The Impact of Teacher's Reinforcement on Students' Engagement in English Language Learning

Ananda Salsabilah Ramadhani[1*], Amirullah Abduh[2], Abdul Halim[3]
Corresponding Autors'email: ananda.salsabilah41@gmail.com
[123]English Language Education, Postgraduate Program
Universitas Negeri Makassar

Abstract

This study explores the impact of teacher reinforcement on student engagement in English language learning at SMPN 40 Makassar. Framed within a descriptive qualitative research design, data were gathered through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews involving one English teacher and seven eighth-grade students. The findings reveal that the teacher employed a variety of verbal and non-verbal reinforcement strategies such as praise, encouragement, eye contact, gestures, and rewards to cultivate a positive and supportive learning environment. From the teacher's perspective, reinforcement enhanced students' confidence, encouraged participation, and positively influenced classroom dynamics. Students echoed this view, identifying reinforcement as a key motivational factor that increased their interest, reduced anxiety, and promoted their willingness to engage in classroom activities. The analysis further suggests that reinforcement not only supports behavioral engagement (active participation) but also fosters emotional (enjoyment, confidence) and cognitive (focus, effort) engagement. These results are interpreted through the lens of Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory, Bandura's Social Learning Theory, and Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan, which collectively emphasize the importance of motivation, autonomy, and social connectedness in learning. The study concludes that teacher reinforcement plays a pivotal role in sustaining student engagement across multiple dimensions. It underscores the need for intentional and consistent use of reinforcement strategies that are sensitive to student diversity and classroom context. These findings hold valuable implications for English language educators seeking to create more inclusive, motivating, and learner-centered environments, particularly within junior high school EFL classrooms in Indonesia.

Keywords: teacher reinforcement, student engagement, English language learning, verbal reinforcement, non-verbal reinforcement

INTRODUCTION

Student engagement is a critical component of the learning process, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, where motivation and active participation significantly impact language acquisition. Engagement is a multidimensional construct that includes behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Behavioral engagement involves students' participation in academic tasks, such as completing assignments and taking part in discussions. Emotional engagement refers to students' attitudes, interests, and feelings toward learning, while cognitive engagement relates to their effort and willingness to

understand complex concepts (Reeve, 2012).

In Indonesia, student engagement in English language learning remains a persistent challenge. Despite English being a compulsory subject in the national curriculum, many students struggle with active participation, motivation, and confidence in using English in both oral and written communication (Lie, 2017). Several factors contribute to low student engagement, including teacher-centered instructional methods, lack of real-world exposure to English, high anxiety in speaking, large classroom sizes, and an exam-driven education system (Rokhayati et al., 2019).

Several studies have identified context-specific issues that prevent student engagement in Indonesian EFL classrooms. These include: (1) Traditional Teacher-Centered Instruction. Many Indonesian classrooms still follow a teacher-centered approach, where teachers dominate the lesson while students remain passive recipients of knowledge. This instructional style reduces opportunities for active student engagement, as students are not encouraged to express ideas or practice speaking skills (Marzuki & Nofianti, 2020). The dominance of this approach can lead to low motivation and disengagement, as students feel detached from the learning process. (2) Limited Exposure to English Outside the Classroom. Unlike in countries where English is widely spoken in daily life, Indonesian students often lack real-world opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. This limitation negatively impacts their motivation and engagement, as they do not see English as a meaningful or necessary skill for daily communication (Renandya & Widodo, 2016). The lack of authentic exposure makes learning English feel mechanical and exam-oriented rather than communicative and engaging. (3) Fear of Making Mistakes and Cultural Influences. Indonesian students often experience high levels of anxiety in speaking English due to cultural and social factors. Many learners fear making mistakes in front of their peers, which discourages them from actively participating in classroom discussions (Musthafa, 2018). This challenge is rooted in Indonesia's collectivist culture, where students may avoid speaking out to prevent embarrassment or appearing disrespectful to teachers (Sulistiyo, 2016). (4) Large Class Sizes and Limited Teacher-Student Interaction. In many Indonesian schools, overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to provide individualized reinforcement and support (Zein, 2017). When a teacher has to manage 30–40 students in a single class, providing personalized feedback, encouragement, and reinforcement becomes a challenge. As a result, students may feel ignored or unmotivated, leading to disengagement. (5) Exam-Oriented Curriculum and Standardized Testing. The Indonesian education system places a strong emphasis on standardized exams, which focus heavily on grammar, reading comprehension, and writing, while speaking and communicative skills are often neglected (Hamied, 2017). This exam-driven approach causes students to prioritize rote memorization over meaningful engagement, further decreasing their motivation to learn English for practical use.

To address these engagement issues, teacher reinforcement plays a pivotal role in motivating students, building their confidence, and fostering a more interactive classroom environment. Reinforcement refers to the use of positive or corrective feedback to encourage desirable behaviors and improve learning outcomes (Skinner, 1953). One of the most well-known frameworks explaining reinforcement is B.F. Skinner's (1953) Operant Conditioning Theory, which suggests that learning behaviors can be strengthened through positive reinforcement (rewarding desired behaviors) or

negative reinforcement (removing obstacles to learning). In Indonesian EFL classrooms, positive reinforcement such as verbal praise, encouragement, and tangible rewards can be highly effective in motivating students to participate actively. For example, a teacher who praises a student's attempt to speak in English, even if the grammar is incorrect, can boost the student's confidence and willingness to engage in future discussions. Conversely, a lack of reinforcement may cause students to withdraw and hesitate to participate.

Beyond behaviorism, Albert Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of vicarious reinforcement, where students learn by observing and imitating friends. In Indonesia, students tend to participate more actively when they see their classmates receiving positive feedback for speaking in English (Marzuki & Nofianti, 2020). Teachers can strategically use reinforcement to establish positive role models in the classroom, encouraging hesitant students to take risks in language learning. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) explains that students are more engaged when their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled (Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, in Indonesia, the rigid and exam-focused curriculum often limits student autonomy, making them overly dependent on teachers (Lie, 2017). Teachers can use reinforcement strategies to promote student autonomy by: encouraging student-led discussions and allowing them to express their thoughts freely, recognizing effort over correctness, ensuring students feel competent and motivated to improve, and creating a supportive learning environment where students feel connected and valued.

Despite the benefits of reinforcement, several practical challenges exist in the Indonesian EFL context. Inconsistent use of reinforcement. Some teachers rely on excessive praise without constructive feedback, while others fail to reinforce participation at all (Yulia, 2013). Cultural perceptions. In some Indonesian classrooms, frequent verbal praise may be seen as insincere, and students may expect authoritative rather than interactive teaching (Sulistiyo, 2016). Curriculum constraints. Teachers are often pressured to complete lesson plans and prepare students for standardized exams, limiting time for meaningful reinforcement strategies (Astuti, 2019). Teacher reinforcement is a crucial factor in enhancing student engagement in English learning in Indonesia. By providing meaningful encouragement, positive feedback, and creating a supportive classroom environment, teachers can motivate students, build their confidence, and reduce anxiety. However, institutional constraints, cultural perceptions, and class size limitations must be considered to ensure reinforcement is applied effectively.

The first relevant study was conducted by Mantasiah, Sinring, & Aryani (2021), which focused on the challenges and stresses students faced during online learning in school-from-home situations. These challenges included unclear instructions, excessive assignments, and difficulties parents faced in assisting their children. While previous research examined these obstacles in an online setting, the present study shifts its focus to the classroom learning environment. Specifically, this research explores how positive reinforcement can reduce boredom and increase student engagement in face-to-face classroom settings, where direct teacher-student interaction and friend collaboration take place. The fundamental differences between online and in-person learning provide an opportunity to investigate unique classroom dynamics, such as real-time feedback, classroom atmosphere, and the direct influence of reinforcement on student motivation and engagement.

The second relevant study was conducted by Tarmin, Darwis, and Nur (2023), which focused on how teacher reinforcement helps students understand the six tenses. However, their research primarily focused on reinforcement as a tool for improving grammatical understanding rather than exploring its role in fostering student engagement in English language learning. This leaves a gap in understanding how positive reinforcement specifically influences students' motivation, participation, and overall engagement in the learning process. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by investigating the ways teachers use positive reinforcement to enhance student engagement in English language learning, providing insights into its effectiveness in promoting active participation and enthusiasm in the classroom.

The third relevant study was conducted by Gaffar, Atmowardoyo, & Dollah (2022), which examined the role of positive reinforcement in enhancing students' writing achievements. The study specifically addressed challenges related to guiding students in expressing their ideas and improving their writing skills through reinforcement strategies. Otherwise, the present research adopts a wiser perspective by investigating the overall impact of positive reinforcement on student engagement in English language learning. Unlike the previous study, which focused on the technical and skill-based aspects of writing, this study explores engagement as a multidimensional construct that includes emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement across various language learning domains, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This difference underline the extend scope and different outcomes examined in the current research.

The fourth relevant study was conducted by Kurniasih, Fitria, & Andriani (2022), which examined how English teachers at SMP 17 Jambi utilized reinforcement strategies, particularly verbal reinforcement through words and sentences, to encourage positive behavior and reduce undesirable student behavior. Otherwise, the present study not only explores the use of reinforcement but also examines its specific impact on student engagement in the classroom learning process, particularly in the context of English language learning. Additionally, this research is conducted at SMPN 40 Makassar, offering a different geographical and institutional context. While the previous study focused primarily on behavior management through reinforcement, this study investigates how reinforcement influences students' emotional, cognitive, and participatory engagement during classroom instruction.

The fifth relevant study was conducted by Fitriati, Fatmala, & Anjaniputra (2020), which examined the comparison between reinforcement and punishment in fostering positive student behavior. The study concluded that reinforcement is a more effective strategy and highlighted the importance of fairness in its implementation, particularly in increasing student motivation in the context of learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia. Otherwise, the present research does not focus on comparing reinforcement and punishment. Instead, it investigates the specific types of reinforcement that teachers employ during the learning process and how these strategies influence student engagement in the classroom. By exploring the impact of different reinforcement techniques, this study provides a deeper understanding of teacher-student interactions and their role in enhancing student engagement in English language learning.

METHOD

The research employed a descriptive qualitative design to explore the impact of teacher reinforcement on students' engagement in English language learning. According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), research design refers to a systematic plan that structures the research process to ensure that data collection and analysis align with the research objectives. This aligns with Mills and Gay (2019), who explain that qualitative research focuses on understanding social phenomena through non-numerical data to capture the depth of individual experiences and perceptions. This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach as described by Sandelowski (2000), which aims to provide a comprehensive, detailed account of the phenomenon under investigation. Through interviews and classroom observations, the researcher sought to gain nuanced insights into how positive teacher reinforcement influences student engagement in English language learning.

The field study was conducted at SMPN 40 Makassar, a public junior high school located on Aroeppala Street No. 4, Gunung Sari. The data collection took place in May 2025 through direct observation and face-to-face interviews conducted in the classroom setting. The research focused on eighth-grade students at the school, which consisted of seven classes (VIII.1 to VIII.7) totaling 180 students. Using purposive sampling, one class was selected based on relevant criteria, such as the teacher's consistent use of reinforcement and the diversity of student engagement levels. From this class, seven students were chosen for interviews due to their notable experiences with teacher reinforcement during English lessons.

This study involved two key variables: the independent variable was teacher reinforcement, and the dependent variable was student engagement in English language learning. Operationally, teacher reinforcement referred to the strategies used by teachers to encourage and maintain student participation and motivation in the classroom. This included both verbal and non-verbal forms of reinforcement observed during lessons and confirmed through interviews. Student engagement, on the other hand, referred to the degree of participation, interest, motivation, and emotional involvement students displayed during English learning activities. These elements were examined through observation and interviews to determine how reinforcement influenced student behavior and attitude toward learning.

To collect data, the researcher used three main instruments: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation allowed the researcher to examine natural classroom interactions without influencing the process, using a non-participant approach. This method provided an authentic view of how reinforcement was applied and received during classroom activities. Interviews were then conducted to gain deeper insights into the perceptions of both teachers and students. Using semi-structured interviews, the researcher asked open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives, allowing flexibility to probe further based on participants' responses. These interviews were conducted individually and face-to-face with selected students. In addition, documentation was used to supplement observation and interview data. Relevant materials such as class notes, instructional tools, and school records were collected ethically to support the analysis and ensure the findings were well-grounded.

The data collection followed a series of organized steps. First, the researcher conducted classroom observations to examine teacher-student interactions. During the observation, an observation checklist was filled out to record specific reinforcement

strategies and student responses. After observations, students were selected using purposive sampling based on their engagement levels and experiences with reinforcement. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with these students to explore their views on the reinforcement methods used by their teacher. Finally, the interview data were transcribed and documented for analysis.

For data analysis, the researcher adopted the qualitative analysis framework proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2018), which includes three major stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and simplified the most relevant data aligned with the research objectives, eliminating unnecessary or repetitive information. The second stage, data display, involved organizing and presenting the data in a structured format that allowed the researcher to interpret patterns and relationships more easily. The final stage was conclusion drawing, in which the researcher identified key findings and formulated clear, concise statements that addressed the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings
1. Types of Reinforcement Used by the Teacher Toward Students' Engagement in English Language Learning

Based on six classroom observations conducted during the final weeks of the semester, the teacher consistently used two main types of reinforcement: verbal reinforcement and non-verbal reinforcement. These strategies were employed across different learning activities, many of which focused on preparing students for their end-of-semester exams. Reinforcement served as a tool to maintain students' motivation, reduce anxiety, and promote active participation in class activities.

Verbal reinforcement emerged as the most commonly used strategy. The teacher frequently offered short phrases such as "Good job!", "Excellent!", or "Well done!" to immediately acknowledge students' efforts. These affirmations validated their responses and encouraged continued engagement. More detailed verbal feedback was also given, including sentences like "That's a great answer" or "You're learning and doing great today." This type of reinforcement not only acknowledged correct answers but also motivated students to try again after making mistakes, as supported by both teacher and student interview responses.

In addition to verbal strategies, the teacher applied various forms of non-verbal reinforcement, including facial expressions like smiling and nodding, gestures such as clapping and thumbs-up, and consistent eye contact. Physical proximity and tangible rewards, such as stickers or point bonuses, were also used to support student engagement. These non-verbal cues conveyed encouragement and approval without spoken words, helping create a warm and supportive classroom atmosphere. Students expressed that even small actions—like a smile or a clap—boosted their confidence and encouraged them to participate more actively.

Each classroom observation confirmed the use of these reinforcement strategies. During writing and speaking activities, the teacher praised students and gave gestures of support, especially to hesitant speakers. In games and vocabulary reviews, rewards such as stickers and cheers were given to motivate teams. During more formal learning tasks, the teacher provided calm reassurance and validation when students asked questions or gave presentations. All these approaches helped reduce anxiety and supported students

in engaging more confidently in English language learning.

These findings are consistent with B.F. Skinner's (1953) Operant Conditioning Theory, which emphasizes that behavior followed by positive consequences (reinforcement) is more likely to be repeated. The teacher's use of praise, eye contact, and physical rewards served as positive reinforcement, motivating students to participate again. Similarly, Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory is evident in how students observed their peers receiving praise and were encouraged to imitate similar behavior in hopes of gaining approval themselves. These strategic uses of reinforcement contributed to a learning environment that nurtured both academic and emotional development.

2. Teacher's Perspective on the Impact of Reinforcement

The teacher's interview provided valuable insights into how reinforcement was perceived and intentionally used to improve student engagement. Two primary themes emerged from the teacher's responses: reinforcement as a confidence-builder and reinforcement as a classroom motivator.

The teacher believed that verbal praise was particularly effective in helping students gain confidence, especially those who were shy or reserved. Recognizing even small efforts was seen as essential in creating a supportive atmosphere where students felt safe to take academic risks. For instance, the teacher observed that students who typically avoided participation started to speak up more after receiving consistent praise and encouragement. He highlighted how reinforcement could transform a student's classroom behavior, citing an example of a once-quiet student who eventually began contributing actively to class discussions after receiving verbal feedback.

Beyond confidence-building, reinforcement was also seen as a tool to improve classroom engagement overall. The teacher noted that consistent and personalized reinforcement led to observable changes in classroom dynamics. Students became more enthusiastic about participating in group work, speaking tasks, and other class activities. Reinforcement was also used to support peer collaboration and create a positive emotional climate in the classroom. Importantly, the teacher demonstrated an awareness of the need to balance external reinforcement with strategies that support intrinsic motivation, aligning with Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory. By using praise in a way that fostered student autonomy and competence, the teacher ensured that reinforcement contributed to long-term engagement rather than dependence on rewards.

The teacher's perspective reflects the multidimensional model of engagement proposed by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), which includes behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Reinforcement, according to the teacher, enhanced participation (behavioral), made students feel appreciated (emotional), and increased focus and motivation (cognitive). Overall, the teacher viewed reinforcement as both an academic tool and a means to build stronger teacher-student relationships in the English classroom.

3. Students' Perspectives on the Impact of Teacher Reinforcement

The student interviews revealed strong agreement regarding the positive impact of teacher reinforcement on their motivation and classroom engagement. Two major themes emerged: reinforcement as a motivator and confidence booster, and reinforcement as a factor that enhances classroom involvement.

Students consistently stated that verbal praise, positive feedback, and small rewards such as stickers or being praised in front of peers—motivated them to participate in learning activities. They described feelings of pride, excitement, and increased self-confidence when their efforts were acknowledged. Several students noted that even when they were unsure about their answers, encouragement like "It's okay, try again" helped reduce their anxiety and made them more willing to speak in English.

Students also emphasized that reinforcement contributed to a more engaging and enjoyable classroom environment. They reported being more enthusiastic about answering questions, joining group discussions, and completing assignments when they felt their efforts would be recognized. Even simple actions like clapping or giving a thumbs-up after a presentation made students feel valued and encouraged continued participation. These forms of acknowledgment supported emotional safety and motivation, particularly for students who were initially shy or afraid of making mistakes.

This student feedback supports the principles of Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (1985), which highlights the importance of fulfilling students' needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Teacher reinforcement enhanced students' sense of competence by recognizing their efforts, fostered relatedness through emotional connection, and promoted autonomy by creating a safe environment for self-expression. Moreover, the students' responses align with research in EFL education that emphasizes the importance of motivation in language learning (Alrabai, 2016). When students felt encouraged and rewarded, their engagement in learning English increased noticeably.

Overall, the students perceived reinforcement not just as a form of praise or reward, but as a meaningful expression of recognition that motivated them to participate, reduced their fear of failure, and enhanced their enjoyment of the learning process.

Discussion

This section interprets the research findings in light of the study's objectives and research questions. It draws upon data collected from classroom observations and interviews with both the teacher and students, connecting the findings with established theories and previous research. The discussion is organized around three central themes: (1) the types of reinforcement used by the teacher, (2) the teacher's perception of reinforcement and its impact on student engagement, and (3) the students' perception of reinforcement and how it influences their engagement in English language learning.

The first major finding concerns the types of reinforcement used by the teacher. The classroom observations and interview responses showed that the teacher utilized both verbal and non-verbal reinforcement strategies consistently throughout the English learning sessions. Verbal reinforcement was the most prominent, often delivered in short phrases like "Good job!" or "Well done!", as well as in more elaborate expressions such as "Don't worry about the mistake, you're learning," or "That was a great explanation."

These types of praise played a critical role in affirming student efforts, easing their fear of making mistakes, and enhancing their sense of accomplishment.

Non-verbal reinforcement also featured strongly in the teacher's approach. This included smiling, nodding, giving a thumbs-up, clapping, maintaining eye contact, moving closer to students during tasks, and giving tangible rewards like stickers or extra points. Such non-verbal cues communicated encouragement without words and helped create a supportive and interactive environment. Together, these verbal and non-verbal forms of reinforcement played an essential role in increasing students' motivation, participation, and overall engagement (Mantasiah et al., 2021; Neef et al., 2022).

These findings align with Skinner's (1953) Operant Conditioning Theory, which asserts that behaviors followed by positive consequences are more likely to be repeated. The teacher's strategic use of praise, gestures, and small rewards served as positive reinforcement, effectively increasing students' willingness to participate in classroom activities. Furthermore, Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory is evident in how students not only responded to direct reinforcement but were also influenced by observing their peers receiving praise. This form of observational learning encouraged them to imitate desired behaviors, contributing to a more dynamic and engaged classroom atmosphere.

The variation in reinforcement methods also reflects the teacher's sensitivity to student differences. By adjusting reinforcement according to students' needs, personalities, and levels of confidence, the teacher demonstrated pedagogical flexibility, a key component in effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching (Putri & Arham, 2024). Such adaptability ensures that reinforcement is inclusive and impactful for a diverse range of learners.

In terms of teacher perception, the interview data revealed that the teacher viewed reinforcement as a vital strategy for engaging students in English language learning. According to the teacher, reinforcement helped students overcome anxiety, gain confidence, and develop a willingness to participate actively in classroom activities. The teacher reported that more consistent and personalized reinforcement led to noticeable improvements in classroom engagement, particularly among students who were previously quiet or hesitant.

This view is supported by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), who conceptualize student engagement as comprising behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. In this study, the teacher's use of reinforcement positively influenced all three dimensions students became more active in tasks (behavioral), felt more appreciated and encouraged (emotional), and became more motivated and focused on their learning (cognitive). A particularly powerful example shared by the teacher involved a previously passive student who began volunteering in class and supporting peers after receiving verbal praise during a group activity. This transformation highlights the potential of reinforcement to not only support academic growth but also foster meaningful social and emotional development.

The teacher also acknowledged the potential downsides of reinforcement, such as students becoming overly dependent on external validation. This awareness reflects an understanding of Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the importance of nurturing intrinsic motivation. The teacher's balanced approach providing praise while encouraging student autonomy aligned with the theory's three core needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Additionally, the

teacher highlighted the value of peer recognition and collective reinforcement in creating a classroom culture that is collaborative and emotionally safe.

From the student perspective, the findings were highly consistent with the teacher's observations. Students reported that reinforcement especially verbal praise and small rewards made them feel more motivated, appreciated, and confident. Many described feeling happy and proud when their efforts were acknowledged, which encouraged them to participate more actively in learning activities. For students who were initially hesitant or anxious, reinforcement played a vital role in reducing fear and promoting a more positive attitude toward English.

These responses further support Self-Determination Theory by demonstrating how reinforcement satisfied students' psychological needs. Students expressed that being praised helped them feel competent, while the teacher's supportive gestures made them feel connected and respected. The encouragement to speak up or complete tasks without fear of being judged promoted a sense of autonomy and increased their investment in learning.

Student responses also reflected principles of positive classroom management and a student-centered approach to teaching. In a learning environment where effort is recognized and students are emotionally supported, engagement naturally increases. The influence of teacher reinforcement on student motivation is echoed in existing EFL literature, such as Alrabai (2016), who emphasized that motivation is a critical determinant of successful language learning. In this study, students frequently stated that reinforcement made them more excited to attend class, more attentive during lessons, and more confident in using English.

In summary, the discussion shows that teacher reinforcement when applied thoughtfully and consistently has a meaningful impact on students' emotional, behavioral, and academic engagement. By reinforcing effort and participation, the teacher not only improved classroom dynamics but also fostered students' growth, motivation, and willingness to communicate in English. These findings affirm the central role of teacher reinforcement in enhancing student engagement, particularly in the context of junior high school EFL classrooms.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the impact of teacher reinforcement on students' engagement in English language learning, with a focus on eighth-grade students at SMPN 40 Makassar. Using a qualitative research design, data were gathered through classroom observations and interviews with one English teacher and seven students. The findings revealed that teacher reinforcement both verbal and non-verbal plays a crucial role in enhancing student motivation, participation, and emotional connection to the learning process.

The teacher employed various forms of verbal reinforcement, including brief affirmations like "Good job!" and more personalized statements such as "Don't worry, you're learning." These forms of praise helped affirm students' efforts, reduce fear of failure, and build their confidence in using English. Non-verbal reinforcements, such as smiling, clapping, giving thumbs-up, maintaining eye contact, and offering rewards like stickers or extra points, also significantly contributed to creating a positive and supportive classroom environment. These strategies helped maintain students' focus and encouraged them to take a more active role in their learning.

The teacher's perspective highlighted reinforcement as an essential tool not only for improving student engagement but also for building a safe and inclusive classroom culture. The teacher observed that students, especially those who were shy or hesitant, began participating more actively after receiving consistent and genuine reinforcement. This aligns with theories from Skinner, Bandura, Fredricks et al., and Deci & Ryan, which collectively emphasize the power of reinforcement and motivation in learning.

From the students' point of view, reinforcement was seen as a powerful motivator. Students shared that they felt more confident, excited, and eager to learn when their efforts were acknowledged. Verbal praise and small rewards helped them feel recognized, which in turn led to increased participation, enthusiasm in class activities, and a stronger emotional investment in learning English.

Overall, the study concludes that teacher reinforcement significantly influences students' engagement in English language learning. The findings underscore the importance of intentional, varied, and student-centered reinforcement strategies to promote a more dynamic, motivating, and inclusive learning environment. These insights offer valuable implications for English language teachers, particularly in junior high school contexts, emphasizing the need to foster encouragement not only to boost academic performance but also to support students' emotional and social growth.

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