

***Development Strategies to Enhance Students' Learning
Motivation Based on English Learning Difficulties in
Chongzhou
Chenju Primary School, Sichuan, China***

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Abstract: This study surveyed 2,200 third to sixth grade English learners and 30 English teachers from Chongzhou Chenju Primary School as the research subjects. Through a questionnaire evaluated by experts, it identified the English learning difficulties of the students in listening, speaking, reading and writing, and found that the teaching strategies were insufficient and the students' intrinsic interest in learning was weak, with external motivation being the main driver. This study aimed to formulate evidence-based strategies for enhancing English learning motivation based on these findings.

Keywords: English Learning Difficulties; Strategies; Students' Learning Motivation

1. Background and Significance of Research Problem

Students at Chongzhou Chenju Primary School face significant English learning challenges, hindering their enthusiasm and effectiveness. As a key subject, English matters for their future, but young age, weak self-discipline, and sharp differences between English and their mother tongue (in structure, pronunciation, grammar, and culture) breed learning anxiety--especially fear of speaking due to phonetic difficulties.

Traditional teacher-centered teaching, single classroom interaction, and competing demands from multiple subjects further reduce engagement and learning time, worsening outcomes. A targeted management guideline is crucial: it addresses personalized needs (e.g., song/game-based teaching), fosters an immersive English atmosphere via activities like

English corners, enhances teacher quality through training on multimedia/group learning, promotes home-school cooperation (e.g., parent guidance, home learning environments), and cultivates students' autonomous learning skills.

Formulating this guideline will boost the school's English teaching quality, stimulate students' interest, support their all-round development, and lay a solid foundation for their future.

1.1. Research Questions

1. What are the specific English learning difficulties that students in Chongzhou Chenju Primary School encounter, and how do these difficulties affect their learning motivation?

2. What strategies can be implemented to enhance students' motivation in light of these difficulties?

1.2. Research Objectives

1. To comprehensively identify students' English learning motivation and analyze the specific English learning difficulties of Chongzhou Chenju Primary School students.

2. To develop the effective strategies for enhancing students' English learning motivation in Chongzhou Chenju Primary School.

1.3. Scope of the Study

1.3.1. Population

This study uses students from Chenju Primary School in Chongzhou City, Sichuan Province, China as case study subjects. There are 3,384 students in Chongzhou City Chenju Primary School, of which 2,200 students from grades 3 to 6 are learning English, and there are 30 English teachers. The population of this research project only covers the 2,200 students from grades 3 to 6 who are learning English in Chongzhou City Chenju Primary School and the 30 English teachers. The research population is divided into two groups, namely: 1) 2200 students from grades 3 to 6 who are learning English in Chongzhou City Chenju Primary School; 2) 30 English teachers in Chongzhou City Chenju Primary School.

1.3.2. Sample

In this research project, the sample group is divided into two groups: 1. 338 students from the third to sixth grade students who are participating in English learning in Chongzhou Chenju Primary School are selected as the sample. The sample size was calculated using random sampling technique according to the Yamane Formula (Yamane, 1973, pp. 727). The random sampling process uses the school's student list to determine the specific student number through a random number generator to ensure that each student has an equal chance of being selected. 2. 30 teachers responded from the English teachers of Chongzhou Chenju Primary School.

1.3.3. Area of Study

This study chooses Chongzhou Chenju Primary School as the case study for three

reasons: 1) The researcher, an English teacher at the school, is familiar with its English teaching system, curriculum, and resources, enabling quick identification of students' classroom performance, knowledge mastery, participation, and learning difficulties. 2) Rich accumulated student materials (homework, grades, classroom interaction records) and communication with other English teachers provide comprehensive data to analyze students' weaknesses and progress. 3) The research results are easily applicable to teaching: new methods in the guideline can be pilot-tested in classrooms, with effectiveness evaluated via student communication, classroom observation, and grade analysis to optimize the guideline.

2. Definition of Term

Strategies: Targeted, systematic methods, measures and action plans designed to solve English learning difficulties of students at Chongzhou Chenju Primary School and enhance their intrinsic motivation and enthusiasm for English learning.

SWOT Analysis: A key tool for formulating the above strategies. It comprehensively analyzes the school's internal factors (strengths: internal factors conducive to boosting students' English learning motivation; weaknesses: internal factors hindering it) and external factors (opportunities: external factors with positive impacts; threats: external factors with potential negative impacts) to provide a holistic basis for strategy formulation, implementation and adjustment, ensuring strategies are more targeted, effective and adaptable.

English Learning Difficulties: Obstacles and problems (e.g., in language knowledge mastery, language skill application, and language learning cognition/emotion) that students encounter in English learning, leading to poor learning outcomes and failure to achieve expected goals.

Students' Learning Motivation: The use of diverse strategies to comprehensively enhance interest, enthusiasm and motivation for English learning among students at Chongzhou Chenju Primary School (Sichuan, China) from internal and external levels, encouraging active participation in English learning activities to optimize learning effects and develop comprehensive language skills.

3. Expected Benefits

3.1. Expected benefits for students

Improved academic performance: Motivation-stimulating strategies help students overcome vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and oral expression difficulties. They master better learning methods, boost efficiency, get better English exam results, gain more confidence and achievement, and fuel continuous learning.

Enhanced learning interest: The study's strategies make English learning more interesting, driving students to participate in learning activities more eagerly. This turns English study from a burden into an enjoyable exploration and maintains their long-term enthusiasm.

Cultivated self-learning ability: Solving learning problems helps students develop self-management, supervision and motivation skills, and gradually form autonomous learning habits—benefiting their English learning, other subjects and lifelong learning.

3.2. Expected benefits for teachers

Improved teaching methods: The study's strategies provide new teaching ideas, enabling teachers to better handle students' English learning difficulties, choose suitable teaching strategies, optimize the teaching process and improve teaching quality.

Enhanced teaching effectiveness: With students' improved motivation and performance, teachers' teaching effectiveness is significantly enhanced. Students' active in-class participation brings teachers a sense of achievement, spurring their enthusiasm and creativity.

Promoted professional development: Teachers need to learn new educational concepts and methods during research and implementation, which prompts them to improve professional qualities and teaching abilities for personal growth.

3.3. Expected benefits for schools

Elevated educational quality: Better student English performance and interest enhance the school's overall educational quality, helping build a good reputation and attract more students and parents.

Optimized teaching resources: Research results inform the school's teaching management, supporting more scientific teaching plans and management measures, optimized resource allocation and improved management efficiency.

Driven educational innovation: The research encourages the school to innovate in English teaching and explore suitable teaching models, whose innovation spirit drives the school's overall educational reform and progress.

4. Literature Review

4.1. The Profile of the Case Study

4.1.1. Research Frontiers in Primary School English Teaching under the “Double Reduction” Policy

Under the “Double Reduction” policy, primary school English teaching focuses on “reducing burdens and improving quality” and stimulating motivation. The core lies in breaking away from the exam-oriented approach and enhancing the intrinsic value of learning^[1]. Lin Xiaomin and Cai Bingxin (2025) proposed based on Self-Determination Theory that “precise feedback + interesting tasks” can meet students' needs for competence and relatedness, promoting the shift of motivation from external to internal^[2]. In terms of home-school collaboration, Gao Shufan (2025) empirically demonstrated that interactive practices such as parent salons and parent-child classes can change parents' “score-only” mindset, alleviate educational anxiety, and help students reduce psychological pressure in English learning and increase their participation^[3].

4.1.2. The Latest Advances in Empowering Primary School English Teaching with Digital Technology

Digital technology has been deeply integrated into English teaching, with AI-assisted teaching as the core direction. Xu Weiqiu (2025) found that AI-customized virtual scenarios and intelligent dialogue systems can make up for the lack of real language situations and adapt to the cognitive characteristics of different grades - reinforcing basic skills in lower grades and enhancing complex task processing abilities in higher grades. Additionally, tools such as AI oral assessment and personalized learning path recommendations have solved the pain points of traditional stratified teaching, namely “difficult assessment and slow adaptation”; the “problem-oriented teaching and research model” empowered by technology, through teaching video playback and data visualization, helps teachers precisely identify classroom pain points.

4.1.3. Research Frontiers on the Correlation between Learning Difficulties and Motivation in Primary School English Learning

Recent research has focused on the dynamic interaction between learning difficulties and motivation. Hsuan(2025) discovered that achievement emotions have a greater impact on English learning outcomes than task value itself. Frustration easily leads to a “difficulty - low motivation - more difficulty” cycle, while success-oriented tasks and positive feedback can alleviate learned helplessness. At the same time, grade differences are significant: students in grades 3-4 have difficulties mainly in basic skills and rely on external rewards for motivation; those in grades 5-6 face challenges with complex tasks, and their motivation is related to self-improvement but is easily affected by difficulties, providing a basis for targeted strategy design.

4.2. Overview of the Case School

Chongzhou Chenju Primary School was founded in 1917 and adheres to the concept of “student-centered, happy education”. It is a benchmark school for primary education in Chongzhou, with 3,384 students and 180 staff members. The school has a high-quality teaching staff who attach great importance to professional development. It has established a three-dimensional curriculum system of “national basics + school-based characteristics”, and promotes cooperative inquiry teaching. As the leading school of the regional “Education Development Community”, it promotes resource sharing. In terms of English teaching, it is equipped with complete multimedia facilities and regularly holds activities such as English corners and cultural festivals, accumulating rich student learning data, providing a solid foundation for the difficulty diagnosis, strategy optimization, and effect evaluation of this research.

5. Research Methodology

5.1. Population and Sample

The population of this study is consistent with the scope defined in Section 1.3.1,

covering 2,200 English learners from Grades 3 to 6 and 30 English teachers at Chongzhou Chenju Primary School.

Based on this population, the sample size was calculated using the Yamane Formula (Yamane, 1973, pp. 727) to ensure representativeness. The study adopts a random sampling technique, with student numbers selected via a random number generator from the school's official list to guarantee equal selection opportunities for all eligible students. The final sample comprises: 1) 338 students from Grades 3 to 6; 2) all 30 English teachers (achieving a 100% response rate).

5.2. Research Instruments

This study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative research tools to gather comprehensive data.

5.2.1. Questionnaires

This study used a questionnaire survey method to collect data, and two questionnaires were distributed to teachers and students respectively as research tools. The questionnaires were divided into two parts: 1) to investigate the problems of teachers in Chongzhou Chenju Primary School in terms of students' English learning difficulties and English teaching strategies; 2) to investigate the problems of students in Chongzhou Chenju Primary School in terms of English learning difficulties and learning motivation.

Three experts evaluated the Index of Consistency (IOC) scores for this part of the questionnaire. The IOC scores for each question in the questionnaire ranged from 0.67 to 1.00, meeting the requirements of this study. The reliability coefficients for the teacher questionnaire and the student questionnaire were 0.91 and 0.89, respectively, using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951, pp. 297-334). This indicates that the scores table 5.2.1.1.

Table 1. Reliability analysis of questionnaire table

Scale name	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of terms
Teachers	0.911	36
Students	0.892	26

As can be seen from Table 1, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient α value of the teacher questionnaire is 0.911, which is between 0.000 and 1.000, and $\alpha > 0.900$, indicating that the scale design is very scientific and reasonable, and the internal reliability of the evaluation items is very high; the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient α value of the student questionnaire is 0.892, which is between 0.000 and 1.000, and $\alpha = 0.892 > 0.700$, indicating that the scale design is scientific and reasonable, and the internal reliability of the evaluation items is relatively high.

5.2.2. A focus group for this discussion meeting

This study conducted a focus group discussion with five experts (English teachers from Chenju Primary School in Chongzhou City) to gain a deeper understanding of students' English learning difficulties, the effectiveness of teaching strategies, teacher development, and home-school collaboration. The discussion was guided by the questionnaire survey results and, in conjunction with the experts' comments and suggestions, refined the proposed strategies.

6. Research Results

6.1. General information

6.1.1. Teachers

Table 2. General information of teachers

General information		Total (n) = 30	
		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	7	23.33
	Female	23	76.67
Total		30	100.00
Education	Bachelor's degree	9	30.00
	Master's degree	21	70.00
Total		30	100.00
Teaching experience	1-5	7	23.33
	6-10	11	36.67
	11-15	9	30.00
	16 and above	3	10.00
Total		30	100.00

6.1.2. Students

Table 3. General information of students

General information		Total (n) = 338	
		Frequency	percentage
Gender	Male	171	50.59
	Female	167	49.41
Total		338	100.00
Grade	Grade 3	91	26.92
	Grade 4	80	23.67
	Grade 5	85	25.15
	Grade 6	82	24.26
Total		338	100.00
English Learning Preference	Very	72	21.3
	Average	144	42.6
	Not very	122	36.09
Total		338	100.00

6.2. Students' English Learning Difficulties

Table 4. Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Students' English Learning Difficulties

Students' English Learning Difficulties	Teachers' Scores		Students' Scores	
	μ	σ	\bar{X}	S.D.
Listening	3.92	0.93	3.85	1.05
Speaking	4.07	0.89	3.80	1.06
Reading	4.10	0.86	3.80	1.08
Writing	4.17	0.87	3.90	1.02

6.3. Students' Learning Motivation

Table 5. Students' Learning Motivation in English Learning

Motivational Attributes	Specific Description	\bar{X}	S.D.
External Motivation	Hope to get praise from teachers or parents by learning English well.	4.06	0.97
External Motivation	Seeing classmates learn English well makes you want to catch up.	4.04	0.99
Internal Motivation	Want to prove your ability by learning English well.	3.99	1.02
Internal Motivation	Interesting English games in class make you more willing to participate in learning.	3.95	1.01
Internal Motivation	If you can solve an English problem by yourself, you will be more motivated to learn.	3.93	1.03
Internal Motivation	Learn English because you like English songs, cartoons and other English-related content.	3.92	1.04
External Motivation	Think learning English well is useful for future travel, studying abroad and watching foreign movies.	3.72	1.02

7. Discussions

This study takes 2,200 students and 30 English teachers from Chongzhou Chenju Primary School as research objects, adopting mixed methods of questionnaires and expert focus group interviews to systematically explore the English learning difficulties, teaching strategy status, and learning motivation characteristics of Grade 3-6 students, and proposes targeted motivation-enhancing strategies. The key findings and discussions are as follows:

7.1. English Learning Difficulties: A Multidimensional Analysis

Both teachers and students perceive high-level English learning difficulties across listening, speaking, reading, and writing (teachers' total $\mu = 4.06$; students' total $\bar{X} = 3.84$), with writing identified as the most prominent challenge by both groups. There are subtle differences in difficulty ranking: teachers prioritize reading and speaking after writing, while students regard listening as the second major difficulty.

The core challenges are threefold: ① Interconnected language skill obstacles: Vocabulary shortages, weak sentence analysis abilities, and grammatical/logical deficiencies mutually hinder the development of listening, reading, and writing skills; ② Significant

psychological barriers: Fear of mistakes, low confidence, and nervousness in public speaking reduce students' participation in oral practice and active learning; ③ Obvious grade differences: Grades 3-4 struggle with basic skills (pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary), while Grades 5-6 face challenges in complex tasks (grasping reading main ideas, organizing writing logic).

In response to the issue of “weak listening and speaking abilities due to the lack of real language contexts” in primary school English teaching, AI technology can create immersive learning environments through intelligent dialogue and virtual scene construction. For instance, in the teaching of the Jiangsu Translation Press textbooks, it has been found that the intelligent dialogue scenarios created by AI can specifically increase students' frequency of oral expression, while customized virtual scenes (such as simulated shopping and campus communication) can help students transfer vocabulary and grammar knowledge to practical applications, effectively alleviating the learning obstacles of “not understanding and not daring to speak” (Xu Weiqiu, 2025). This application of technology aligns with the differentiated instruction proposed in this study, providing technical support for addressing the stratified difficulties of “weak basic skills” in grades 3-4 and “insufficient adaptation to complex tasks” in grades 5-6.

A key innovation of this study is the identification of the “mutual hindrance mechanism” between language skills and the “grade-specific difficulty stratification” characteristics, which breaks through the previous simplistic understanding of primary school English learning difficulties as a single skill deficiency and provides a more refined analytical basis for targeted teaching.

This grade-level stratification of learning difficulties essentially reflects the differentiated “competence need” of students at different stages - lower grades need to master basic skills to fulfill their sense of competence, while higher grades need to break through complex tasks to achieve the same. This is consistent with the Self-Determination Theory's view that “competence is the core driving force of motivation”, and it also explains why a mismatch in difficulty directly suppresses students' learning motivation.

7.2. English Teaching Strategies: SWOT-Based Optimization

The school's English teaching has inherent strengths in teaching research activities, hardware support, and campus English atmosphere, but also faces internal weaknesses such as textbooks disconnected from real life and heavy teacher workloads. Externally, it enjoys opportunities including abundant online resources and English competitions, while confronting threats such as students prioritizing other subjects and inter-school competition. Expert interviews confirm that situational teaching, task-driven methods, and differentiated instruction are effective optimization approaches.

This study innovatively integrates SWOT analysis into primary school English teaching strategy design, linking internal strengths/weaknesses with external opportunities/threats. It further proposes a “problem-based + practical sharing” teaching research model (focusing on resolving classroom pain points such as students' reluctance to speak through lesson examples and video reviews) and an AI tool-assisted differentiated instruction plan (e.g., using oral scoring software to meet diverse proficiency needs). These designs make up for the lack of systematicity and operability in existing research on primary school English teaching

strategies.

The SWOT analysis, which integrates internal and external factors to optimize strategies, essentially aims to create conditions for students' autonomous choice (autonomy need) and peer interaction (relatedness need) — two core psychological needs proposed in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). By leveraging hardware advantages (such as multimedia) to design flexible learning tasks and compensating for textbook shortcomings with real-life content, the strategy further reserves space for students to gain a sense of mastery (competence need). This fully aligns with the need satisfaction logic of Self-Determination Theory, which holds that intrinsic motivation is fostered by the joint satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, providing solid theoretical support for subsequent motivation transformation.

7.3. Learning Motivation: External vs. Internal Drivers

Students' overall English learning motivation is high ($\bar{X}=3.97$), but it is mainly driven by external factors such as teacher/parent praise ($\bar{X}=4.06$) and peer encouragement ($\bar{X}=4.04$), while intrinsic motivation related to interest in English content ($\bar{X}=3.92$) and practical application (e.g., future travel/study, $\bar{X}=3.72$) is relatively weak. Motivation shows obvious grade differences: lower graders (Grades 3-4) rely more on external rewards, while higher graders (Grades 5-6) tend to pursue self-improvement but are prone to motivation decline when facing learning difficulties.

Notably, motivation and learning experience form a dynamic feedback cycle: successful task completion and interactive participation enhance motivation (a “success-motivation-more success” cycle), while repeated difficulties (e.g., pronunciation/writing obstacles) suppress it (a “failure-low motivation-more failure” cycle). Empirical research conducted in 2025 on upper-grade primary school students revealed that the impact of achievement emotions on learning outcomes even surpasses that of task value itself (Mu Hsuan Chou, 2025). This finding resonates with the current study's discovery of ‘psychological barriers suppressing participation’ - it is necessary to reduce the sense of hopelessness in the classroom through success-oriented tasks and positive feedback, rather than merely emphasizing the ‘importance’ of learning.

This dynamic cycle can be theoretically explained by Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that intrinsic motivation is inherently fostered when individuals' three basic psychological needs—autonomy (sense of choice and control), competence (sense of mastery), and relatedness (sense of connection with others)—are satisfied (Deci & Ryan, 2012). The “difficulty-strategy-motivation” linkage identified in this study aligns with SDT's core logic: students' English learning difficulties (e.g., weak basic skills, fear of speaking) directly undermine their sense of competence and relatedness, while targeted teaching strategies address these needs to facilitate motivation transformation.

Specifically, the differentiated instruction proposed in this study directly responds to the need for competence. For Grades 3-4, who struggle with pronunciation and vocabulary, integrating spelling games and phonics exercises ensures learning tasks match their current ability level, allowing them to experience small successes and build mastery confidence—effectively alleviating the sense of incompetence caused by “unachievable tasks”. For Grades 5-6, targeted training in reading main idea extraction and writing logic

organization helps them cope with complex tasks, further consolidating their competence perception. This echoes (Lin, X. M., & Cai, B. X. 2025) finding that “precise feedback and interesting tasks” under the “Double Reduction” policy promote motivation internalization, as both strategies prioritize matching task difficulty to students’ abilities to satisfy competence needs.

The AI-assisted situational teaching (Xu Weiqiu, 2025) and collaborative learning activities (e.g., group English story creation) address the need for autonomy and relatedness. AI-generated customized virtual scenes (e.g., simulated shopping, campus communication) allow students to choose interaction topics and roles, granting them a sense of control over their learning process—compensating for the lack of autonomy in traditional teacher-centered classrooms. Meanwhile, collaborative tasks enable students to interact with peers and teachers, reducing the psychological barrier of “fear of speaking” through mutual support and forming emotional connections that satisfy the need for relatedness. This explains why such strategies can effectively reduce students’ speaking anxiety: the sense of connection with others mitigates the pressure of “making mistakes in public”, while the sense of choice increases active participation.

Aligning with the core logic of “transforming external recognition into intrinsic interest”, SDT further clarifies that external motivation (e.g., teacher praise, parent approval) can be internalized when teaching strategies continuously satisfy the three basic needs. The current study’s finding that higher graders (Grades 5-6) tend toward self-improvement but face motivation decline when encountering difficulties confirms this: when learning difficulties persist, competence needs are not met, and external motivation fails to transform into intrinsic interest. In contrast, strategies such as AI-assisted differentiated instruction, problem-based teaching research, and home-school collaboration (Gao, S. F., 2025) collectively create an environment where autonomy, competence, and relatedness are continuously satisfied—turning “learning for praise” into “learning for interest and growth”.

This study innovatively reveals the “difficulty-motivation-experience” circular interaction mechanism in primary school English learning and clarifies the grade differentiation of motivation types, supplementing existing research’s lack of attention to the dynamic relationship between learning difficulties and motivation, and enriching empirical evidence in this field.

7.4. Summary of Key Innovations

This study achieves innovations in three aspects: ① Research perspective: Integrates SWOT analysis and dynamic interaction mechanisms to explore the interrelationship between learning difficulties, teaching strategies, and motivation; ② Content refinement: Identifies grade-specific difficulty stratification and motivation differentiation, moving beyond the previous one-size-fits-all analysis; ③ Strategy design: Proposes operable schemes such as problem-oriented teaching research and AI-assisted differentiated instruction. The research results provide practical guidance for Chongzhou Chenju Primary School to optimize English teaching and enhance students’ motivation, and offer a reference for similar primary schools (especially those in urban-rural fringe areas) facing similar challenges.

8. Recommendations

8.1. Recommendations based on research findings

This survey, focusing on students and English teachers in grades 3-6 at Chongzhou Chenju Primary School, found that students generally face difficulties in English listening, speaking, reading, and writing (younger grades focus on basic skills like spelling and pronunciation, while older grades focus on more advanced skills like grasping the main idea of reading and writing logic). While teaching strategies such as English activities, research, and hardware support have been effective, they also face challenges such as poor alignment with the textbook and heavy teacher workload. Students' learning motivation is primarily driven by external validation, and internal interest needs to be nurtured.

1. The school should optimize English curriculum design and teaching content, implementing stratified strategies based on students' grade-specific difficulties. For grades 3-4, strengthen basic skills training such as spelling and pronunciation (e.g., integrating spelling games and phonics exercises) to reduce errors. For grades 5-6, enhance training in grasping reading main ideas and organizing writing logic through targeted exercises, and incorporate real-life scenarios like campus life to improve practicality.

Drawing on insights from Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), relevant research suggests that optimizing task design and creating collaborative contexts are effective ways to stimulate intrinsic motivation (Lin, X. M., & Cai, B. X. 2025). Under the "Double Reduction" policy, schools can integrate the concept of "precise feedback and interesting tasks" into both classroom teaching and homework design—for example, organizing group English story creation, situational role-play, or personalized learning tasks with timely positive feedback. This not only meets students' psychological needs for competence and relatedness but also helps transform their learning motivation from external recognition (e.g., teacher praise) to internal interest, laying a foundation for long-term English learning enthusiasm.

2. Make full use of existing multimedia equipment to support diversified teaching activities. Expand effective English competitions and cultural festivals to provide more display platforms for students, update textbook content to increase relevance to students' lives, and transform teaching research activities into problem-oriented ones focusing on practical issues like students' reluctance to speak.

To further optimize English teaching strategies, schools can introduce AI technology to enhance situational teaching. Research shows that AI can significantly stimulate students' participation in contextualized teaching of primary school English. Through intelligent dialogue customization and virtual scene generation, it can not only match the cognitive levels of students in different grades (for example, lower grades focus on interesting interaction and higher grades on complex task simulation), but also make up for the shortcomings of traditional classrooms such as single interaction and fixed context (Xu Weiqiu, 2025). However, it should be noted that in practice, a balance should be struck between the integration of technology and teaching objectives to avoid over-reliance on tools. At the same time, attention should be paid to the transformation of teachers' roles. Through training, teachers should be helped to master the practical operation methods of AI tools to ensure the deep integration of technology and teaching strategies. This is highly consistent

with the suggestion of this study to “enhance teachers’ professional capabilities”.

3. Provide ongoing professional training for English teachers to enhance their ability to address learning difficulties and innovate teaching methods. Encourage teachers to participate in workshops and lesson study activities to improve the effectiveness of differentiated instruction and motivation cultivation strategies.

4. Strengthen home-school collaborative education to unify educational cognition under the “Double Reduction” policy. Practical cases from multiple schools in Beijing have demonstrated that interactive practices can effectively transform parents’ roles and alleviate educational anxiety (Gao, S. F., 2025). For example, Yuying School changed parents’ anxious perception of homework reduction through parent salons, and Zhongguancun No.3 Primary School transformed parents from “educational onlookers” to “participants” by inviting them to participate in after-school courses. Chongzhou Chenju Primary School can learn from these practices: organize regular English-themed parent salons to guide parents to shift their focus from “score pursuit” to “interest cultivation”, helping them understand the importance of reducing unnecessary academic pressure for primary school students’ English learning; design parent-participated after-school English activities (e.g., parent-child English story sharing, situational role-play, English corner co-organization) to enhance parents’ participation in their children’s English learning. This not only unifies home and school educational concepts but also creates an immersive English learning atmosphere, which is crucial for nurturing students’ intrinsic learning motivation and alleviating psychological barriers such as fear of speaking.

8.2. Recommendations for further study

To understand the problems and needs encountered by students and teachers in English learning and teaching, and develop Strategies to improve English education in Chongzhou Chenju Primary School, schools should set the following methods:

1. Conduct a long-term survey to collect issues affecting English learning (such as grade-specific difficulties in listening, speaking, reading, writing) and corresponding needs from students and teachers, tracking changes in learning motivation and teaching strategy effectiveness.

2. Review relevant domestic and foreign literature on English learning difficulties, teaching strategies, and motivation, conduct theoretical analysis, and learn practical experience from other schools in addressing similar issues to optimize local teaching guidance.

9. Conclusions

This study explored the relationships between English learning difficulties, teaching strategies, and learning motivation among Grades 3–6 students and English teachers at Chongzhou Chenju Primary School using mixed methods. The core conclusions are summarized as follows:

9.1. Core Findings

1. Students face pervasive, hierarchical English learning difficulties across listening,

speaking, reading, and writing, with writing identified as the most prominent challenge by both teachers and students. Difficulty rankings differ slightly between the two groups, and key issues include interconnected skill obstacles, significant psychological barriers (e.g., fear of mistakes), and distinct grade-based differences (basic skill gaps for Grades 3–4 vs. complex task challenges for Grades 5–6).

2. The school’s English teaching has strengths in teaching research, hardware support, and campus atmosphere, but is constrained by textbooks disconnected from real life, inadequate parental support, and external pressures like inter-school competition. Situational teaching, task-driven methods, and differentiated instruction are verified as effective optimization directions.

3. Students exhibit high overall learning motivation, primarily driven by external recognition (e.g., teacher/parent praise, peer encouragement), while intrinsic motivation (interest in English content, practical application) remains weak. Motivation varies by grade—lower graders rely more on external rewards, while higher graders tend toward self-improvement but face motivation decline when encountering difficulties—and forms a dynamic feedback cycle with learning experiences (success boosts motivation; repeated difficulties suppress it).

9.2. Key Innovations

1. Constructed a “difficulties-strategies-motivation” linkage framework, revealing the mutual hindrance mechanism of language skills and the dynamic interaction between difficulties and motivation. Different from existing primary English education research that only focuses on the influence of single factors such as teaching strategies or learning difficulties in isolation, this study breaks the simplistic single-factor analysis model and clarifies the two-way feedback and mutual shaping relationship among the three core elements, providing a more systematic analytical perspective for the field.

2. Identified grade-specific hierarchical characteristics of learning difficulties (basic skill gaps for Grades 3–4 vs. complex task challenges for Grades 5–6) and differentiated motivation traits (external reward dependence vs. self-improvement tendency). Unlike previous research that adopts a “one-size-fits-all” approach to analyze primary school students’ English learning problems, this study refines the developmental differences across grades, making the research conclusions more targeted to the actual teaching scenario and filling the gap of insufficient attention to grade stratification in existing studies.

3. Integrated SWOT analysis into the design of primary English teaching strategies, linking internal strengths/weaknesses with external opportunities/threats, and proposed operable solutions such as problem-based teaching research and AI-assisted differentiated instruction. In contrast to existing research on primary school English teaching strategies that lack systematic logical support or are overly theoretical and difficult to implement, this study combines strategic analysis tools with practical teaching needs, realizing the organic unification of systematicity and operability of strategies, and solving the practical pain point of “disconnection between theory and practice” in the field.

9.3. Practical Implications

1. For schools: Optimize stratified curriculum design, update textbooks to enhance real-life relevance, expand English competitions and cultural activities, and build distinctive English teaching brands.

2. For teachers: Promote situational and task-driven teaching, use tools like AI oral scoring software for differentiated instruction, and conduct problem-focused teaching research to address key pain points (e.g., students' reluctance to speak).

3. For home-school cooperation: Strengthen parent guidance to shift focus from score pursuit to interest cultivation, and foster collaborative education through parent-child English activities. Relevant social observation reports have confirmed that practical interaction is a key path to unify home-school educational cognition (Gao, S. F., 2025). For instance, parent salons can effectively alleviate parents' anxiety about homework reduction, and parent participation in after-school courses can enhance their understanding of teaching goals. Schools can apply these experiences to English teaching: invite parents to participate in English class activities, hold regular communication sessions to share students' learning progress and difficulty-solving methods, and guide parents to create a relaxed English learning environment at home. This synergy between home and school helps reduce students' learning pressure and enhance their intrinsic motivation.

9.4. Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations: The single-school sample limits generalizability; reliance on questionnaires and interviews (lacking long-term classroom observation or quasi-experiments) may incomplete capture deep mechanisms; insufficient integration of classic theories (e.g., Self-Determination Theory) reduces theoretical contribution; and key variables (e.g., teacher teaching styles, "Double Reduction" policy impact) were not explored.

Future Directions: Expand samples for cross-school comparative studies; conduct 1–2 year longitudinal tracking to evaluate strategy effectiveness; deepen theoretical integration to analyze motivation transformation paths; optimize methods (e.g., classroom observation, quasi-experiments); and incorporate additional variables to explore multi-factor interaction mechanisms.

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