



# Five Teaching Strategies to Stimulate Chinese Pupils' Interest in Learning English

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**Abstract.** In recent years, Chinese students have begun to learn English from primary school being as English became very popular. However, some monotonous, boring, and mechanized traditional teaching makes plenty of Chinese primary school students not interested in English, which brings difficulties to the English learning of Chinese pupils. Primary school students are in a critical period of language learning. For Chinese primary school English teachers, it is very necessary to use scientific and effective teaching strategies to stimulate pupils' interest in English learning. Specifically, this paper reviews five representative and effective teaching strategies: 1) Using music in English class, 2) Integrating games in English class, 3) Adopting heuristic teaching, 4) Taking part in a variety of English extracurricular activities, 5) Making emotional communication between teachers and pupils. The unique value of this paper lies in analyzing the contents and characteristics of the five stimulating strategies integrally, arguing five representative teaching strategies can effectively stimulate Chinese primary school students' interest in English learning and can inspire English teachers in China to apply these stimulating strategies synthetically to teach English.

**Keywords:** Teaching Strategies · Chinese Pupils · Interest · English Learning · Music · Games · Heuristic Teaching · English Activities · Emotional Communication

## 1 Introduction

English is the most widely spoken language all over the world [1]. It is a worldwide communication language that has been used as a global communication tool in many places throughout the world. English has steadily become more significant in international communications in the contemporary era of globalization. As a result, English becomes one of the languages to acquire [2]. Many countries across the world, including China, are studying English. In China, English learning is spread throughout all age groups, with elementary school being a significant age level where students' English learning is in the Critical Period. The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) holds that there is a critical period for a person to learn a new language. According to the Critical Period Hypothesis, the optimal age for pupils in our nation to learn English is approximately

nine years old, and they are in the critical period for language acquisition. In addition, the brain of children over two years old and less than adolescence (10–12 years old) has the characteristics of strong plasticity [3]. Therefore, it is of great importance to be clear about the critical period of pupils for English language learning and capture the critical period to apply correspondent teaching strategies and teaching methods. Simultaneously, the objectives of this paper are primary school students rather than other groups, due to pupils' interest in English is especially crucial, they are at a critical stage in their lives, the period of English education enlightenment, and the vital stage of growing and fostering talent. More importantly, it will have an impact on students' English learning at the junior, senior, and college levels [4]. However, from the actual situation, many problems are currently prevalent in primary school English teaching in China. The main problem is that myriad pupils lack learning motivation, especially the English learning interest cannot be stimulated.

Interest is an important and key factor affecting English learning motivation [5]. Interest plays a vital role in education and particularly in second or foreign language learning [6]. According to Hidi and Renninger (2006), interest is defined as heightened attention and emotional engagement that emerges when a person has a positive interaction with a content area or a task [7]. According to X.L. Yang (2020), Interest refers that a powerful learning motivator as well as the beginning point for achievement. Interest is additionally delivered in the learning exercises and can turn into the consequence of learning for it can deliver new interest and work on unique interests. Along these lines, learning interest is the reason for the study and the consequence of learning [4]. Krapp (1992) argues that interest is the feeling that you have when you want to know or learn more about something. It alludes that an individual's positive learning propensities and enthusiastic state. Interest can turn into the reason for learning for it can advance learning [8].

There is no doubt that without interest, pupils' initiative in English learning is impossible to stimulate. Learning interest is a crucial component in both teaching and learning, as well as the most realistic and active aspect of passion and initiative [9]. Children with strong learning interests are more likely to concentrate intensely in English class, improve their learning efficiency, establish the habit of self-study, and progress in their English studies. Some studies show that several factors influence foreign language learning. Nevertheless, the primary consideration is the pupils' interest in learning a foreign language. Learning interest is to encourage learners to engage in some learning activities that are driven by internal factors. Interest plays a vital part in improving the learning effect. Therefore, it considerably improves the learning of pupils [10].

At present, what English teachers can control most is to use effective and scientific teaching strategies to stimulate students' interest in English learning. As a result, it is necessary for English teachers to stimulate pupils' interest in English learning so that our students can learn English effectively in the shortest period feasible [9]. There is a lack of research on teaching strategies to stimulate primary school students' interest in English learning in China. However, there are some good studies about this topic in other countries, thus some successful stimulating strategies in other countries can be used by Chinese English teachers. However, some researchers mostly have their respective understanding and show us different aspects, and do not have an overall understanding.

Therefore, in this paper, the author is to integrate the teaching strategies into a whole understanding, it shows five representative and effective stimulating strategies: 1) Using music in English class, 2) Integrating games in English class, 3) Adopting heuristic teaching, 4) Taking part in a variety of English extracurricular activities, 5) Making emotional communication between teachers and pupils that are particularly suitable for stimulating Chinese pupils' interest in English learning.

## **2 Stimulating Strategies**

### **2.1 Using Music in English Class**

Music can be integrated into listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English learning, and adapted for pupils. Listening to music is enjoyable for numerous pupils. Since many students remember melody, rhythm, and rhyme, the struggling student may find English learning simpler when linked to music. The approach which is using music in English class was chosen considering that it is an effective strategy when pupils begin learning English. Music has so many properties that can motivate pupils and make them more positive about learning English. As a result, given that music offers more fun and engaging way to study, their interest in learning English may be stimulated. Using music in class as an instructional strategy in English language learning may help to focus pupils' attention and develop more dedicated students [11].

Pupils cannot pay attention constantly and be not interested in the content in English class without music. On the other hand, in classes with music, pupils are more willing to learn English as a second language in classes that included music. They are more involved in the class and may have a strong desire to acquire new knowledge in English class. Furthermore, if English teachers choose appropriate music in class, pupils can have a positive propensity for learning English as a second language. They are hardly distracted, participating more actively, and completing all of their responsibilities with greater excitement. Due to music generate a positive atmosphere in class and inspire pupils' interest in learning English [11].

It is also worth mentioning that not all pupils are enthusiastic about learning English as a new language. Some of them may have a negative attitude toward it, resulting in a negative disposition. As a result, finding strategies to overcome these prejudices and inspire students is critical. Choosing music over other alternatives, such as novels, and the web, since music allows teachers to portray a happy portion of the children's world in class while also establishing good relationships with pupils. Musical intelligence is frequently overlooked, and while it is not everyone's strongest intelligence, it is something that most kids can appreciate. In summary, it is critical to draw a connection between the usage of music in English classes and the interest pupils can be stimulated [12].

### **2.2 Integrating Games in English Class**

One of the most effective stimulating strategies to engage pupils' interest in learning English is to integrate games in class. The function of using games in the classroom has been considered in many ways as English education has progressed. English teachers are

increasingly incorporating games into the lessons as they recognize the importance of games in teaching English. Learning English becomes more entertaining and enjoyable by using games in class. Engaging the students by playing interesting games, they would become more interested in learning English and can be able to grasp English faster and more readily [5].

The goal of adopting games to teach English was to engage and encourage pupils. Students were able to cooperate, communicate, engage, and work in groups while playing games in English class. Students can benefit from games that assist them to enhance their brain function. Additionally, students' enthusiasm for English learning was improved by playing activities related to learning [13]. It is unquestionably different if English teachers complete an English class in the way of leading the lecture.

When pupils play games, their muscles can be encouraged to grow. More importantly, they can also put to use all of their moods, sensations, and ideas. One of the most important aspects of playing games in class is having fun. Pupils will engage in interesting games as long as it is enjoyable to them. While playing games, pupils can get real-life experiences. They can discover their talents and limitations, hobbies, and how to perform tasks through playing games. Playing games is a crucial part of one's physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and creative. When compared to individuals who do not have enough experiences to play games, those pupils who do have enough opportunities to play will be easy to be creative, and intellectual. They are learning English while playing games, which might benefit the growth and development of pupils. Activation in this context refers to stimulation that originates from outside the individual. Pupils that receive an amount of stimulus develop more quickly than students who receive little or no stimulation. Stimulation can also be used as a kind of reinforcement. When providing stimulation to pupils according to their developmental period will be more successful. Therefore, playing games is a good strategy of stimulation in this case for pupils learning English [13].

As a result, integrating interesting games in English class is a way that can be used to make pupils learn English better and more pleasant. There are various advantages to learning through playing games. To begin with, what pupils learn is a real experience, not just rational knowledge, which is difficult to forget. Furthermore, the English class presented is well-received since students are linked to the game's amusing and enjoyable character. Students are more interested in the content in English class when they are playing games simultaneously [2].

### **2.3 Adopting the Heuristic Teaching**

Adopt a heuristic teaching approach with a problem-based context to encourage students' active thinking and stimulate their interest in English learning. English teachers can set out to build an effective language environment in order to increase student's English knowledge. They prepare teaching materials in class, construct various instructional activities, continually provide fresh background, create a diversity of situations, mix content with real life, simulate real-life incidents, and seek to make teaching vivid and alive. These strategies overwhelm pupils, engage their interest in English learning, take part in English activities that are significant to them, and increase their enthusiasm to learn English [10].

Setting up a problem-context is when teachers show challenging questions in the English class so that pupils may either feel familiar or connect with prior information to solve and stimulate interest for self-thinking and a desire to learn. This is an excellent strategy in English since the new information can boost the pupils' interest to produce a positive teaching impact. The most significant benefit of heuristic teaching is that it may raise students' excitement for learning English, encouraging them to think about questions actively and summarize rather than relying on teachers [10].

## **2.4 Taking Part in a Variety of English Extracurricular Activities**

Cultivating Chinese pupils' interest in learning English as well as through a variety of extracurricular activities. Teachers can prepare a variety of extracurricular activities based on the personalities, talents, and interests of their students. The English activities develop pupils' practical abilities while also providing a pleasant learning atmosphere for them. They also bring enjoyment to their lives. The following are examples of English activities:

First and foremost, the English corner should be maintained. The English corner is highly popular being as it has the potential to enhance people's lives, and English enthusiasts may join the English corner. They can discuss intriguing subjects or research issues. Teachers should encourage students to speak out, even if they make mistakes [4].

In addition, performing English drama by pupils together is beneficial. Playing classic fairy tale stories, and dramas from textbooks is effective. Dramas can be performed by students using their facial expressions and body language. It is extremely helpful to students. Other types of extracurricular activities exist in addition to the ones mentioned above. It is an essential complement for the class to organize colorful and plentiful extracurricular activities, thus teachers should do so regularly [4].

Furthermore, a multitude of English competitions can be carried out, such as singing contests, tongue twister contests, narrative contests, riddle contests, recitation contests, and speech contests, which can be held in English. Pupils of all levels of experience can participate in these activities and win prizes, gain a sense of success from studying English, and have a deeper grasp of what they have learned through these activities. As a result, students not only attend English lessons with interest, but they also get valuable experience and develop their English abilities. Moreover, it can stimulate their interest in English study and demonstrate that mastering the language is not difficult [9].

## **2.5 Making Emotional Communication between Teachers and Pupils**

In daily teaching activities in China, many teachers provide pupils with knowledge and ask them in answering questions about English learning. Simultaneously, it is necessary to make emotional communication with pupils, with a genuine, friendly attitude, in order to improve their optimism and stimulate their interest in learning English [14].

It is crucial to create a harmonious relationship between teachers and pupils. Teachers should attempt to adjust their psychology to fit the qualities of their pupils, the current status of the educational subject, and take enthusiasm, smiles, joy, and respect in their students' hearts. To be friends with all students, and to provide them support and love in order to improve students' English interests. Teachers in English classes increase

emotional communication with students who have high self-esteem and consistently receive excellent grades and praise. For instance, if a student makes an English mistake or gives a bad response in front of the whole class and the English teacher criticizes him and the other students laugh at him, he can't handle it and would not like to answer other questions in the following English classes. At this point, teachers should apply encouraging language to assist children in making all possible advancements. After that, even if pupils provide the incorrect response, they will be able to recognize the feeling of being cared and their confidence and interest in learning English will increase [10].

Additionally, it is critical to identify pupils' benefits and abilities and to reward them on a regular basis. Students require a sense of safety since they are terrified of replying incorrectly or being made fun of by others. Nevertheless, learning English as a second language is tough and students frequently make grammatical errors, therefore students must muster the bravery to take a chance. Similarly, their ambition is high, having received instructors' honest appreciation, they expect to study more and achieve better. Their actions, abilities, and command of English learning eventually conform to the teachers' expectations. As a result, pupils are in desperate need of the teacher's support and appreciation. Their self-confidence will be strengthened if teachers can encourage students frequently and allow them to see development [10].

Experiments by Hector Locke reveal that praise and encouragement can stimulate pupils' learning motivation more effectively than critics who can neither laud nor criticize the result [10]. In Yin Gouen's experiment, Chinese academics discovered that incentives might dramatically enhance students' learning motivation. "Praise is one of the simplest, easiest, and most successful methods to utilize to motivate students' learning motivation," education psychologists GaiJie and Andrew remark. Material rewards, smiles, nods, and "Very Good!" "Congratulations!" "Wonderful!" are all examples of methods to reward [14].

In English learning, having feelings of emotional communication with pupils will allow them to achieve the effect of learning English, strengthen their interest and enthusiasm in learning English, train and motivate them to learn English better and easier.

### 3 Conclusion

This paper has introduced five representative stimulating strategies to arouse Chinese primary school students' interest in learning English. There are many problems in learning English at the primary school level in China, however, interest in learning English is a very crucial factor that affects students' learning of English. Interest is the direct motivation that inspires students to learn, and only when students are interested in learning can they improve their English. For a lot of primary school students, learning English as a second language makes them feel difficult. Because of the difficulty of learning, it is easy for students to lose interest in learning English. Language learning is a long-term process and it is important to grasp this critical period of learning English in primary school. Therefore, teaching English as a second language is quite a challenging task for English teachers in China. English teachers should find the right teaching strategies in order to get their students interested in learning English.

Currently, many researchers have conducted specific research on only one teaching strategy to increase students' interest in learning English, and few have integrated representative teaching strategies. The contribution of this paper has been to confirm five representative teaching strategies can be effective in stimulating Chinese pupils' interest in English learning and English teachers can be inspired to apply these stimulating strategies within this review comprehensively rather than mechanically. This paper was limited by the absence of the fact that the teaching strategies were not very comprehensive, the objectives were focused on pupils and the language was for English only. In addition to the motivational strategies incorporated in this thesis, English teachers also need to use other teaching strategies wisely, control the pace of lessons, and ensure that the integration of classroom progress is completed.

Interest is the most important starting point for students to learn English well. Therefore, it is the primary responsibility of English teachers to do their best to stimulate students' interest, and sustained interest in learning English will play an important role in students' future English learning. When primary school English teachers use motivational strategies to make pupils learn English excited, curious, and willing to learn English. However, their interest and enthusiasm for learning may diminish over time and as the difficulty of learning increases. Maintaining students' interest in learning English is an important and difficult task for English teachers and it is hoped that further research will be carried out extensively on the related research subjects in the future.

In addition to teachers, schools and parents play an important role in this topic. This would be a fruitful area for future related research. Schools and parents should be extremely supportive of teaching and learning. Schools should be well equipped to create a good teaching and learning environment. Parents should encourage their children, supervise their studies and create a good learning environment at home. Only when teachers, schools, and families cooperate will children be more relaxed and interested in learning English. Simultaneously, students' learning interests are complex and multidimensional, and in the future, researchers can further identify the key role and influence of interest in language learning. Therefore, it is hoped that subsequent research-related experts in the field and English teachers will discover more scientific and effective ways to promote and improve students' English learning.

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