English orally. Following this, a range of intervention strategies was introduced, such as:

- Storytelling and role play to contextualize vocabulary
- Games to enhance engagement and encourage spontaneous speech
- Personalized praise to build confidence and self-worth
- Providing choice in tasks to promote learner autonomy (Brown, 2007)

Throughout a six-week period, weekly records of behavioral changes and language output were maintained. To enrich the interpretation of findings, the study also incorporates theoretical insights from constructivist learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978), the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), and communicative language teaching (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). This triangulation of observation, literature, and reflective analysis ensures a holistic understanding of the effects of motivation on young learners.

Results. The case study revealed significant progress in the learner's attitude and language use. Within six weeks, the student moved from non-participation to actively contributing in group discussions, volunteering in games, and completing homework with initiative. Vocabulary retention improved, and she began applying new words in context during role-play activities. These changes aligned with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, suggesting that lowering emotional barriers can enhance language acquisition. The learner responded particularly well to:

- **Autonomy:** Being allowed to choose her role in tasks increased her sense of responsibility.
- **Recognition:** Personalized feedback boosted her self-esteem and classroom presence.
- **Social environment:** Positive peer interaction stimulated cooperative learning and engagement.

Additionally, the student's progress appeared to influence her classmates, creating a ripple effect that improved group dynamics and motivation. This supports the idea that motivation is not only an individual phenomenon but also socially influenced, as Vygotsky (1978) emphasized.

Discussion. The outcomes reinforce existing theories of second language acquisition and child-centered pedagogy. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory highlights the role of mediated interaction in learning, which was evident as the learner gained confidence through cooperative activities and teacher scaffolding.

Furthermore, Krashen's (1982) emphasis on low-anxiety environments and comprehensible input was validated by the student's improved outcomes under stress-free and engaging conditions.

From a methodological standpoint, the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach—prioritizing meaning over form—proved highly effective. Techniques such as interactive storytelling, language games, and visual aids were not only educational but also emotionally enriching, aligning with Brown's (2007) assertion that affective factors must be integrated into pedagogy.

However, some challenges emerged. It was difficult to maintain consistent motivation across a group of diverse learners and to balance classroom management with learner autonomy (Abduxayotovna, 2021). These insights underscore the importance of teacher adaptability and emotional intelligence, as educators must continuously respond to evolving learner needs and classroom dynamics.

Conclusion. Teaching English to children is not solely about linguistic instruction but involves fostering emotional connections, motivation, and creativity. This study shows that even disengaged learners can thrive when taught through empathetic, student-centered methods. The success of the case underscores the significance of emotional support, intrinsic motivation, and interactive strategies in language learning.

Teachers have the potential to shape lifelong attitudes toward learning. As such, they must embrace roles as motivators, facilitators, and emotional supporters. Future research could investigate the long-term effects of motivational strategies in language learning and explore diverse cultural contexts to identify universally effective practices. Ultimately, teaching young learners demands not only pedagogical knowledge but also heart and imagination.

References

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