



ENHANCING CHILDREN'S LEARNING MOTIVATION THROUGH POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT: A CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

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Abstract

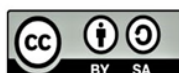
This study investigates the use of positive reinforcement, specifically praise and positive words, in teaching English to young learners. Grounded in the Self-Determination Theory and Social Cognitive Development, the research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, examining a popular YouTube video featuring an EFL teacher. Results emphasize the varied roles of positive expressions, including fostering engagement, enhancing emotional well-being, and encouraging positive behaviour. The research addresses a gap in detailed analyses of educators' use of positive words, offering valuable insights for crafting effective language teaching strategies. The methodology, findings, and implications contribute to the development of engaging educational materials for children.

Keywords: *Reinforcement, Communication, English Teaching, Young Learners, Youtube video*

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of education, cultivating a genuine enthusiasm for learning among children is a pursuit that transcends the boundaries of traditional pedagogy. Recognizing the pivotal role motivation plays in a child's educational journey, this article embarks on an exploration of strategies that go beyond conventional approaches. Specifically, we delve into the influence of positive reinforcement, encompassing the power of praise and positive words, on enhancing children's motivation for learning.

Numerous studies have illuminated the connection between motivation and academic achievement in young learners. The work of Ryan & Deci (2020) emphasized the intrinsic motivation that arises when individuals feel a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their learning environment. Moreover, Al Zakwani's (2020) research highlighted the significance of teachers' motivational strategies in fostering a positive learning atmosphere. Within this context, positive reinforcement, in



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Enhancing...

the form of praise and positive words, emerges as a potent catalyst for instilling a love for learning in children.

Praise, when wielded effectively, has been proven to be a cornerstone in shaping a child's perspective on education. The research of Karadeniz (2023) underscored the importance of praising children for their efforts rather than their inherent intelligence. This shift in focus fosters a growth mindset, wherein children are more likely to embrace challenges and view learning as a continuous journey rather than a static destination (Fong, Patall, Vasquez, & Stautberg, 2019).

The primary objective of this research is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the positive words utilized by an English language teacher within the instructional context of the YouTube video titled "How to teach Kids | from a Prague kindergarten, part 1 | English for Children" (Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIk1-ck4c6Q&t=939s>). By scrutinizing the linguistic elements embedded in the teaching methodology presented in the video, the study aims to identify and categorize the spectrum of positive words employed by educators. Through this analysis, the research seeks to unravel the nuanced ways in which positive reinforcement is woven into the language used, shedding light on its potential impact on motivating and engaging young language learners.

While existing literature acknowledges the broad significance of motivation and positive reinforcement in education, there remains a conspicuous gap concerning the detailed examination of positive words used by English language teachers. This research endeavors to fill this void by offering a nuanced exploration of the linguistic nuances that contribute to a positive and motivating learning experience on online platforms. In the subsequent sections, we will delve into the methodology employed for the analysis, present key findings, and discuss the implications for educators. By elucidating the role of positive words in shaping the learning motivation of young language learners, we aspire to contribute valuable insights that can inform the design of effective and engaging educational materials for children.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to delve into the pedagogical impact of positive words used by a male English language teacher in the

widely popular YouTube video titled "How to teach Kids | from a Prague kindergarten, part 1 | English for Children" (Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIk1-ck4c6Q&t=939s>). The selection of this video is based on its exceptional popularity, having garnered over 30 million views, making it a significant and influential resource in the realm of online language teaching for children.

The descriptive qualitative approach is chosen to provide a detailed and nuanced exploration of the positive words employed by the teacher. This method aligns with the research objective of offering a rich, contextually grounded analysis that goes beyond statistical measurements, aiming to uncover the subtleties and nuances of positive language use in the instructional context.

The subject of this study is a male English language teacher featured in the chosen YouTube video. The focus on a specific teacher within an authentic teaching environment ensures a targeted analysis of the instructional language, interactions, and communication style. This approach enables a deeper understanding of the practical application of positive words in the teaching process.

The primary data for this research consist of all positive words and expressions used by the teacher in the selected video. This includes both verbal and non-verbal positive cues. The data collection process involves careful observation, transcription, and meticulous listing of every positive word or phrase spoken during the instructional session. The popularity of the video ensures a substantial dataset for thorough analysis.

The chosen YouTube video's popularity serves as a key factor in its selection. With over 30 million views, it has undoubtedly reached a vast audience, making it a noteworthy representation of online language teaching for children. The widespread viewership indicates its influence and the potential impact of its teaching methodologies, particularly concerning the use of positive words.

The analysis phase encompasses a systematic examination of the collected positive words and expressions. Utilizing a text analysis approach, the study aims to categorize the types of positive language used, evaluate their frequency, and explore the contextual nuances of their application. Thematic analysis will uncover recurrent patterns and shed light on how positive words contribute to the overall language teaching experience for children.

Enhancing...

This research contributes to the broader discourse on effective language teaching by providing insights into the strategic use of positive words. Understanding how positive reinforcement is manifested in language instruction, as demonstrated by the chosen teacher, can inform educators, curriculum developers, and content creators aiming to create engaging and motivating learning experiences for young language learners.

The descriptive qualitative analysis of positive words in the selected YouTube video aims to unravel the intricacies of language teaching for children. By delving into the specifics of positive language use, the research aspires to offer valuable insights that enhance our understanding of effective pedagogical strategies and their implications for motivating and engaging young language learners in the digital age.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Table 1 Positive Word/ Expressions Used by the Teacher in the Video

Positive Words / Expressions	Functions
<i>Are you ready?</i>	Encourages engagement and readiness for the upcoming activity.
<i>Bye-bye</i>	Expresses a positive farewell, creating a positive closure to the interaction.
<i>Goodbye</i>	Reinforces the positive farewell gesture, ensuring a warm departure.
<i>Happy</i>	Indicates a positive emotional state, contributing to a joyful atmosphere.
<i>Help me up</i>	Solicits assistance in a positive manner, fostering a supportive learning environment.
<i>Here we go</i>	Initiates a positive transition or activity, signalling excitement and anticipation.
<i>High-five</i>	Encourages a positive physical interaction, fostering a sense of accomplishment.
<i>Hold hands</i>	Promotes unity and cooperation in a positive context, potentially during a group activity.
<i>It's blue</i>	Describes a colour positively, likely engaging children in a visual and positive manner.
<i>It's red</i>	Similar to the above, describes a colour positively, creating a positive association.
<i>Jump</i>	Encourages a physical activity in a positive manner, promoting engagement and fun.
<i>Little</i>	Positively frames something as small, potentially making it more approachable or cute.
<i>Move back</i>	Directs a movement in a positive way, providing clear instructions for an activity.
<i>Okay</i>	Affirms agreement or understanding positively, providing clarity and positive reinforcement.
<i>Open please</i>	Requests an action in a polite and positive manner, contributing to a positive atmosphere.

Maisarah....

<i>Please</i>	Adds politeness to requests, fostering positive communication and cooperation.
<i>Pull me up</i>	Seeks assistance in a positive manner, promoting collaboration and support.
<i>See you soon</i>	Expresses a positive anticipation for future interactions, creating a positive farewell.
<i>Show me</i>	Requests a demonstration in a positive manner, facilitating active participation.
<i>Sit down nicely</i>	Encourages a specific behaviour positively, fostering discipline in a positive light.
<i>Stand up</i>	Prompts a physical activity positively, creating engagement and movement.
<i>Thank you</i>	Expresses gratitude positively, fostering a positive interaction and appreciation.
<i>Tra la la la</i>	Adds a musical and positive element, potentially used during a fun or creative activity.
<i>Very good</i>	Offers positive feedback for achievements or behaviours, reinforcing positive actions.
<i>Very good superstars</i>	Provides additional positive reinforcement, possibly in a playful and encouraging tone.
<i>Very nice to meet you</i>	Conveys positive greetings, creating a positive and friendly atmosphere.
<i>Well done</i>	Acknowledges positive achievements, fostering a sense of accomplishment.
<i>Yay</i>	Expresses joy and excitement positively, contributing to a lively and positive ambiance.
<i>Yeah</i>	Affirms positively, expressing agreement or enthusiasm.
<i>Yes</i>	Affirms positively, indicating agreement, understanding, or encouragement.

Positive words and expressions serve a myriad of crucial functions in fostering a conducive and uplifting learning environment. Firstly, they play a pivotal role in encouraging engagement and readiness for upcoming activities, setting a positive tone that prepares individuals for the learning experience. For example, phrases like "Are you ready?" initiate a positive anticipation, creating enthusiasm for what follows. Additionally, positive farewells, reinforced to ensure a warm departure, contribute to creating positive closures to interactions. This is exemplified by repetitive use of phrases like "Goodbye" or "See you soon," leaving a lasting positive impression on participants.

Positive words also play a significant role in indicating a positive emotional state, thereby contributing to a joyful and harmonious atmosphere. Expressions like "Yay" or "Yeah" are examples that showcase enthusiasm and excitement. Furthermore, soliciting assistance in a positive manner fosters a supportive learning environment. For instance, "Help me up, please" encourages collaboration and a sense of assistance. Positive

Enhancing...

transitions or activity initiations, as seen in phrases like "Here we go," signal excitement and anticipation, fostering engagement.

Encouraging positive physical interactions, such as through high-fives or holding hands positively, contributes to a sense of accomplishment and unity. For instance, when a teacher encourages a group activity by saying "Hold hands in a circle," it promotes cooperation and a positive context within the group. Describing colors positively engages children visually, as seen in phrases like "It's blue" or "It's red," creating positive associations with learning elements. Similarly, positively framing something as small, as in "Little jumps," makes it more approachable and cute, encouraging participation.

Clear instructions provided through positive directives, like "Show me" or "Sit down nicely," direct movement positively, creating an organized and positive atmosphere. Affirmations of agreement or understanding, expressed positively through phrases like "Yes" or "Okay," provide clarity and reinforce positive behavior. Polite requests, such as "Please" or adding politeness to requests, foster positive communication and cooperation.

Expressions of gratitude, positive feedback for achievements, and additional positive reinforcement, often delivered in a playful tone, contribute to positive interactions and appreciation. For example, "Thank you" expresses gratitude, while "Very good superstars" offers positive feedback, reinforcing positive actions. Positive greetings, acknowledgments of achievements, and expressions of joy and excitement create a positive and friendly atmosphere. Phrases like "Hello" or "Well done" foster a sense of accomplishment and contribute to a lively and positive ambiance.

In summary, the multifaceted use of positive language is pivotal in shaping a positive and supportive learning environment, enhancing engagement, cooperation, and overall positive experiences for participants.

Discussion

The research findings strongly resonate with prominent psychological theories, particularly those related to child development and educational psychology. Let's discuss the results in the context of the following theories:

Enhancing Motivation: The research outcomes harmonize seamlessly with the fundamental tenets of the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a psychological framework

asserting that individuals are intrinsically motivated when their basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are met (Dearborn & Flierl, 2023). The teacher's adept use of genuine praise and positive acknowledgment in the video serves as a powerful instrument in fulfilling the crucial need for competence among children. Through expressions like "Very good" and "Well done," the teacher effectively addresses the competence need, instilling a sense of capability and motivation in the young learners (Κώνστα, 2019).

In the context of SDT, autonomy refers to the desire to act in harmony with one's own interests and values. The positive words used by the teacher not only acknowledge the children's efforts but also empower them, contributing to the satisfaction of their need for autonomy. By providing an environment where their contributions are recognized and celebrated, the teacher nurtures a sense of autonomy, fostering a more profound and sustained motivation for learning.

Furthermore, the concept of relatedness within SDT emphasizes the importance of social connection and positive relationships. The teacher's encouraging phrases create a positive and supportive learning atmosphere, fostering a sense of relatedness among the children. As they receive positive recognition, the students feel connected to the teacher and their peers, enhancing their overall motivation and engagement in the learning process.

The judicious use of positive words in the teaching environment not only fulfills the need for competence but also contributes to a broader fulfillment of autonomy and relatedness. This aligns perfectly with the SDT framework, showcasing how the teacher's choice of language plays a pivotal role in shaping a motivational and enriching educational experience for the children.

Building Confidence: The Social Cognitive Development theory, formulated by Albert Bandura, underscores the significance of self-efficacy in the process of learning. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to succeed in particular situations, and according to Bandura (in Pajares, 2012), it plays a pivotal role in shaping cognitive and behavioral outcomes. The teacher's use of authentic praise, exemplified by expressions like "High-five" and "You're very strong," becomes a catalyst in bolstering children's self-efficacy.

Enhancing...

Within the framework of Social Cognitive Development, praise acts as a powerful source of positive reinforcement. When children receive acknowledgment for their efforts, it not only validates their actions but also instills a belief in their own competence. For instance, a simple "High-five" after completing a task successfully serves as concrete evidence of their capability, contributing to an increased sense of self-efficacy. Similarly, being told "You're very strong" not only appreciates their physical prowess but also reinforces the idea that they possess the strength and capability to overcome challenges.

Moreover, the cultivation of self-efficacy through genuine praise extends its influence beyond the immediate task at hand. Bandura's theory posits that individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to approach new challenges with confidence and persistence. By consistently offering positive reinforcement, the teacher contributes to the development of a mindset where children perceive themselves as capable learners, unafraid to tackle novel and potentially demanding learning activities.

The integration of genuine praise aligns seamlessly with the Social Cognitive Development theory, specifically its emphasis on self-efficacy as a driver of cognitive and behavioral development. The teacher's thoughtful use of positive words not only acknowledges the immediate efforts of the children but also serves as a foundational element in nurturing their belief in their own capabilities, fostering a positive and confident approach to learning.

Providing Positive Feedback: The implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) underscores the pivotal role of positive reinforcement in molding behavior, a concept crucial for fostering a positive and supportive learning environment. Within this framework, the provision of positive feedback, as exemplified by phrases such as "Very nice to meet you" and "Good job" in the video, emerges as a potent tool for guiding children toward desired behaviors and establishing positive learning expectations (Bear, Whitcomb, Elias, & Blank, 2015).

In line with the principles of PBIS, positive feedback operates as a valuable reinforcer by accentuating and affirming correct actions. When a teacher expresses, "Very nice to meet you," it goes beyond a mere greeting; it conveys appreciation for the child's social engagement, reinforcing the positive behavior of initiating communication. Similarly, the phrase "Good job" not only acknowledges the

completion of a task but also communicates approval, associating the performed action with a positive outcome.

Moreover, the use of positive feedback through praise contributes to the creation of a supportive and encouraging learning environment. According to Sugai and Horner (in Bear, Whitcomb, Elias, & Blank, 2015), such an environment helps in clarifying behavioral expectations and promoting a shared understanding of what constitutes positive behavior. When children consistently receive positive reinforcement for their actions, they internalize the connection between their behaviors and the positive feedback, fostering a sense of accomplishment and encouraging them to repeat these behaviors in the future.

Additionally, the teacher in the video demonstrates how positive feedback through praise can play a crucial role in setting a positive tone for interactions. Phrases like "Very nice to meet you" not only express warmth but also establish a positive emotional connection, contributing to a positive and inclusive learning atmosphere.

The utilization of positive feedback, grounded in the principles of PBIS, serves as a powerful mechanism for shaping behavior and fostering a positive learning environment. The teacher's thoughtful application of phrases like "Very nice to meet you" and "Good job" exemplifies how positive feedback through praise can be instrumental in reinforcing desired behaviors and cultivating a positive and supportive educational setting.

Strengthening Emotional Bonds: The theory of attachment, formulated by John Bowlby, accentuates the crucial role of emotional bonds between caregivers, particularly teachers, and children in the learning process. The teacher's use of praise infused with affection, as evidenced by expressions like "Thank you" and "Yay" in the video, serves as a mechanism for strengthening these emotional bonds, aligning with the fundamental principles of attachment theory (Holmes, 2014).

In the context of attachment theory, "Thank you" goes beyond a polite acknowledgment; it becomes a powerful expression of gratitude, conveying appreciation and affirming the child's positive behavior. This fosters a positive emotional connection, contributing to the development of a secure emotional attachment between the teacher and the child. The phrase "Yay" further amplifies this emotional connection, as it denotes joy, enthusiasm, and celebration. By using such positive and

Enhancing...

joyful expressions, the teacher not only acknowledges the child's actions but also actively engages in the emotional experience, creating a bond that goes beyond the academic setting.

Moreover, the strengthening of emotional bonds through praise positively influences the overall learning environment. According to attachment theory, a secure emotional attachment provides a foundation for exploration and learning, as children are more likely to engage in educational activities when they feel emotionally secure (Holmes, 2014). The phrases used in the video contribute to creating an atmosphere of security and support, where children feel valued and emotionally connected to their teacher.

The application of attachment theory in the learning environment is evident in the teacher's use of praise with affection. Phrases like "Thank you" and "Yay" not only serve as positive reinforcements for the child's behavior but also play a vital role in strengthening emotional bonds. This, in turn, fosters a secure and supportive learning environment, aligning with the principles of attachment theory and emphasizing the significance of emotional connections in the educational setting.

Encouraging Positive Behavior: The findings harmonize with the foundational principles of Behaviorism, a psychological theory that underscores the role of positive reinforcement in shaping and encouraging desired behaviors. In the context of the observed teaching methods, phrases like "Very good" and "Well done" are emblematic of positive reinforcement, aligning with the behaviorist perspective. According to Behaviorism, positive reinforcement involves the use of favorable consequences to strengthen and encourage behaviors, fostering their repetition (Skinner, 2015).

In the application of Behaviorism within the learning environment, praise functions as a form of positive reinforcement, creating a direct association between positive behavior and positive recognition. When children receive affirmations like "Very good" or "Well done" in response to their actions or achievements, they establish a link between their conduct and the positive acknowledgment they receive. This association serves as a powerful motivator for children, as it communicates that their positive efforts lead to positive outcomes, reinforcing the desired behaviors.

Furthermore, this positive reinforcement through praise contributes to the development of positive habits among children. As per Behaviorism, the repetition of

behaviors that lead to positive consequences strengthens those behaviors, making them more likely to recur in the future (Skinner, 2015). In the teaching scenario analyzed, the consistent use of positive reinforcement phrases encourages children to engage in positive behaviors repeatedly, potentially establishing a foundation for constructive habits.

The utilization of positive reinforcement, as observed in the form of praise, aligns with Behaviorist principles. The phrases "Very good" and "Well done" serve as positive reinforcements, creating a link between positive behavior and positive recognition. This association, in turn, promotes the repetition of positive behaviors and contributes to the formation of positive habits among children.

Motivating Growth: The concept of motivating growth aligns seamlessly with the principles of the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which places a significant emphasis on nurturing intrinsic motivation. In the context of the observed teaching methods, phrases like "You're very strong" and "Little jumps" exemplify the application of SDT principles, emphasizing effort and perseverance over mere outcomes. According to SDT, recognizing and praising children for their dedication and hard work fulfills their psychological need for competence, promoting intrinsic motivation (Gagné, Deci, & Ryan, 2018).

By highlighting effort and perseverance through positive affirmations, the teacher in the video contributes to shaping a mindset that views learning as a continuous and developmental process. Phrases such as "You're very strong" communicate the importance of personal effort and resilience, fostering a sense of competence in children. This approach is in line with SDT, as it addresses the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, crucial for sustaining intrinsic motivation.

Moreover, this approach encourages the cultivation of a growth mindset among children. A growth mindset involves perceiving challenges as opportunities for learning and embracing the idea that abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work (Gagné, Deci, & Ryan, 2018). By praising efforts and perseverance, the teacher helps diminish the fear of trying new things, creating a positive and supportive learning environment that promotes a spirit of exploration.

Enhancing...

In essence, the utilization of positive affirmations that highlight effort and perseverance, as observed in the phrases "You're very strong" and "Little jumps," resonates with the Self-Determination Theory. This approach not only addresses the psychological needs outlined by SDT but also contributes to fostering intrinsic motivation, promoting a growth mindset, and cultivating a positive attitude towards learning.

Stress Reduction: The notion of stress reduction finds resonance in the Social Cognitive Theory, postulated by Albert Bandura, which posits that individuals acquire knowledge by observing others. Within the framework of a positive learning environment influenced by praise, stress is effectively minimized (Bandura, 1999). The phrases like "Very nice to meet you" in the observed teaching methods contribute to establishing an environment where children feel at ease, fostering a climate conducive to learning (Butterfield, 2018).

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the importance of observational learning and the impact of the environment on an individual's behavior. In the context of the observed positive affirmations, creating a low-stress atmosphere is a key aspect. When children receive positive recognition for their efforts, as conveyed through phrases like "Very nice to meet you," they are more likely to perceive the learning environment as supportive and encouraging.

The positive atmosphere cultivated by praise becomes a crucial factor in stress reduction. Children tend to be more comfortable and open to learning when they feel that their efforts are acknowledged and valued. By fostering an environment where positive reinforcement is a norm, stress associated with learning is mitigated, allowing children to engage more effectively in the learning process.

The principles of the Social Cognitive Theory, as applied to the observed positive affirmations, highlight the role of a positive learning environment in stress reduction. The phrase "Very nice to meet you" serves as an example of how such positive expressions contribute to creating an atmosphere where children feel comfortable, supported, and, consequently, less stressed.

Enhancing Emotional Well-being: The concept of enhancing emotional well-being aligns with the Positive Psychology framework, which asserts that positive emotions play a vital role in contributing to overall psychological well-being. In the

context of the observed positive affirmations, frequent expressions of positive praise, such as "Thank you" and "Yay," are indicative of an environment that fosters positive emotions in children. According to Csikszentmihalyi, Seligman, & Csikszentmihalyi, (2014), this emphasis on positive emotions has a direct correlation with improved emotional well-being.

In practical terms, phrases like "Thank you" convey appreciation and acknowledgment, creating positive emotional experiences for children. These positive emotions, when consistently reinforced through praise, contribute to a more positive mood and emotional state. By integrating such positive expressions into the learning environment, the overall emotional well-being of children is enhanced.

Furthermore, the link between positive emotions and reduced stress levels is evident in the observed teaching methods. When children feel appreciated and valued through expressions like "Yay," stress associated with learning is likely to diminish. This positive emotional state not only creates a conducive learning atmosphere but also contributes to a sense of security and support.

The findings support the Positive Psychology framework, illustrating how frequent positive praise, exemplified by phrases like "Thank you" and "Yay," enhances emotional well-being in children. This positive emotional state, in turn, reduces stress levels and fosters an overall positive and supportive learning atmosphere.

In conclusion, the research findings not only align with these fundamental psychological theories but also provide tangible examples from the video, demonstrating how praise, when employed effectively, can enhance motivation, build confidence, provide positive feedback, and strengthen emotional bonds in the context of children's learning.

CONCLUSION

The research emphasizes the crucial role of positive reinforcement, particularly through praise and positive words, in creating an engaging learning environment for young language learners. Inspired by the Self-Determination Theory and Social Cognitive Development, the study explores a popular YouTube video's instructional context, highlighting the transformative impact of positive language.

Enhancing...

Findings indicate that positive words play diverse roles, encouraging engagement, promoting emotional well-being, and reinforcing positive behavior. The nuanced analysis reveals how positive language contributes to a conducive atmosphere, leaving lasting impressions on learners. The research not only provides valuable insights into effective language teaching but also addresses a gap in examining positive words used by English language teachers online.

Recommendations for English Language Teachers include mindful use of positive language, emphasizing effort and growth, diversifying positive expressions, providing contextualized positive feedback, and engaging in professional development. In conclusion, the research underscores the power of positive language in shaping a positive educational journey, enabling teachers to foster enthusiasm, engagement, and a lifelong love for learning among their students.

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