

## An Exploration of Young Learners' Motivation Level inLight of TEYL Principles: Private vs. Public Schools in Sialkot

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### Abstract

*This study explores the young learners' motivation level in light of TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners) principles in Sialkot public and private schools. This study uses the qualitative descriptive research methodology, and data is collected through semi-structured interviews with the teachers serving in public and private schools. Understanding young learners involves comprehensively investigating student development, education, and well-being. This exploration encompasses a range of interdisciplinary perspectives, including educational psychology, early childhood development, pedagogy, and socio-cultural factors. Researchers delve into young learners' cognitive, emotional, social, and physical dimensions to understand their learning processes, needs, and experiences. Additionally, exploring young learners involves examining effective teaching strategies, curriculum design, assessment methods, and classroom environments that promote optimal learning outcomes for children. The motivation level of students in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) classrooms is influenced by applying TEYL principles, which prioritize creating engaging, interactive, and developmentally appropriate learning environments. By incorporating principles such as meaningful context, active participation, and play-based activities, TEYL educators can foster intrinsic motivation among young learners. The teachers from both sectors highlighted the factors, strategies and challenges they encountered while teaching. They also pinpointed some disparities in the motivation levels of the young learners stemming from their environment. Moreover, they emphasized the use of technology for employing TEYL principles and the governing bodies' role to resolve the disparities, uplift the school environment and provide the resources to dispel these disparities in the motivational levels of the young learners. This study finds out that for the implementation of TEYL principles, the "Rewards", "Interactive Classrooms", and "Use of Audio-Visual Aids" play a significant role in uplifting the motivation level of young learners in both public and private schools in Sialkot.*

**Keywords:** Motivation; Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL); Private Schools; Public Schools; Language Acquisition; Classroom Practices, Sialkot, Pakistan.

### Introduction

Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) represents a dynamic and multifaceted area within the field of language education. It caters to the linguistic and developmental needs of children between the ages of 5 and 12. This specialized teaching domain goes beyond mere language instruction, intertwining pedagogical strategies, psychological understanding, and cultural awareness to foster an effective and engaging learning environment for young students. At the core of TEYL is the recognition of the unique ways in which young learners acquire a new

language. Children are more receptive to language learning through play, stories, songs, and interactive activities than adolescents and adults. This intrinsic capacity for language learning suggests that TEYL must be designed to capitalize on these natural inclinations, offering an educational but also enjoyable and engaging curriculum. Teachers in this field are tasked with the crucial role of facilitating a positive first encounter with the English language, which can significantly influence the learners' attitude towards success in future language learning endeavours. Ahmed et al. (2015) and Kakar&Pathan (2017) have observed that Pakistani learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) do not gain the desired proficiency in the language despite investing considerable effort.

### Activity-Based Approach



Figure.1 The framework of the
   
 curriculum for both level 1 and level 2
   
 (Wang, 2002, p. 100)

Figure 1 illustrates that while the fundamental requirement does not prescribe specific methods for teaching young learners, it emphasizes an activities-based approach. This approach involves listening, speaking, singing, playing, acting, and hands-on experiences to immerse children in language learning. The learning process is intended to be enjoyable and fulfilling for children, focusing on experiential learning. Assessment aims to enhance pupils' overall development, with formative assessment and portfolios being preferred methods for evaluating English proficiency. Consequently, communicative language teaching (CLT) has emerged as the predominant approach for teaching young learners in the context of advocating English instruction reforms. CLT was introduced to foreign language teaching in China in the late 1980s and shares similarities with Total Physical Response (TPR), as noted by Asher (1972). While the national curriculum supports teaching based on the rationale of CLT/TPR, various contextual factors impact the implementation of these approaches. In some cases, the application of CLT/TPR does not fully align with the goals of English language learning outlined in the curriculum documentation.

### Aim of the Study

This study analyzes the motivation level of young learners triggered by effective teaching strategies, such as Repetition and Reinforcement, Storytelling, Engagement, Interactive Learning through Games and Group Activities, and Contextual Learning.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To gauge teachers' perceptions of motivation levels among young English learners in public and private schools.
2. To explore the implementation of TEYL principles through the lens of teachers in public and private school settings in Sialkot.
3. To scrutinize teachers' insights into potential motivation level disparities between public and private school students.

### Research Questions

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the motivation levels among young English learners in public and private schools in Sialkot?
2. How do teachers discern how to apply TEYL principles in public and private school environments in Sialkot?
3. What insights do teachers provide about the nature of motivational variations between the students attending public and private schools in Sialkot?

### Significance of the Study

The study "Young Learners' Motivation Level in Light of TEYL Principles: Private vs. Public Schools in Sialkot" carries significant importance within the educational context of Sialkot, Pakistan. Motivation plays a pivotal role in shaping students' learning outcomes and experiences, particularly in the context of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). By examining the motivation levels of young learners in private and public schools, this study sheds light on the effectiveness of TEYL principles in fostering enthusiasm in English language learning. Understanding the differences in motivation levels between students in private and public schools can provide valuable insights into the impact of varying educational environments, resources, and teaching methodologies on student engagement.

### Literature Review

Hussain & Farid (2013) highlight that in Pakistan, lowering the age for compulsory English language teaching has created opportunities and challenges at the same time. It may be hard for young learners to learn a foreign language at an early age, but they also have the opportunity to enhance global communication in the long run and learn more through increased exposure. There is another apprehension about lowering the age of compulsory English that it the survival of the mother tongue may be at risk, which may cause loss of language and death of roots of many social and cultural identities. Keeping this in view, teacher training programs are required to adopt English language teaching at a very young age successfully. In the educational policy landscape, sustainable language and culture preservation remain a question to ponder, reflect and research. Hussain (2016) discusses that in Pakistan, promoting English learning at a young age is not without its impact on acquiring language, behavioural development and values from decades and centuries. It has the consequences for teacher motivation and learner motivation.

Hussain (2018) studied motivating adult learners to learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL), which may open an avenue for learning and earning at multiple global forums and platforms. Literature indicates that adult EFL learners may face many internal and external barriers, including professional goals, promotion of culture, socio-economic conditions, and

rapport in other countries. There is also pressure on adults to be proficient in the English language for advanced studies at the international level and to get a good job. This is not the case with the young learners as their motivation dynamics are quite different.

Ishtiaq et al. (2020) highlight a very important point that promoting the English language may result in a loss of historical knowledge in the mother tongue. Many factors motivate learners to learn the English language at young and adult ages, including personal and socio-economic factors that deeply impact personality development and professional achievements. There will be serious concerns about second language motivation pros and cons, and training for teachers and instructors, and policies and programs to keep things in balance.

Motivation plays a crucial role in learning, particularly in the context of English language acquisition at the primary level, where its significance is heightened. To boost motivation levels among young learners, teachers in both public and private sectors can adopt and implement Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) principles. However, various scholars have provided distinct definitions of motivation and TEYL principles. Motivation drives the behaviour, influencing individuals to engage in or refrain from certain actions (Alizadeh, 2016). Additionally, Tambunan & Siregar (2016) highlight a positive correlation between motivation and educational achievements, as evidenced by grade point averages across all levels of schooling from elementary to college.

Lai (2011) emphasizes that rewards play a significant role in influencing students' motivation, as they can either enhance or diminish motivation depending on the type of rewards and the context in which they are provided. Teachers should encourage students to have more autonomy and control over their learning process to foster motivation. Creating a supportive classroom environment that values context, connection, and external evaluation is essential. Similarly, holistic activities in young learners' classrooms have positively impacted language learning and motivation (Sue & Serdar, 2022). Despite the widespread adoption of English in primary schools since the late 1990s, there still needs to be more research in the field of teaching English to young learners, as highlighted by Sue & Serdar (2022).

TEYL is increasingly prioritized by governments worldwide and is possibly currently one of the world's largest educational policy developments. As Cameron (2003) has observed, all those involved in TESOL must take this phenomenon seriously. Sarah (2014) points out that although our understanding of TEYL is steadily growing, there is still much to be achieved – not only in describing the complexities and local realities faced by young English learner educators in their work around the globe but also in identifying emerging agendas for enhancing the development of this important facet of language learning. Moreover, some researchers have concluded that young learners are more likely to attain native-like pronunciation (Scovel, 1988), greater confidence in speaking the language, and better oral proficiency (Harley, 1998). Different scholars have described principles regarding Young Learners (YLS):

Timmons & Corter (2016) discuss that children's development is closely intertwined with the study of young learners' progress in learning. According to Copland & Garton (2014), teachers must have a solid comprehension of children's social and cognitive development and a thorough understanding of second language acquisition theories to facilitate effective learning. They emphasize that a child's capabilities and needs evolve significantly as they grow older; therefore, classroom strategies that are appropriate for older children may not be suitable for

younger ones. This underscores the importance of tailoring teaching approaches to align with the developmental stage of each child.

### Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design, suitable for describing and analyzing the results without making broader conclusions. This design aligns with the study's objective of exploring and understanding natural phenomena. Semi-structured interviews conducted with participants served as the primary data collection method. Semi-structured interviews administered in this study blended structured and unstructured elements, offering a flexible approach to gathering information. Researchers prepared a set of predetermined questions while allowing room for follow-up inquiries based on participants' responses.

This approach encouraged a conversational and exploratory dialogue, facilitating a deeper exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and perceptions. By capturing rich narratives and contextual details, semi-structured interviews provided the researchers a holistic understanding of the research topic and uncover nuanced insights that may not emerge through standardized interview formats. As there were three objectives of the study, every objective helped craft three questions (interview items), making nine items in total.

The data for this research was collected from teachers serving in public and private schools: three from the public sector and three from the private sector. They were asked some questions according to the research objectives, i.e. to gauge teachers' perceptions related to the motivation of young English learners, to explore the implementation of the TEYL principles in public and private school settings and to scrutinize the potential disparities in young learners' motivation levels enrolled in public and private schools. The data is analyzed descriptively by comparing and contrasting the responses collected from the sample (teachers from public and private schools).

### Data Collection, Data Description and Interpretation: Results and Findings

The data was collected through semi-structured online interviews with six teachers, three from government sector teachers (GSTs) and three from private sector teachers (PSTs). They were asked nine questions in total in light of the research objectives of this study. Moreover, their responses were recorded, transcribed and used for analysis.

The researchers asked the respondents about the **factors** which influence the motivation level of young learners. The responses by the teachers reveal that both (GST and PST) teachers serving in public and private schools are of the view that the **“Rewards”, “grouping”, “interactive and positive learning activities”, and “Parents, teachers and peers’ involvement”** enhances the motivation level of the young English learners (This aligns with Lai, 2011). Similarly, when it was asked what effective strategies were adopted by the teachers and were found effective in surging motivation level of the young learners, the GSTs and PSTs endorsed using **“Audio-Visual aids”, “Gestures”, “Quoting Practical Examples”, Use of Multi-Colored Charts and Markers”** last but not the least, **“to draw grammar portions on the board by using different markers”**, so that the students can better comprehend the ideas. In addition, when the teachers were asked about the **challenges** they encountered while teaching young learners, they highlighted **poor background and confidence-related issues**, especially



with the public sector students, **lack of resources** and **language barriers** that ultimately halted the cognitive development of the young learners and demotivated them.

Further, to explore **the implementation of TEYL principles**, they were asked about the **approaches** they employed and **adapted** while teaching. They responded by emphasizing **using sound and spelling learning activities, including poems and songs, targeting the phonetics technique, and hitting the oral practices**, which helped learn **sentence structure** and ultimately develop **creative writing skills**. Additionally, they highlighted the importance of the **role played by authorities and governing bodies in coping with the lack of resources** regarding implementing TEYL principles, especially in public schools. In this way, they can perform better, and the young learners' interest is developed in learning activities.

As far as the **factors** contributing to the **potential disparities in motivation levels** between students attending public and private schools are concerned, they pinpointed many factors such as **lack of discipline and proper planning, low punctuality, less work on lesson plans, conventional way of teaching, less extra-curricular activities and a major focus on the syllabus completion in the public schools**. While in the **private sector**, it was highlighted that along with some other factors, the **strong family background and the interest developed by the parents play a positive role in increasing the motivation level of the young learners**. On the other hand, **students in public schools belong to poor backgrounds where parents show the least interest** in the development of the motivation level of their children. When the respondents were asked about any **similarities** between the young learners attending public and private schools, **teachers from both sectors disagreed**, emphasizing that there were no similarities between them.

## Findings

This study, in light of the first research question, "What are teachers' perceptions with respect to the motivation levels among young English learners in public and private schools in Sialkot?" finds that **"Rewards", "Interactive Classrooms", and "Use of Audio-Visual Aids"** play a significant role in uplifting the motivation level of the young learners in public and private schools in Sialkot.

Secondly, it is explored in light of the second research question, i.e., "How do teachers discern the application of TEYL principles in the environment of public and private schools in Sialkot?" that the government school teachers (GSTs) highlight similar challenges in motivating young learners in public schools, e.g., **language barriers, poor background, and lack of resources**.

Thirdly, in light of the third research question, "What insights do teachers provide in relation to the nature of motivational variations between the students attending public and private schools in Sialkot?" **motivational variations** exist between the young learners of both public and private schools in Sialkot. However, there exist **no similarities** in the motivation levels of young learners attending public and private schools in Sialkot.

## Conclusion and Recommendations:

In conclusion, this study talks about the motivation levels of young learners, and here, the researchers have tried to explore the teachers' responses from public and private schools. The

study aimed to analyze the motivation level of the young learners, triggered by effective teaching strategies, i.e. Repetition and Reinforcement, Storytelling, Engagement, Interactive Learning through Games, Group Activities, and Contextualized Learning. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted, which provided the researchers with information on many factors that contribute to motivating and demotivating young learners in public and private school settings. Moreover, the teachers adopt different strategies and approaches such as storytelling, songs, poems, and positive reinforcement using audio-visual aids, coloured markers and charts to develop their students' interest and motivate them positively. However, they also encounter some challenges, such as language barriers and low-income family background, especially in the case of public schools, which halt the students' cognitive development. There is also a lack of resources and the difference in environment in both settings, which increase the disparities.

The respondents did not highlight similarities between the young learners of public and private schools in Sialkot. This study points out that more teacher training programs are needed to enhance the incorporation of TEYL principles during the teaching process. Furthermore, the role of governing authorities is also significant in implementing these principles. The governing bodies should also come forward to resolve the disparities between the public and private sectors by providing resources and a healthy environment, especially in the public sector. Revising the curriculum according to the needs of the young learners should be the top priority. Although the SNC (single national curriculum) is a praiseworthy initiative taken by the government of Pakistan, more efforts are required to remove these disparities.

**The following are the key recommendations in light of the participants' responses:**

- a. Teachers instructing young learners must complete pre-service teaching training courses to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge. Employing untrained teachers is compromising the quality of education and adversely affecting students' futures.
- b. Salaries for school teachers should be higher than those of college teachers to acknowledge the significant effort and dedication required in primary and secondary education. Recognizing the demanding nature of teaching young learners warrants appropriate compensation.
- c. Efforts should be made to address disparities between private and government schooling systems to ensure equitable access to quality education for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background.
- d. Teachers of young learners should be encouraged and supported to employ innovative and varied teaching approaches, considering their students' cognitive and psychological development. Proper planning of teaching strategies is crucial to effectively engaging young learners in learning.
- e. Teachers instructing young learners should minimize the use of grammar translation method (GTM) and lecture-based teaching, opting instead for interactive and engaging methods to foster a positive learning environment.
- f. Using audio-visual aids is essential in teaching young learners to accommodate their limited attention spans and enhance learning retention. Incorporating

multimedia resources can help reinforce linguistic concepts in a stimulating and engaging manner.

- g. Maintaining small class sizes for young learners allows teachers to provide individualized attention and support, facilitating optimal learning outcomes. This personalized approach helps address each student's diverse needs and abilities in the classroom.

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