



# Extrinsic Motivation Factors of Primary School Students in English Learning

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**Abstract.** With the increasing emphasis on education, extrinsic motivational factors are being given with high expectations, especially for primary students who are less self-controlled than other learners. The learning status of the beginner will have a great impact on their future learning. This paper aimed to explore three characteristics of elementary school students: full of curiosity, easy to be affected, and no foundation, with using these characteristics to connect with external motivation factors. To improve learning efficiency, the influence of significant others, giving appropriate rewards, and the effect of learning and social environment should be utilized. When combined with the characteristics of elementary school students, extrinsic motivational factors also differ. Through this way, students can achieve good grades in good physical and mental health with external motivation factors.

**Keywords:** Extrinsic motivation · primary students · English learning

## 1 Introduction

Many teachers use one method when teaching, rather than adapt the teaching method to the target audience. The group discussed here are primary students who are different from other learners. There are some previous studies related to it: the current situation of elementary students; English learning motivation and its countermeasures, intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions [1, 2]. However, all of them paid less attention to the extrinsic motivation of primary students. This paper is organized based on three questions: who, what, and how. Who is the group we research? What are the main factors of extrinsic motivation? How do motivate them?

## 2 The Situation of Primary School Students

Primary students are a special group. Their learning motivation is mainly external. For primary students, getting into elementary school is the first time to contact with officially learning. In kindergarten, students learn the knowledge in an entertaining and relaxed way. Furthermore, the purpose of learning at that time is not to make them learn knowledge but stimulate their language cognitive abilities [3].

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Z. Zhan et al. (Eds.): SEAA 2022, ASSEHR 675, pp. 442–448, 2023.

[https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-05-3\\_55](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-05-3_55)

Primary students have no foundation in English learning. Even some of do not know how to write English, only noticing some English rhythm. How do they start to learn a new language is significant. Due to the different language environment, without good guidance, it is easy to make them unconfident and raise fear of difficulty. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage them to open their mouths and speak English from the very beginning. It also paves the way for later English learning and makes it easier to overcome the sense of unfamiliarity and intimidation.

Primary students are still in a stage that less active in learning. The initiative and independence of primary students are weak relatively. There are 31% of students who would not answer the questions actively. Over 60% of students would not initiatively participate in harder English practice and English contests [3]. It is impossible for them to form objective long-term learning by themselves. Simple motivation arises in the early years of schooling; shallow motivation develops in the lower and middle grades; further motivation develops in the middle and upper grades [3]. Being affected by a weak foundation and poor self-control, primary students have to take advantage of these extrinsic factors to enhance their abilities. However, turning this disadvantage into an advantage, the features of active and curious led them to become more likely to be attracted by the colorful pictures and the teacher's exciting tone. Therefore, it is important for teachers to show some videos and add more tidying and expressions to the teaching process.

### **3 Extrinsic Motivation Factors**

Learning a new language often requires students' years of exercise and tenacity to face setbacks. According to the hardness of learning a second language (L2), maintaining the learning motivation of students is a key to achieving success [2]. Motivation can be defined as one person's possible main incentives to carry out a certain action. Motivation is the factor that inspires people to take action and persist in. Extrinsic motivations are those activities not happened due to interest or spontaneous will but aim for some instrumental end [4]. Some people believe that intrinsic motivations are more important than extrinsic factors. But in fact, the two complement each other and contribute to each other. Different stages of learning suit different motivations.

#### **3.1 Significant Others**

##### **3.1.1 Teachers**

For teachers, communication style variables of them had already connected with learning motivation and result in a normal course environment [4].

###### **3.1.1.1. The Lead-in Part**

In the first class, it is important that teachers should motivate students to become interested in English. It would better enable students to have further desire to learn more. Furthermore, this period is the best time to cultivate good learning habits. Generally, most of the teachers utilize the features of the beginning stage to let them play a role: (1) making use of students' curiosity to let them read more authentic materials and learn

more English culture after class; (2) taking advantage of their aggressiveness to let them raise their hands to answer more questions in the class and open mouths to read aloud. These ways are supposed to build a positive learning atmosphere. In Chamber's survey, some students' average age is 11 [5]. Then they were asked the reason they like or dislike during their previous L2 learning [5]. 46% of students admitted that it is their teachers who played a positive role in their language learning [5].

### 3.1.1.2. The Continuous Learning

In this period, some students had already lost curiosity about English. Incomprehensible knowledge has gradually been overstocked. More and more input knowledge is required to be memorized. Some students would produce negative emotions and get boredom of English learning [6].

Teachers play an important role in continuous learning. If they just follow the textbook and teach it rigidly, most students would be absent-minded and slack off in their studies. Some little games can be added to increase the class interest degree, thereby building a lively and easy atmosphere. It is important for teachers to make sure every student participates in and represents their strong learning enthusiasm. It also helps them to improve the educational effectiveness and teaching quality.

### 3.1.2 Parents

During the process of learning, parents' encouragement on behalf of the external strength, and emphasizing the importance and necessity of learning viewpoint should be paid attention to [7]. Though teachers are responsible for students' performance at school, parents are in charge of students' performance at home. Absorbing knowledge is indeed matter, but reviewing them in time and setting a suitable timetable is also important to organize the whole knowledge structure as well. That requires parents to spend their money, time, and energy. Parental input is divided into three types according to different functions by Hill and Tyson: academic socialization, school-based involvement, and home-based involvement [8].

The method parents treat English affect students' attitude. Children's cognition and evaluation for learning task value are affected by parents' educational value orientation to some extent. According to the research, 3954 students from primary and middle school in Beijing are investigated by three types of research: parental involvement in academic socialization, the investment based on family, the investment based on school [9]. Then, the persistence of children is affected by the degree of parental attention [9]. Some uneducated parents cannot speak English. It is difficult for them to instruct children. It is not so bad if they encourage and accompany children to learn this new language. The worse situation is that some parents hold the opinion that their work environment is not involved in English. The horizons are restricted. So they told children it is unnecessary to learn English. Then, children start to speak little English, which might cause worse learning outcomes. However, most of the family attach importance to English learning, as it is one of the main cores in the current education system of China.

## 3.2 Rewards

Rewards have been valued and respected by people for a long time, as a reinforcing and motivating educational aid. It is hoped to promote English learning motivation and have a positive change, achieving the English learning automatic. Students are led by rewards to develop their English not only in families, but also in schools [10, 11].

### 3.2.1 Material Reward

Material rewards aim to satisfy the substance requirement of students. To encourage the learning and living situation of students from a material level, in order to encourage them to achieve the expectation [12]. Over half of teachers are willing to pay out of their own pocket to buy little gifts for students. Guo finds that there are 89.40% of teachers believed that rewards can play a good role in teaching activities. Only 3.20% of teachers have an idea that punishment could benefit teaching [10]. The gifts are given to students who behave well. This form of reward would unconsciously attack the self-confidence of students who are not good at showing themselves. When considering rewards, it is necessary to take them into account.

Parents are willing to offer children material rewards, especially now material conditions are more affluent than before. Children indeed would make efforts to achieve the goals, but it is short-term and weak persistence. However, it is hard for parents to balance the behavior and rewards. Furthermore, during the reward, it contains more subjectivity. And the target of rewards is likely to be unclear. Students would confuse about what did they do to earn the reward. The effect of rewarding will be weakened. Primary learning is a process use of extrinsic motivation to foster intrinsic motivation. Material rewarding requires measured cadences, which would undermine students' intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, material rewards should not too valuable, which may lead students to be utilitarian.

### 3.2.2 Spiritual Reward

Spiritual rewards are the main trend of rewards, while material rewards give subsidiary for it. There are many forms of spiritual reward: praising in public, granting the certificate, writing letters of encouragement, and delegating authority [13].

Rewards are regarded as glory. In China, when students behave well in a certain area, then they would be given a relative certificate of merit. They not only focused on academic records, but comprehensive development. In English class, rewards should be distributed diversely. Some students behave actively to get good grades. But overall, the students who are inconspicuous and embarrassed for showing themselves more desiring encouragement and rewards than others. If teachers give them more attention, they may get some unexpected outcomes. With a too high frequency of reward, the effect of urging backwardness and highlighting excellence would be attenuated [13].

## 3.3 The Learning and Social Environment

It is a complicated process to learn another language with linguistic or non-linguistic outcomes is influenced by many factors. Due to the social environment possessing great

potential for development and sustainability, motivation is the factors educators can develop to improve the L2 results of students [14].

Linguists have found that if people want to truly master a language, it is necessary to be exposed to this language [15]. In China, most schools treat grades as teaching syllabus, but they ignore English's communicative purposes. Part of schools and parents came to realize the truth, trying to create an English communicative learning atmosphere. They employ foreign teachers to talk with children, including children who just mastered the native language for a while.

The English learning environment is getting more and more mature. The younger trend is gradually accepted [16]. Parents hold the opinion that it is exactly the right time to foster a positive attitude and motivation. Park et al. find that about 74% of primary students have already mastered the basic English skills when they are in grade one or two [17]. Son et al. estimate about 80% of kindergartens teach English in South Korea [18]. The younger trend drives children to have to burden with more work, in case of falling behind others.

## 4 How to Motivate?

For students themselves, making good use of these extrinsic motivations is to rise their learning efficiency. Meanwhile, they should also cherish taking the opportunity to foster intrinsic motivation. It would help us to learn more easily. With the progressive development of the study phase, combining extrinsic and intrinsic factors would achieve the greater effectiveness.

If all the students desire to learn actively, then the life of the teacher would be wonderful [19]. Some English foreign language teachers often ignored the problem of motivation when urging learners. English foreign teachers are supposed to aid learners to find motivation where they cannot expect. At the same time, searching for the process of motivation, for the sake of getting used to it [20]. The cognitive evaluation theory of Reeve refers to: through using interesting activities, promptly feedback, wisely rewards, acceptance of students' expectations in emotion and culture [21]. Using the extrinsic factors is rational. There is great authority for teachers, even in the highly collective education area. For primary students, their self-awareness is in the stage of forming. Teachers are able to guide students to integrate into the English environment and enjoy the feeling of getting knowledge.

What parents can do is different from teachers. Teachers are people who endow their knowledge directly. But parents are who guide them to apply knowledge. In primary schools, the knowledge students learn mostly is daily life English. Providing encouragement when they need protects their confidence and will not frustrate them. When children show you what they have learned, a look of satisfaction and anticipation will increase their desires for knowledge.

To establish L2 awareness and application, teachers can allot 10 min out to let them share what happened in their daily life. Without all grammar mistakes being correct, they can even express by simple words or pictures. It all aimed at linking what they learned in the class with what they were interested in. It would enhance the awareness of how important English learning is and establish contact with lives and the future [22].

## 5 Conclusion

Learning extrinsic motivation of primary students is aimed to provide children a good starting point when they first learn English. That is a key point for them as well. After research, the main factors of extrinsic motivation affect primary students: significant others, rewards, learning and social environment. Using these extrinsic factors to motivate primary students would improve the efficiency of learning and lay a good foundation and study habits for future English learning. Though this research has the limitation that it does not have much connection with intrinsic motivation, for the future direction, the author tends to focus on how to shift from external supervision to internal self-motivation to learn.

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