

ClassPoint Application for Enhancing Motivation in Communication among ESL Young Learners

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Abstract

Teachers and students have been exposed to an influx of educational technology in the classroom since the outbreak of COVID-19. Young students require constant stimulation, especially when learning English; otherwise, they will lose interest. The ClassPoint application (hereafter referred to as the app) is an interactive learning tool that can be tailored to the needs of individual students. This research examines how the ClassPoint app motivates students of English as a Second Language to learn English. This research employed a mixed-method design with a sample of thirty-five Year 3 primary students. They responded to a 15-item questionnaire prior to the implementation of the app, and researchers completed an observation checklist during the implementation. Ten students were randomly selected to participate in a semi-structured interview following the app's performance. The data were then analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings identified several reasons why Year 3 students struggle to learn English, such as a lack of motivation towards the language and ineffective teaching strategies.

The ClassPoint app also increased students' engagement and motivation to learn English. Students were more engaged in learning English when the ClassPoint app was utilised. Results indicate that interactive teaching and learning methods increase second-language acquisition motivation among students.

Keywords: ESL young learners, challenges in learning the English language, ClassPoint application, motivation

1. Introduction

English is one of the most common languages worldwide. Statista Research Department (2023) analyzed that in 2022, around 1.5 billion people worldwide spoke English either natively or as a second language, slightly more than the second most common language, Mandarin Chinese, with 1.1 billion speakers. 67 nations and 27 non-sovereign organizations recognize English as at least one of their official languages. On the other hand, English is spoken in many countries where it is not an official language (Assi, 2022). Taken together, English could be considered the world's lingua franca. According to Ilyosovna (2020), English is the most common language online, with nearly 1 billion users. Consequently, if people can read and comprehend English, they will have a far richer online experience, keep up with global news, and participate in community discussions (Farasahiyen & Tan, 2012).

In Malaysia, English is regarded as a second language, and most study it in the classroom. Students must pass a written English test as part of the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia examination to continue their studies at the tertiary level. Moreover, most book references are in English at the tertiary level. For non-native speakers to reach their full potential as future professionals, they must learn English as part of their formal education. After the COVID-19 pandemic began, pupils were exposed to numerous educational technologies and activities during online learning, so reverting to traditional chalk-and-talk classes makes lessons less engaging.

Learning English as a second language can be challenging for people who are unfamiliar with it. Technology presents an easier way to acquire language (Tan et al., 2022). Using technology often helps in teaching English. It should be done in two ways, interactive and meaningful learning to improve English language acquisition, especially for young learners. Therefore this study investigated how the ClassPoint app can improve young learners' motivations to learn English as a second language. Two research questions guide the study:

1. Does motivation affect Year 3 pupils' difficulties when studying English as a second language?
2. How does the ClassPoint application help increase young learners' motivation to learn English as a second language?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teaching English as a Second Language to Young Learners

English as a Second Language (ESL) is a term that describes when people from a nation where English is not the primary language learn English as a second language ("Oxford Learners' Dictionary," n.d.). Kırkgöz (2018) classifies young learners as children ages 3-12. Given its status as the globe's de facto international language, English is impossible to ignore (Nishanti, 2018). People worldwide view learning and using English as necessary; thus, it is taught extensively (Zoubi, 2018).

English is Malaysia's second language and is utilized professionally and socially. However, many Malaysians do not achieve average or higher proficiency in English. In the 2019 Malaysian EF English Proficiency Index, Malaysia was ranked 28th out of 100 nations and had a high rating (Lim, 2019). However, by 2020, Malaysia had dropped to the 30th rank, and its rating had shifted to moderate. According to Ujang (2019), Professor Michael Woolcock notes that the Malaysian education system does not support lower SES learners. He further reports that 51% of the lower class in Malaysia could not understand manuals due to their lack of proficiency in English (Ujang, 2019).

The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (2013) requires students to pass the Malaysian education system's English proficiency test to address this problem. All pupils must demonstrate proficiency in all four areas of the language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Further, they are expected to achieve, at a minimum, the basic level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), A2. Muñoz and Cardieno (2021) argue that pupils should be exposed to and provided opportunities to utilize the language. Similarly, Wood (2022) states that a learner has the highest chance of attaining proficiency similar to that of a native speaker if they begin studying a new language before age 10.

2.2 Challenges in English Language Learning

Since English is a second language in Malaysia, ESL learners confront several problems when learning the language. The first problem is vocabulary acquisition, critical for developing language abilities. Teachers should help students develop their vocabulary knowledge to help them acquire language skills (Afzal, 2019). Students will have difficulty progressing toward fluency without a solid knowledge of the language's foundational words.

Language acquisition of the mother tongue begins at birth. There is a strong pull toward one's mother language that is difficult to overcome and contributes to a sense of inferiority among learners. As a result, non-native speakers may struggle to hold meaningful conversations. When learning a new language, a person's natural propensity is translating everything from the first to the target language. Learners solely use their mother tongue while communicating and translate the target language through that lens (Debio, Ablisha & Iankumaran, 2018).

Young learners are more active, have shorter attention, and acquire the language based on teachers' instructional methods. They deeply connect to their environment and prioritize experiencing the world hands-on. Therefore, it is essential to include many visually appealing images, toys, puppets, or things to keep children interested in the activity (Kholmurodova & Sokhiba, 2021).

2.3 ClassPoint Application as Educational Tools

Inknoe, a software development company, created the ClassPoint application in 2015 ("Classpoint," n.d.). It is an add-on for Microsoft PowerPoint that combines an interactive whiteboard and a classroom quiz tool into one convenient package. It can also quickly turn PowerPoint presentations into interactive quizzes, deliver quizzes in class, gather live student replies, score quizzes, and store results without requiring the user to switch to other tabs. Educators can also annotate slides with comments and add as many whiteboards as they like while viewing presentations. Students may utilize their mobile devices or personal computers to take tests and follow the teacher's PowerPoint presentation. They can do so by accessing the website (<http://classpoint.app>), providing the class code, and creating a username. The app promotes involvement, allowing students to demonstrate what they have learned (Bong, 2021).

2.4 Motivation in Language Learning

In language learning, motivation is the interplay between a desire to learn and a positive belief about one's ability (Ulfa & Bania, 2019). Accordingly, a person's desire to learn and enjoy English indicates their motivation to study the language. Engaging students actively in classroom activities is a vital component of any effective teaching-learning strategy (Filgona et al. 2020). Positive and negative outcomes should be the emphasis of English-learning incentives (Azar & Tanggaraju 2020).

The current study emphasizes that implicit motivation is the primary driving force behind English language acquisition among Malaysians, which may be classified as intellectual or practical. The motivation to learn encompasses more than just the will to learn. Motivation is related to the student's mental exertions in the learning process. Accordingly, teachers must develop new ways to inspire students to learn. For example, teachers may help students identify the benefits of language learning, such as interacting with people from other backgrounds, enjoying the learning process, and progressing on their integrative objectives (Zhang et al., 2020).

3. Methodology

This study used an integrated, mixed-method approach to data collection and analysis. This study lasted one month. Convenience sampling was used to choose participants from a population of students whose English proficiency ranged from low to intermediate. The sample comprised 35 students from a Malaysian primary school in Year 3. Few pupils could communicate effectively in English without the help of their teachers. During English lessons, they were somewhat sedentary and rarely spoke. They showed no signs of wanting to

use English in their interactions with the researchers.

The primary research instrument was a questionnaire with 15 items, all on a three-point Likert scale. Respondents checked the box next to the suitable response. Researchers from Yahya (2012) and SILL; Oxford (1990) developed and adapted the questionnaire to identify challenges in learning English. Items covered were questions and answers. This type of questionnaire allows students to answer truthfully. Participants who had trouble comprehending the questionnaire were given additional verbal explanations by the researcher, who translated the questions into their native languages. After data collection, a multi-step data analysis procedure was performed. The researcher used the percentage to synthesize the questionnaire data and acquire statistical analysis information.

During the app’s implementation, the researcher utilized an observation checklist with four indicators and nine behavioral indicators, which were developed and adapted by Setiawan and Wiedarti (2020) to determine the factors that could help pupils’ engagement and motivation in learning English.

The semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, where the researcher identified several primary themes from the students' comments. A triangulation approach was employed to address both study questions. Triangulation allows the researchers to answer the research questions more accurately and precisely.

4. Findings

4.1 Does Motivation Play a Role in Year 3 Pupils’ Difficulties When Studying English as a Second Language?

Table 1. The challenges faced by Year 3 ESL pupils

No	Question	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Total	Percentage Score
1.	There are grades for classroom participation. (Q12)	0	0	35	35	100
2.	Sometimes, I do not have the motivation to learn the English language. (Q10)	2	3	30	35	85.71
3.	The teaching aids in my English class are not motivating. (Q14)	0	8	27	35	77.14
4.	I feel uneasy and lack confidence when I speak English. (Q7)	6	5	24	35	68.57
5.	Writing is a major problem for me. (Q4)	4	8	23	35	65.71
6.	I am forced to learn English by the people around me. (Q8)	9	6	20	35	57.14
7.	The economic situation of my family does not help me learn English. (Q9)	10	5	20	35	57.14
8.	Reading and understanding English texts are not easy. (Q6)	6	10	19	35	54.29
9.	English speaking skill is difficult for me. (Q3)	7	10	18	35	51.43
10.	My English vocabulary is limited. (Q1)	11	8	16	35	45.71
11.	Pronunciation of words in English is difficult. (Q5)	8	12	15	35	42.86
12.	My teacher encourages me to participate. (Q11)	12	10	13	35	37.14
13.	English language listening skills are a challenge for me. (Q2)	15	7	13	35	37.14
14.	The language activities encourage communicating in English. (Q15)	20	3	12	35	34.29
15.	My teacher is helpful in solving my academic difficulties. (Q13)	10	15	10	35	28.57
					Total	842.84 / 15

Average of Percentage(s) Score: 56.19%

Table 1 above shows 15 items intended to measure the challenges faced by the Year 3 ESL pupils, arranged from highest to lowest percentage scores. The highest-scored item was “There are grades for classroom participation” (Q12), and the lowest-scored item was “Sometimes, I do not have the motivation to learn the English language” (Q10). These results indicate that students strongly agreed that their motivation to learn was their most significant challenge in learning English as a second language. Responses indicated that the knowledge that lessons would be graded was related to lower motivation.

The third and fourth items, “The teaching aids in my English class are not motivating” (Q14) and “I feel uneasy and lack confidence when I speak English” (Q7), also strongly influenced pupils’ motivation for English learning and interest in English as a subject. The low score for the last item in the list, “My teacher is helpful in solving my academic difficulties” (Q13), indicated that the teacher was not always helpful to them in class. The balanced votes between the “disagree” and “agree” indicated that the teacher might help some pupils but not others. Fifteen students were unsure whether they got help from the teacher during classes. This discrepancy also affected the pupils' motivation toward learning English.

4.2 How Does the ClassPoint Application Help Increase Young Learners' Motivation to Learn English as a Second Language?

Table 2. The observation checklist used during the implementation of ClassPoint

No	Indicators	Observed Aspects	Yes	No
1.	Actively engaging	Participants pay attention in class when teachers present using the ClassPoint application.	35	0
		Participants focus during question-and-answer sessions.	27	8
2.	Have a passion for learning.	Show interest in learning English skills using the ClassPoint application.	35	0
		Participants memorize the spelling of the words shown on the ClassPoint application.	26	9
		Participants compete with their friends on who can answer the questions faster using the ClassPoint application.	35	0
3.	Joyful Learning	Participants show positive emotion when completing the task in the ClassPoint application.	30	5
4.	Social interacting	Participants are enthusiastic when the teacher uses the ClassPoint application.	35	0
		Participants prefer to work alone (Do not want to share devices) when using ClassPoint App.	10	25
		Participants actively work together with friends when answering questions using ClassPoint App.	25	10

Table 2 above shows the summarized results of the observation checklist. All the indicators are related to the research questions. More than half of the class was actively engaged when the ClassPoint application was implemented, and they showed a passion for learning English. Due to the use of computers and educational tools, students also showed enthusiastic responses and effort when answering the questions. Only ten pupils preferred working alone, while the others worked with their friends.

Table 3. Themes from the interview about the ClassPoint application

No	Theme	Excerpt	Frequency
1.	Learning Convenience	Click the code and enter	7
		Very fast	10
2.	ICT Skill	Can use computer and handphone	10
		I can learn how to use the computer	9
		I can type faster when the teacher uses a timer	6
3.	English Language Acquisition	Lots of pictures and interesting	8
		Easy to memorize	10
		I can write and spell correctly when the teacher asks on the day that we did not go to the computer lab	7
4.	Motivation	I want to get all my answers correct	9
		Competition to answer with friends	9
		I don't feel afraid to answer the questions	10
		I like to see our marks on the screen	7

Table 4.2.2 shows several themes from the pupils' answers during the semi-structured interview. Most pupils positively responded to the themes identified by the interviews after implementing the ClassPoint app. Therefore, students believed the ClassPoint app promoted ICT skills, English language acquisition, learning convenience, and motivation. There was a significant improvement in English language acquisition among pupils. The pupils who used this tool were aware of their learning because they produced more coherent texts. After the ClassPoint app's administration, most pupils were more engaged and motivated when learning English. However, a notable limitation of the ClassPoint app was that students required several training sessions before the app was used during lessons.

5. Discussion

The present mixed-method study investigated how the ClassPoint app helped to increase young learners' motivation to learn English as a second language. Three instruments were used in the data collection to answer two research questions: (1) Does motivation play a role in the difficulties that year three pupils confront when studying English as a second language? Moreover, (2) How does the ClassPoint application help increase young learners' motivation to learn English as a second language?

The findings above indicated that motivation significantly influenced pupils' interest in learning English. The pupils were aware that English was required and graded daily by teachers. Narinasamy and Nordin (2018) mention that teachers recorded students' mastery levels in a template assessment, and then analyzed mastery levels based on the rubric descriptions provided. This process pressured students to accept English language learning.

The lack of motivation to learn English and the teachers' instructional tools influenced the motivation of the Year 3 pupils to learn English. It can also come from a series of lessons with the same activity types in the same order. Therefore, teachers must determine their students' motivation early to maximize their success in learning a second language (Imsa-ard, 2020). Pupils can be motivated in the classroom through positive reinforcement, games, activities, a wide range of instructional approaches, the teacher's passion for the subject, and a rewards system.

In the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015 – 2025, The Ministry of Education (2013) states that by the end of Year 6 of primary school, pupils must achieve at least an A2 in the English language. As part of a 10-year reform plan to enhance English language education in Malaysia, the Ministry of Education has urged swift action to equip students with the information and skills (including English proficiency) they will need to succeed as global citizens in the 21st century (Mohd Don & Abdullah, 2019).

According to Parlindungan (2019), the social and cultural context in which a child grows up profoundly impacts the ability to read and write. ClassPoint is an interactive application that teachers and pupils can utilize in the classroom. Technology use in the classroom can significantly improve student engagement and retention (Yang, Wen, & Qi, 2020). The accessibility of the materials developed enabled the pupils to be more engaged and interact with the lesson thoroughly. Every pupil dreamed of an entertaining and joyful learning experience. Based on the results above, the ClassPoint application helped pupils acquire the English language, including ICT skills, acquisition, and motivation, partly because of the app's convenience. Combining questions and visual aids make lessons more enjoyable and accessible to low-achieving students (Hong & Nguyen, 2019), resulting in increased engagement.

Taber and Li (2020) note that a virtual learning environment allows ready access to various instructional tools, including many that teachers and students can modify in real time. As one of these tools, the ClassPoint app promotes general understanding, fosters critical thinking, and improves English language proficiency. Abdelrady and Akram (2022) found that using ClassPoint in the classroom boosted EFL learners' contentment with their education.

Modern technology pushes pupils to study English practically and realistically (Alqahtani, 2019). The results indicated that the ClassPoint app improved pupils' motivation to learn English. They felt comfortable studying and learning how to use new words (Gurgenidze, 2018). This activity encouraged pupils' interest, motivation, and attention because ClassPoint differs from the usual instructional method. With ClassPoint, students developed all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), especially for those with a low proficiency level in English. Therefore, the ClassPoint application can help young learners develop their English skills once they know how to use it.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the ClassPoint app increases the motivation of young language learners to study English as a second language. According to the findings, incorporating ClassPoint tool activities into the ESL learning environment significantly increased students' motivation to learn English. ClassPoint is a valuable tool that should be implemented at all educational levels to improve students' learning experiences by increasing their engagement with the learning process. Regarding implementation, governing bodies should hold workshops or seminars on utilising ClassPoint technology to its full potential. Primary school teachers should also embrace new instructional tools to assist young students in acquiring English as a second language.

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