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Improving Students' Motivation in English Learning Through Positive Reinforcement

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Abstract: This action research was aimed at improving students' motivation in English learning through positive reinforcement at SMK Prima Mandiri Sejahtera Makassar for the eleventh grade in the academic year of 2022/2023. This research was action research and consisted of two cycles in three meetings. The participants of this research were the eleventh-grade students of SMK Prima Mandiri Sejahtera Makassar in the academic year 2022/2023. The participants consisted of 20 students. The procedures of this research were planning, action, observation, and reflection. The techniques for collecting data were questionnaires, observations, and interviews. In analyzing the data, the researcher did three steps: organizing the data, coding and reducing data, and interpreting data. The validity of the data was obtained by applying democratic validity, outcomes validity, process validity, catalytic validity, and dialogic validity. The reliability of the data was obtained by using time triangulation.

The use of positive reinforcement in this study successfully improved the students' motivation. The improvement in student motivation can be seen in enthusiasm, excitement, interest in learning, and curiosity in English learning. The students who were classified as students with low motivation successfully improved their motivation after implementing verbal and non-verbal positive reinforcement. The improvement could be seen from the observation during the process of the action, interview, and the result of the questionnaire. It can be concluded that positive reinforcement can improve students' motivation in English learning.

Keywords: Positive Reinforcement, Students' Motivation.

1.   Introduction

Learning motivation is significant for every student in the teaching and learning process because learning motivation can promote and maintain learning activities that have been conducted as internal strength. According to Long et al. (2013), motivation in learning will be formed in students with an active learning attitude, showing a strong desire to learn, and being able to concentrate in class to understand knowledge. However, students will face challenges due to a lack of adequate motivation, and it is easier for students to learn effectively if they have a desire or motivation to learn.

Motivation also influences student's learning outcomes in the learning process. According to Harmer (2001), two factors influence the process and student learning outcomes: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic factor

refers to the motivation to engage in an activity or students' ability. Meanwhile, extrinsic factors pertain to the deliberate activities undertaken to attain specific instrumental objectives; examples of potential incentives include the acquisition of a reward or the cessation of a punishment action. This relates to external factors that are beyond the control of the students themselves. Extrinsic motivation refers to behaviours driven by external factors when individuals engage in acts intending to attain specific outcomes, such as obtaining rewards or avoiding unfavourable consequences. (Covington & Müeller, 2001).

Besides that, the teacher is an extrinsic factor supporting student motivation. It is related to Syah (2016), who said that extrinsic factors include factors from outside students, such as the ability of teachers, learning atmosphere, learning facilities, learning methods used in the classroom, learning media used, school environment, etc. The notion that the teacher plays a crucial role in fostering student motivation and promoting active participation in the educational setting is generally recognised, underlining its significance in enhancing classroom performance and facilitating overall improvement (Williams in Rahmouni & Aleid, 2020). Therefore, the teacher must find strategies so students can be interested or more motivated in learning, especially in learning English.

Nevertheless, many students need more cognitive awareness regarding the underlying causes driving their behaviours. Occasionally, students may need more precise rationales and objectives for their engagement in the classroom setting. Saaed and Zynger (2012) said that students are only sometimes intrinsically motivated toward particular tasks. Therefore, students may need to be more efficient in their participation in learning activities because they lack strong motivation, which can affect their learning outcomes.

Towards this direction, in education and more notably in learning, providing stimuli or reinforcement to students is very important (Troussas et al., 2017) since it may be improved by giving students encouragement and advice, establishing students at the centre of the educational process, and encouraging students to pursue their studies. To optimise the efficacy of the learning process, it is imperative to sustain a heightened degree of motivation, as it serves as an essential stimulus for achieving achievement. The motivation of students can be enhanced by the implementation of positive reinforcement techniques during the teaching and learning process, hence fostering a greater inclination to engage in classroom activities actively. (Gaffar et al., 2022).

Regarding this, positive reinforcement is the key to positively impacting the student's motivation. According to Santrock (2011), positive reinforcement refers to the augmentation in the response frequency resulting from introducing rewarding stimuli. The provision of reinforcement by the teacher during the learning process can manifest in both verbal and nonverbal forms. As for what is meant by verbal reinforcement, it is, for example, in the form of praise such as good, nice, excellent, correct, awesome, and so on. Meanwhile, non-verbal reinforcement is reinforcement in the form of expressions with gestures, such as smiles, nods, thumbs up, or claps, which the teacher gives to students to remind them of learning motivation that is more active and independent.

Several studies have been conducted on the intensity and perception of positive reinforcement on the student's learning performance. The first study was conducted by Pertiwi (2019). It was found that the English teacher frequently employed a reinforcement approach during the instructional process. The teacher employed a specific approach to enhance student motivation and foster positive conduct. Reinforcement plays a crucial part in developing positive student behaviour and fostering motivation for learning. The second related study was conducted by Susila (2019). It was found that positive and negative reinforcement was used by the teachers in the teaching and learning process. Positive reinforcement, such as giving praise, stamps, rolled paper, etc., was most frequently used. Since teachers prefer to create a positive learning environment where students are eager to acquire something by doing an additional activity, negative reinforcement is rarely used. The third related study by Gaffar et al. (2022).

Based on the explanation from the previous research above, the previous research explores the perception of the students of positive reinforcement and the intensity of the teacher giving positive reinforcement to the students. In contrast, this research will apply all types of positive reinforcement, both verbally and nonverbally, to improve students' motivation. Therefore, this research will be titled "Improving Students' Motivation in English Learning through Positive Reinforcement."

1.2   LITERATURE REVIEW

1.2.1   Positive Reinforcement

Reinforcement is a procedural technique that provides a reward after exhibiting a desired behaviour to enhance the possibility of repeated behaviour in similar circumstances. This means that reinforcement is anything that is offered to enhance expected behaviour. It is also claimed that reinforcement is the presentation or removal of something immediately following a reaction or skill that improves the response (Camacho et al., 2019). The same response is expected to occur repeatedly when reinforcement is used.

Reinforcement or appreciation, in general, has a favourable impact on people's lives because it can encourage and enhance their behaviour and raise their excitement. Schunk (2012) said that positive reinforcement is the consequence of strengthening or enhancing positive behaviour. Therefore, to improve and strengthen someone's behaviour, positive reinforcement is necessary. Meanwhile, Alberto and Troutman (2006) define positive reinforcement as presenting a stimulus to enhance the probability of a response occurring. Pidarta (2007) also defines positive reinforcement as every stimulus that can solidify the response to instrumental conditioning and every prize that can solidify the response to behavioural conditioning.

One of the basic skills that a teacher must master is the skill of providing reinforcement. Therefore, the researcher agrees that reinforcement is a critical part of the learning process in improving the process and outcomes. Hoque (2013) stated that one of the essential elements in the teaching process is reinforcing students because the reinforcement given to students can increase student motivation. A teacher requires an understanding of reinforcement strategies that can serve as stimuli for students to improve their academic achievement. It can be concluded that positive reinforcement is a stimulus or gift given to improve and stabilise behaviour. This concept is also associated with the principles of behavioural psychology, which can be employed to facilitate the acquisition and reinforcement of behaviours.

1.2.2   Kinds of Reinforcement in the Learning Process

According to Djamarah in Jasrial (2021), there are 2 kinds of reinforcement they are verbal reinforcement and non-verbal reinforcement. Verbal reinforcement is a type of social reinforcement in which one uses words to reinforce one's or another's actions. This is typically in the form of praise. Verbal reinforcement is expressed in three forms:

a) Words, for example: good, nice, excellent, etc.
b) Phrase, for example: thank you, good job, very good, etc.
c) Sentences, for example: Your work is very good, and your work is getting better and better. I am happy with your work.

Meanwhile, Nonverbal reinforcement is reinforcement that does not use verbal actions but uses direct actions. Nonverbal reinforcement is divided into 5 forms: gestural reinforcement, proximity reinforcement, contact reinforcement, activity reinforcement, and token reinforcement. gestural reinforcement refers to reinforcement in the form of expressions and body movements, such as head nods, smiles, thumbs up, applause, etc

1.2.3   The Purpose of Positive Reinforcement

Every treatment must have a purpose. Giving positive reinforcement not only increases behaviour but also the application when learning has certain goals. According to Djamarah (2005), reinforcement has objectives such as increasing student attention and helping students learn when giving reinforcement is used selectively, giving motivation to students, controlling or changing the behaviour of students who interfere, improving productive learning, developing students' self-confidence to organise themselves in the learning experience, directing towards the development of divergent thinking and taking free initiatives.

According to Adibsereshki et al. (2015), the purpose of reinforcement may be explained as follows: firstly, it serves to enhance students' awareness towards the learning process; secondly, it acts as an incentive for augmenting and sustaining enthusiasm for learning; and thirdly, it serves to promote engagement in learning activities and develop productive behaviours. In comparison, according to Buchari (2008), the purpose of reinforcement can be defined as follows: a) enhancing student attention, b) facilitating the learning process, c)

fostering and sustaining motivation, and d) managing or modifying disruptive attitudes and inappropriate learning behaviour. e) developing and self-regulating in learning is essential to academic growth. f) This development also leads to the development of alternative ways of thinking and personal initiative.

Based on the opinion above, the application of positive reinforcement given by teachers in the form of gifts or other forms of appreciation in learning activities in class aims to motivate students to pay more attention to the learning being carried out. Selective positive reinforcement also enables attention to be focused and can develop student confidence because students feel valued. In addition, the application of positive reinforcement that is right can control and change the behaviour of students who are deemed inappropriate so that later, it is able to maintain and even improve good behaviour

1.2.4 Principles of Using Positive Reinforcement

The fundamental concept underlying positive reinforcement refers to the reaction produced by a positive behaviour, which serves to improve the probability of its future occurrence. The topic of reinforcement requires careful and serious consideration rather than being approached casually or irresponsibly. According to Wahidmurni (2010), the use of positive reinforcement is guided by six key principles. These principles encompass the following aspects: a) the demonstration of sincerity; b) the display of passion; c) the establishment of meaningfulness; d) the avoidance of negative responses; e) the provision of instant reinforcement; and f) the utilisation of many forms of reinforcement.

The next principle involves the avoidance of negative responses. Teachers must ensure that the use of positive reinforcement strategies does not cause adverse reactions from students, such as decreased enthusiasm or feelings of offence. Moreover, the efficacy of reinforcement is enhanced when it is administered promptly following the display of positive behaviour by students, as opposed to delaying its delivery by many days. The timing of reinforcement provision is important to the topic at hand. The last principle involves the necessity for varying the reinforcement provided. Positive reinforcement covers a range of verbal and non-verbal forms. In order to avoid student disengagement, educators can employ a diverse range of positive reinforcement strategies, thereby reducing the potential monotony associated with such reinforcement.

The teacher, as the main character in providing positive reinforcement, must understand the principles of its use. The warmth and delivery of teachers eager to provide positive reinforcement will be more beneficial for students, especially if the teacher applies it more varied. Teachers must avoid negative reinforcement because it will affect students psychologically in their acceptance. Negative reinforcement will later have an unfavourable impact on students, such as they become frustrated, become brave, and feel punishment is considered pride. Teachers must avoid negative reinforcement because it will affect students psychologically in their acceptance.

1.2.5 Overview of Motivation

Motivation can be defined as a psychological drive that is produced by both internal and external stimuli, leading individuals to desire and pursue behavioural or activity-related improvements above their prior condition. Motivation covers inquiries into the factors influencing individuals' selection of one action over another, the level of energy and exertion they will invest in this activity, and the duration of their engagement with it (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021).

In learning activities, students also need motivation. For instance, students aspire to achieve high academic performance, or students aim to complete their examinations successfully. Motivation plays a crucial role in the process of learning. Motivation serves as a guide for directing one's actions towards established objectives, with the anticipation of successful attainment (Uno, 2011). Motivation can be described as the comprehensive energy inherent in individuals, serving to sustain learning endeavours and guide them towards the learner's desired objectives.

In addition, students who engage actively in a language class and demonstrate a willingness to put in substantial effort, especially in the face of challenging activities, are seen as possessing motivation to learn. Consequently, they have an enhanced capacity to assimilate and retain more material presented during the lesson. Motivation has a crucial role in shaping the level of a learner's active engagement and overall attitude towards the learning process.

Motivation involves various components, including the establishment of a specific objective, the allocation of exertion, the presence of a strong desire, the mobilisation of energy, active engagement in the task at hand, and the sustained commitment to achieving the desired outcome. Uno (2011) reveals that the motivation to engage in learning activities can be attributed to intrinsic variables such as personal desire, the aspiration for success, the drive to acquire knowledge, and the pursuit of ideal goals. The extrinsic component represents a captivating educational endeavour. These two characteristics are elicited by specific stimuli, hence enhancing an individual's motivation and engagement in learning activities.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that motivation is something that encourages someone to do something. In education, motivation is the stimulation of individuals to carry out a learning process. This stimulation can come from within and from outside.

2   Research Method

2.1   Types of Research

The research design in this study applied Classroom Action Research. The action research process was carried out by one or more individuals or collectives intending to address a specific problem or acquire knowledge to enhance local practices (Fraenkel et al., 2018).

The research model chosen is the Kemmis-Tagart cycle model, which is based on the concept that classroom action research consists of four main components. The four stages take place in a cycle. The stages of classroom action research follow; plan, action, observe, and reflect

2.2   Population and Sample

This research was conducted in the eleventh grade of SMK Kesehatan Prima Mandiri Makassar, which consisted of 20 students in the academic year 2022/2023. This research was carried out for two months, from April to May 2023.

2.3   Instrument of Collecting Data

The researcher provided three instruments: an observation checklist, a questionnaire, and interview guidelines in order to answer the research problems. The instruments were classified below:

2.3.1   Observation Checklist

The researcher used an observation checklist as a tool to obtain the data. This observation checklist served as a guideline for observing the situation in the classroom and the learning process.

2.3.2   Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a data collection technique by the researcher providing a list of questions or written statements to be answered by the respondents (Fraenkel et al., 2018). Therefore, the questionnaire in this research aims to determine the level or category of the student's motivation for English learning. It is made by Atmojo (2016) entitled Pengaruh Pemberian Reward dan Reinforcement Negatif terhadap Motivasi Belajar Siswa with the validity test result 0,409-0,713 and the reliability test result 0,873.

2.3.3   Interview

The researcher used in-depth interviews as additional data. Previous data is expected to be obtained. To collect the necessary data, the researcher conducted interviews with a sample of five students who exhibited enthusiastic participation in the class. The selection of students for the study is conducted through purposive sampling, as the researcher specifically seeks to interview.

2.4   Data Collection Technique

The procedure of data collection in this research involves:

2.4.1   Observation

Firstly, in each meeting, the teacher observed the teaching process and filled out the observation checklist. Then, the researcher analysed the data collected to be interpreted.

2.4.2   Questionnaire

Secondly, the researcher distributed the questionnaires to the students after conducting cycles one and two to the students. Then, the researcher collected the results of the questionnaire. Lastly, the researcher analysed the data collected to be interpreted.

2.4.3   Interview

After analysing the results of the questionnaire, then the researcher conducted interviews with the students

3   Findings and Discussion

3.1   Findings

Based on the results of observations, it was found that students' learning motivation is low. Many students still needed to be more attractive and show enthusiasm during the teaching and learning process. This is based on the fact that some students need to pay attention to the teacher's explanation. In addition, some students also often do not attend English classes. This can be seen from the students' interest in English subjects and the result of pre-questionnaire. Based on the data analysis from the pre-questionnaire, it was found that students' motivation is low. It can be seen from the result of the mean score in the pre-questionnaire that was calculated b:

$$\overline{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N} = \frac{1113}{20}$$

$$= 55,65$$

Based on the problem, the researcher found a technique to improve student motivation. The method reinforces students in learning English to improve their motivation. The description of the learning process is explained below:

3.1.1   Description of Cycle 1

1)   Planning

The activities carried out in this plan were the first to create the lesson plans. The researcher created a lesson plan about procedure text. The learning process was carried out in 3 meetings in 1 cycle with a time allocation of 90 minutes. For every action, the researcher, as a teacher, reinforces the form of both verbal reinforcement and nonverbal reinforcement. The second was the preparation of learning resources. The learning resources used are e-books and several sources from the internet. The third activity was the preparation of learning media. The learning media used in cycle 1 were a projector, laptop, videos, pictures, and speakers. The last was the preparation of the Instrument. Instruments made by researchers include questionnaires, interviews, and observation sheets of researchers as teachers. The observation sheet was created when the researcher was a teacher in the teaching and learning process. The observation sheet contains student activities and situations related to the reinforcement. 2.

2)   Action & Observe

The implementation of the action of cycle 1 consisted of three meetings with different learning activities. Each meeting includes initial activities, core activities, and final activities with a time allocation of 90 minutes, and

the researcher, as a teacher, provides reinforcement both in the form of verbal reinforcement and nonverbal reinforcement in every action.

3)   The First Meeting of Cycle 1

The first meeting using the prepared lesson plan was conducted on Thursday, Mei 2nd, 2023. The allocated time was 90 minutes. The initial activity started with the researcher showing pictures of fried rice, fried noodles, and pancakes. Then, ask the students a question. Then, the teacher explained material about the procedure text and enhanced the comprehensiveness of the explanation by employing a slide presentation to improve the efficacy of instruction and stimulate the students' engagement. The activity was continued with question-and-answer activities related to the topic. Students who answer questions correctly are given praise and applause from other students. In the question-and-answer section at the first meeting, three students answered the questions correctly, got a score, and were given praise and applause from other students.

4)   The Second Meeting of Cycle 1

The second meeting was conducted on Monday, 8th May 2023. The researcher told the students about the lesson's objective in the second meeting. The students would be presented with procedure text based on the previous meeting. Two students raised their hands and answered the question correctly. Then the researcher, as the teacher, gave reinforcement by saying, "Good job and your answer is correct", then gave applause and was followed by other students. When giving reinforcement, the teacher also does it with a cheerful expression, smiles, and does not forget to give a thumbs up. In the next activity, students will demonstrate their group's results on how to make something. The students have divided their roles. Furthermore, each student has a role in explaining the material. After students demonstrated how to make something, the researcher commented on their performance. As a teacher, the researcher also gave positive reinforcement, such as providing applause and praise, and at the end of the lessons, students got a present for the best group.

5)   The Third Meeting of Cycle 1

The third meeting was conducted on 9th May 2023. In the initial activity, the researcher provided the game through Kahoot! The media that researchers use are projectors, laptops, and speakers. This game aimed to remember the material taught in the previous meeting. Throughout the game, the students exhibited high enthusiasm, significant curiosity, and attentiveness towards the questions on the screen. At the end of the game, the winner will appear on the screen automatically for the student who gets the highest score. Students who get the highest score are given a special present by the researcher as a teacher. This made the other students look excited, and they asked the researcher to hold

3.2   Discussions

The action in this study was carried out to improve student motivation by using reinforcement in English learning. The researcher was motivated by providing verbal and non-verbal reinforcement. It was related to the theory of Djamarah (2005). She said that there are two kinds of positive reinforcement. They are verbal and non-verbal reinforcement. Verbal reinforcement is a type of social reinforcement in which one uses words to reinforce the actions; nonverbal reinforcement is reinforcement that does not use verbal actions but uses direct actions. Reinforcement in this study was also given to individuals and groups because the learning process has been done individually or in small and large groups.

The results of action research in cycle 1 and cycle 2 using positive reinforcement showed a significant improvement. Based on the results of student observations, interviews, and questionnaires, student motivation has improved. It is relevant to Djamarah (2005), who said that reinforcement has objectives such as increasing student attention and helping students learn when giving reinforcement is used selectively, providing motivation to students, controlling or changing the behaviour of students who interfere, and improving productive learning.

The first meeting's observations showed that the average student activity was still low. Many students lack the initiative to answer and lack interest in following lessons. At the second and third meetings, there was an average improvement in student motivation. The number of students who responded to questions voluntarily

improved. Through questionnaires distributed to students and interviews with students, it also showed an improvement in student motivation.

Student motivation in cycle 2 was improved. Students seemed enthusiastic about participating in learning. Students' attention in English lessons was serious but in a fun atmosphere. In cycle 2, students are more interested in learning because it is more varied, reinforcement is given with more intensity, and the number of rewards is greater. It was relevant to Hoque (2013), who stated that one of the essential elements in the teaching process is reinforcing students because the reinforcement given to students can increase student motivation.

The improvement in student motivation in two cycles can be seen from observations, questionnaires and student interviews. Based on the observation, Students look enthusiastic about learning English, the students indicate this start paying attention to the teacher's explanation, students begin to be active in class by asking or answering questions, students look serious doing the task, and students show happy expressions when given appreciation, praise, or present, besides students also show happy expressions when given nonverbal reinforcement such as smiling, applauding, give a thumbs up, and approach to the students by standing next to them.

The results of the interview also showed positive reinforcement to improve student motivation. Students like the rewards given by the researcher. Awards in the form of approaches, presentations, and praise have a very positive impact on improving student motivation. Based on the discussion of the research results, using reinforcement can enhance student motivation in learning English at SMK Kesehatan Prima Mandiri Sejahtera.

4 Conclusions and Implications

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion of the previous chapter, the researcher concludes that the student's motivation to learn English at SMK Prima Mandiri Sejahtera through positive reinforcement is improved. The improvement in student motivation can be seen in enthusiasm, excitement, interest in learning and curiosity in English learning. The students who were classified as students with low motivation successfully improved their motivation after implementing verbal and non-verbal positive reinforcement. Students look enthusiastic about learning English, indicating this by paying attention to the teacher's explanation. Students begin to be active in class by asking or answering questions and showing happy expressions when given appreciation, praise, or present. This was also proven by the students' observation, questionnaire, and interview after being given the action in cycle 1 and cycle 2. Based on the results of the questionnaire, it was found that students with high motivation were 1 student (5%) in pre-questionnaire and improved to 19 (90%) in post-questionnaire

4.2 Implications

Based on the research discussion and conclusion, positive reinforcement can improve students' motivation to learn English. The implications of the actions are described as follows.
a. The implementation of verbal reinforcement can improve student motivation. Showing good respect and saying, "Good, excellent, your answer is correct, or Thank you" were done to show appreciation to the students when they tried to be active and answer the question.
b. The implementation of non-verbal reinforcement can also improve student motivation. Giving rewards in the form of compliments and presents was seen able to make students enthusiastic and more cooperative in every meeting.
c. Applying positive reinforcement was successful since the student's motivation was improved. Due to these positive attitudes, students were enthusiastic and involved in the learning activities. The students looked happier when they did something right and got good comments. It was implied that applying positive reinforcement can improve student's motivation in English learning

4.3 Suggestions

In line with the conclusion above, the researcher provides suggestions for the students and the next researcher, as follows:

a. English Teacher

The English teacher needs to keep implementing English learning by using verbal and non-verbal reinforcement skills and using reinforcement skills properly by paying attention to the principles and ways of using them.

b. Other Researcher

Continue researching reinforcement or other teaching skills on different or more complex materials to improve learning. In addition, this study may be used as one of the reading sources before the researchers do action research related to the development of the student's motivation.

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