



A Project entitled

*A study on the relationship between motivation in English learning and attitudes towards
English learning environment in Hong Kong primary schools*

Submitted by

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submitted to The Education University of Hong Kong

for the degree of Bachelor of Education (Honours) (English) (Primary)

in *May 2018*

Declaration

I, Lam Ka Man , declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of Dr. Yu Baohua, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

Signed _____

Lam Ka Man

18 May 2018

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Abstract

For most of the Hong Kong students, they only learn and speak English in schools. Thus, both classroom and outside-classroom experiences are crucial in enhancing the English proficiency of students. Due to the exam-oriented education system and Chinese culture concepts like ‘saving face’ and ‘avoiding to show off’, students may not dare to speak English in the public outside schools (Yang, 2010). Building authentic English-rich environment at schools could provide more opportunities for students to practice their target language and to expose themselves more to the target language.

On the other hand, L2 motivation is strongly related to the environment where the language is learnt (Dörnyei, 1990). According to the study of Hsieh (2002), there is a positive relationship between learning environment and students’ motivation. Physical environment, instructional arrangements and social situation are the three most relevant aspects in language learning environment within the school context. The purpose of this study is to further explore how these aspects affect L2 learning of students and their motivation in the context of Hong Kong primary schools. Oxford and Shearin (1994) suggested that teachers could adopt several motivational strategies to increase students’ motivation for language learning and these strategies are relevant to promotion of stimulating language-rich environment at schools.

In this study, questionnaires were distributed to English teachers and students and interviews have been conducted in a primary school, in order to investigate the relationship between teachers’ motivational strategies, students’ motivation, the attitudes and the ratings of

importance for both teachers and students towards the current English learning environment on their campus. A positive relationship between students' motivation and the English learning environment, as has been reported in previous studies (Hsieh, 2002), was observed in this study. These findings lead to the conclusion that by promoting English-rich environment, students' motivation can be enhanced.

Keywords: Motivation; English learning environment; Teachers' motivational strategies;

Attitudes towards learning environment

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I. Introduction

English is one of the official languages in Hong Kong and is taught in schools starting from kindergarten. For most of the Hong Kong students, their English learning and practices are only limited in schools. Thus, both classroom and outside-classroom experiences are crucial in enhancing the English proficiency of students. As stated in the English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) prepared by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) in 2004, ‘creating a language-rich environment’ is one of the emphases for developing and organizing a school-based English language curriculum. A language-rich environment could provide authentic situation for students to acquire second language (L2).

According to Dörnyei (1990), L2 motivation is strongly related to the environment where the language is learnt. A positive relationship between learning environment and students’ motivation has also been proved in the study of Hsieh (2002). The purpose of this study is to further explore how English learning environment affects L2 learning of students and their motivation in the context of Hong Kong primary schools, and to investigate the attitudes of teachers and students towards the learning environment. In this study, the relationship between students’ motivation and English learning environment was studied by a mixed methods research approach to see if there is positive relationship from the perspectives of Hong Kong primary school teachers and students.

Significance of study

This study aims to investigate the relationship between students' motivation and English learning environment by researching into language teachers' and learners' perceptions. A similar study has been conducted by Wu and Wu (2008) in EFL context, which is based on undergraduate students at one private technical university - Chienkuo Technology University (CTU) in central Taiwan. The perceptions of undergraduate students towards motivation for learning English and the views towards characteristics of the EFL learning environment in schools are the foci in the study. Since there is scarce evidence showing there is significant positive relationship between motivation and English learning environment in Hong Kong primary school context, and teachers' perceptions are important in promoting professional pedagogical development, this study aims to provide new insights and implications in English teaching and learning within an English learning environment in primary schools. As stated by the Education Bureau, 'creating a language-rich environment' is one of the suggested ways to enhance students' L2 competence. The study would explore teachers' and students' attitudes towards the notion.

II. Literature Review*Building English learning environment*

The traditional classroom setting often limits teacher-student interaction, which causes deterioration in students' motivation towards learning English (Yang, 2010). Under the

Primary Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme launched by the Hong Kong Education Bureau in 2002, native-speaking English teachers are hired in primary schools. Foreign teachers could be regarded as a source of authentic inputs and encourage the use of English outside the classroom setting. In long term, optimizing teaching environment as neutral and authentic should be the goal in promoting English learning.

In Hong Kong context, as Cantonese is used as first language for communication, English is used as a second language or a foreign language. Most of the students learn English in schools only. The chances for them to communicate in English outside classroom is limited. Also, due to the exam-oriented education system and Chinese culture concepts like ‘saving face’ and ‘avoiding to show off’, students may not dare to speak English in the public outside schools (Yang, 2010). Thus, the target language environment is limited to schools most of the time. Although Hong Kong is an international city, students may not have many chances to interact with native speakers in their daily life, except for talking with the Native-speaking English teacher at school. Building a rich English learning environment environment at schools could provide more opportunities for students to practice their target language and to expose themselves more to the target language.

According to the English Language Curriculum Guide (2004), a language-rich environment includes several main components, which are ‘use of English in all English lessons and beyond’, ‘provision of an English-rich environment in school and at home’, ‘layout and decorations of classrooms or special areas like English Corner and school library

with provision of relevant resource materials’ and ‘a lively and encouraging school and classroom atmosphere’. Students are expected to develop interest and attitudes towards English learning by immersing in a natural, authentic and stimulating language-rich environment.

Motivation for language learning

Motivation for language learning is regarded as another important factor contributing to L2 language competence other than effective vocabulary learning strategies (Dörnyei, 1994). Motivation has great effects on how students use the L2 learning strategies, how they interact with native speakers, how high their language competence is and how long they persevere and maintain their L2 skills when their language learning has ended (Gardner, 1992; Robin & Oxford, 1992). Motivation is considered to be highly relevant to language learning. Oxford and Shearin (1994) suggested several ways that teachers could do to increase the students’ motivation for language learning, for example, teachers could demonstrate L2 learning is a pathway to cultural awareness, which means English is used as a living language, rather than language used for academic purposes only. Also, teachers could make L2 classroom a place where students’ anxiety is at minimum through offering realistic situations for students as stimulation for learning L2, like performing daily tasks using the target language. These motivational strategies are indeed relevant to promotion of stimulating language-rich environment at schools.

Relationship between English learning environment and motivation

L2 motivation is strongly related to the environment where the language is learnt (Dörnyei, 1990). According to the study of Hsieh (2002), there is a positive relationship between learning environment and students' motivation. Based on the learning environment of school, Smith, Neisworth and Greer (1978) categorized it into five aspects, namely 'physical environment', 'instructional arrangements', 'social situation', 'evaluation instruments and evaluative practices' and 'supportive services'. Physical environment refers to school space and design. Instructional arrangements refer to the pedagogy and curriculum content. Social situation refers to teacher-student interaction and other social interactions at schools. Evaluation instruments and evaluative practices are the summative and formative tools used by school psychologists and others. Lastly, supportive services are the facilities within schools like counseling and health services. Physical environment, instructional arrangements and social situation are the three most relevant aspects in language learning environment within the school context.

This study further explored how these aspects affect students' motivation. Since there is scarce evidence showing there is significant positive relationship between motivation and English learning environment in Hong Kong primary school context, this study aims to provide new insights and implications in English teaching and learning within an English learning environment in primary schools.

Research questions

The following research questions were addressed:

- 1) Are there group differences in attitudes and the ratings of importance towards English learning environment between teachers and students?
- 2) What are the relationships between teachers' motivational strategies, attitudes and the ratings of importance towards English learning environment for teachers?
- 3) What are the relationships between students' motivation, attitudes and the ratings of importance towards English learning environment for students?

III. Methodology

Setting

The study was conducted in a Hong Kong primary school located on Hong Kong Island. It is a non-EMI primary school, which means English is not used as the medium of instruction, except for English lessons only. Students have English lessons daily and some of them may join the after-school activities held by the school or organizations authorized by the school to learn English. Whole-school English activities are also being held for students, like English Day which is held on every other Wednesday and English Lunchtime story broadcast during lunchtime, in which students could listen to English stories and learn some new English vocabulary. Regular English lessons include General English lessons which focus on grammar learning, RSP lessons which students could learn English through reading English

storybooks and process-writing lesson which students would write articles under the process-writing model.

Participants

Thirty students from both lower and upper primary took part in the study. They were mainly from Primary 3 and Primary 5, including 12 male and 18 female students, aged from 8 to 10. These students were chosen because they have participated in the English activities held by the primary school. On the other hand, ten English teachers, including one Native English Teacher from the primary school also participated in the study and expressed their opinions and attitudes towards the English learning environment of the school.

Research instruments

A mixed methods approach was used in the study, which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from teachers and students. Ten questionnaires were distributed to English teachers in the primary school to rate the frequency of using the motivational strategies for English teaching at school, their satisfaction and attitudes towards the English learning environment of the school. The same questionnaires were also distributed to thirty primary school students, instead of investigating the motivational strategies, the source of motivation for students towards learning English were studied. The items on the questionnaires were adapted from three previous studies on teachers' motivational strategies

(McEown and Takeguchi, 2014), students' motivation (Peng and Woodrow, 2010) and efficacy of the current English learning environment of the primary school (Wu and Wu, 2008). Some items from the survey of the previous studies have been edited or deleted so as to match with the Hong Kong Primary school context.

Individual interviews were conducted with six primary English teachers, which their perceptions towards motivational strategies, students' motivation towards English learning and attitudes towards English learning environment were explored. Teachers' opinions towards the learning environment of the school were studied to see whether the environment is favourable for English teaching and whether there were any limitations and room for improvement.

Group interviews with primary school students were also conducted to investigate the perceptions of their L2 learning motivation and the learning environment in schools, which serves as a source to validate the data collected from questionnaires. The interviews were conducted in Cantonese and in groups, so as to allow them to express themselves clearly and freely. Student' views towards the learning environment for English of the primary school were asked to see whether they were satisfied with it and found it beneficial for L2 learning. The interview format for both teachers' and students' interviews was semi-structured. A set of questions were prepared in advance, but follow-up questions were also asked apart from the prepared questions.

Procedure

The questionnaires were given to thirty primary school students and ten English teachers teaching at the primary school respectively, including the teachers teaching Primary 3 and Primary 5 English classes. The Likert Scales, from 1 to 6, were given to the teachers and student for rating on the questionnaires. For items asking about frequency of using motivational strategies for teachers, 1 means ‘never’ and 6 means ‘always’. For items concerning students’ motivation, 1 means ‘strongly disagree’ and 6 means ‘strongly agree’. For items asking about the English learning environment, these items were categorized into two sections, the first section was about attitudes towards the learning environment and the second section was about the importance of the learning environment from the perspectives of both teachers and student. The items appeared on the questionnaires were classified into smaller sub-scales for data analysis in the later stage. After the completion of questionnaire, thirty primary school students were invited to take part in the follow-up group interviews, while six teachers agreed to have individual interviews which lasted for around fifteen minutes.

The data from the questionnaires were entered into SPSS. Descriptive data, group differences and collocation were studied by using SPSS. Group differences among teachers’ and students’ attitudes and ratings of importance towards the English learning environment were investigated using ANOVA. Relationships between teachers’ motivational strategies, students’ motivation, attitudes and ratings of importance towards the learning environment for

both teachers and students were found using Bivariate Correlation test. The interview transcriptions were translated into English and further analyzed for interpretation of the data collected from questionnaires.

IV. Findings

For the data collected from questionnaires, sets of sub-scales were used for the categorization of items under each variable, namely ‘teachers’ motivational strategies’, ‘students’ motivation’, ‘attitudes towards English learning environment’ and ‘ratings of importance of English learning environment’ for both teachers and students. The categorization of variables is shown in Table 1. The sub-scales were used for the data analysis by using SPSS.

Table 1: Categorization of variables.

Variables	Sub-scales	Items
Teachers’ motivational strategies	Maintaining a better learning environment	A1, A2, A3, A6, A7, A8
	Clear explanation	A4, A5, A13
	Basic instructional skill	A9, A10, A11
	Positiveness in communicative style	A12, A14, A15, A16
Student’s motivation	Instrumental motivation	B5, B6
	Integrative motivation	B1, B2, B3, B4, B7, B8, B9
Attitudes towards English learning environment	Physical environment	C1-C5
	Instructional arrangement	C6-C20
	Social interaction	C21-C27
	Physical environment	D1-D5

Ratings of importance of English learning environment	Instructional arrangement	D6-D20
	Social interaction	D21-D27

1. Group differences in attitudes and the ratings of importance towards English learning environment between teachers and students

To investigate the group differences in attitudes and the ratings of importance towards English learning environment between the two groups, teachers and students, one-way ANOVA was performed. Table 2 shows that no significant group differences were found between the two groups on scores for their attitudes towards physical environment [$F(1, 38) = 0.04, p = .84$], instructional arrangement [$F(1, 38) = 0.06, p = .80$] and social interaction at school [$F(1, 38) = 1.14, p = .29$]. No significant differences were also found between the two groups on scores for their ratings of importance of physical environment [$F(1, 38) = 0.64, p = .43$], instructional arrangement [$F(1, 38) = 0.95, p = .34$] and social interaction at school [$F(1, 38) = 0.94, p = .34$].

Table 2: Group differences in major study variables.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Attitudes towards physical environment	0.06	1	0.06	0.04	0.84
Attitudes towards instructional arrangement	0.06	1	0.06	0.06	0.80
Attitudes towards social interaction	1.50	1	1.50	1.14	0.29
Ratings of importance of physical environment	0.56	1	0.56	0.64	0.43

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Ratings of importance of instructional arrangement	0.60	1	0.60	0.95	0.34
Ratings of importance of social interaction	0.68	1	0.68	0.94	0.34

Descriptive data were used to explore more on the attitudes and ratings of importance towards English learning environment for both teachers and students. Table 3 shows that the mean score of teachers for their attitudes and ratings of importance towards the English learning environment of the school was around 4, which means they were always experiencing an English learning environment and found it moderately important to them. For students, their mean score for attitudes and ratings of importance was around 4 and around 5 respectively, which means they were also always experiencing an English learning environment and found it important to them.

Table 3: Mean scores and Standard Deviation of major study variables.

		N	Mean	SD
Attitudes towards physical environment	Teachers	10	4.28	0.77
	Students	30	4.37	1.23
Attitudes towards instructional arrangement	Teachers	10	4.47	0.57
	Students	30	4.56	1.10
Attitudes towards social interaction	Teachers	10	4.29	0.70
	Students	30	4.73	1.25
Ratings of importance of physical environment	Teachers	10	4.82	0.66
	Students	30	5.09	1.01
Ratings of importance of instructional arrangement	Teacher	10	4.79	0.41
	Students	30	5.06	0.88
Ratings of importance of social interaction	Teachers	10	4.84	0.67
	Students	30	5.14	0.89

2. *Relationship between motivational strategies, attitudes and the ratings of importance towards English learning environment for teachers*

To study relationships between teachers' motivational strategies, their attitudes and the ratings of importance towards English learning environment, a Bivariate Correlation test was used to find out the correlation between these three variables. Table 4 reveals that the motivational strategies used by teachers and teachers' attitudes towards English learning environment at school were positively and highly correlated to each other, Pearson's $r(9) = .71, p < .05$. It can be concluded that in the perspective of teachers, the more motivational strategies were used, the more they could experience an English learning environment at school.

Table 4: Correlation between teachers' motivational strategies, attitudes and ratings of importance towards English learning environment for teachers.

		Teachers' motivational strategies	Attitudes towards English learning environment	Ratings of importance of English learning environment
Teachers' motivational strategies	Pearson Correlation	1.00	0.71*	0.49
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.02	0.15
Attitudes towards English learning environment	Pearson Correlation	0.71*	1.00	0.58
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.02		0.08
Ratings of importance of English learning environment	Pearson Correlation	0.49	0.58	1.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.15	0.08	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

3. Relationship between motivation, attitudes and ratings of importance towards English learning environment for students

Another Bivariate Correlation test was performed to find out the relationships between students' motivation, their attitudes and ratings of importance towards English learning environment. Table 5 shows that all three variables were positively correlated to one another. Students' motivation and their attitudes towards English learning environment were positively and moderately correlated, Pearson's $r(29) = .46, p < .05$. Students' motivation and their ratings of importance towards English learning environment were also positively and moderately correlated, Pearson's $r(29) = .44, p < .05$. Moreover, students' attitudes and their ratings of importance towards English learning environment resulted in a positive and high correlated relationship with each other, Pearson's $r(29) = .84, p < .01$. The result suggested that for students, the higher the motivation towards English learning, the more they could experience an English learning environment and the higher the importance of the environment to them.

Table 5: Correlation between students' motivation, attitudes and ratings of importance towards English learning environment for students.

		Students' motivation	Attitudes towards English learning environment	Ratings of importance of English learning environment
Students' motivation	Pearson Correlation	1.00	0.46*	0.44*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.01	0.02
Attitudes towards	Pearson Correlation	0.46*	1.00	0.84**

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English learning environment	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.01		0.00
Ratings of importance of English learning environment	Pearson Correlation	0.44*	0.84**	1.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.02	0.00	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4. Teacher's attitudes towards English learning environment

a. Attitudes towards motivational strategies

For lower primary students, most of them are visual learners. They rely on pictures to learn English a lot. Thus, teachers always use pictures as aids to arouse students' interests in learning English. Teachers encourage students to use pictures for English learning by themselves too.

Teacher W: I will match the words with pictures. I will not only teach the words solely because they are visual learners, especially they are children. They recognize the pictures better than the words. It will be more interesting to them too.

Teacher C: We will encourage them to use pictures for memorization the vocabulary. [...] By linking the picture and the word together, we hope that they can memorize the word better in terms of the shape and meaning of the word.

For upper primary students, they tend to learn English by doing group activities.

Teachers incorporate the element of group collaboration into their daily teaching, so as to make their teaching less teacher-centered and allow students to explore by themselves more.

Students' motivation could be enhanced through promoting more student-centered pedagogical approach.

Teacher V: We always use the cooperative learning approach, which they (students) have to work with others, help each other. [...] I think contextualized and activity-based classroom can motivate students more because there is a real reason for learning. The context and also the activities could help them see the importance of learning those things more easily.

Almost all the teachers being interviewed agree that teaching English through playing games is an effective motivational strategy to enhance students' motivation towards learning English. The strategy is applied to all students, including both lower and upper primary students.

Teacher Y: We usually use board game for consolidation. [...] Every student like playing games.

Every game. As simplest as guessing words, they enjoy playing it too.

Teacher C: Usually they are already very excited before playing the activities. They are very happy

after playing the games. These may act as initiatives to enhance their motivation.

Teacher W: In this kind of (school) environment, I think the children definitely like learning English through games. This is particularly useful for students in Key Stage 1 because they love playing a lot.

If they could play games and learn English at the same time, they would be benefited as they could have profound memory.

b. Importance, effects and limitations for building English learning environment

Teachers expressed their concerns for building English learning environment. Some teachers think it is important to build an authentic English environment for students to have actual use and practice of English, like promoting whole-school English activities. However, some think due to the limitation of school environment, policies, the capability of students speaking in English, it is hard to build a rich English learning environment for students in the context of non-EMI primary school.

Teacher V: It helps provides students a reason to learn and then it shows students like how to speak in English or do things in English. It's such a normal thing. I think in long term, it helps change students' learning attitude towards English or it changes students' way of seeing English, and seeing the importance of English, knowing how closely it is related to their everyday lives.

Teacher A: They would communicate with me in English. But as I also mentioned maybe some students they're really not at the sufficient standard to communicate with me or they don't have the confidence. [...] Some students are happy to do it. Some students feel challenging for them to do it.

Teacher W: For school, it is very hard to promote such an authentic environment [...] because it is difficult for local schools to be that English-oriented, except for EMI primary schools.

5. Students' attitudes towards English learning environment

a. Attitudes towards current English learning environment

Most students think the classroom setting is not spacial enough for doing activities. RSP room, a room for reading big books and doing a variety of reading related activities is seen as a place for learning English with fun. However, only lower primary students would have their English reading lessons in the RSP.

S11: For the lower primary students they will go to the room to have RSP lessons. It will be quite boring for us to have the lesson in our own classroom. We just sit there and listen.

S12: I don't really like the RSP lessons now. It was better when we were in P.1 to P.3 because at least we had some interacting activities with our classmates. There are not many interactions with others. It's quite boring.

S16: RSP lessons are more interesting than normal English lessons because we can play many things in the RSP lessons. Some of them are games. We had a chapter about bubbles and we even tried blowing some bubbles using the bubble water.

b. Awareness of English learning environment and motivation to use English

For students with higher ability in using English, they enjoy doing activities and communicating in English. Yet, for students with lower ability, they are shy to use English at school. They may rely on their mother tongue more and not dare to use English. The motivation of using English may be lower.

S4: I think if I suddenly use English to speak to classmates in leisure time, they will think I am very strange. Because I don't usually use English to speak.

S12: We seldom have opportunities to speak in English (at school). For those low-ability students, they don't know many words. [...] It is hard for us to communicate with them.

S8: The NET will speak faster in English, it is more suitable for us to learn English in that pace because when we speak to native speakers we're speaking in that pace too. For local teacher, the pace is too slow.

S11: NETs are more humorous. We will learn more colloquial English words from NET. We would like to talk more with Native speakers.

Differences were found in the types of motivation towards learning English among students. Most of the students have instrumental motivation towards English learning, while some of them have integrative motivation.

S5: I like English. Because most of the secondary schools and universities have English as the medium of instruction, it is important to learn English so as to communicate better.

S10: I'm not learning English just for getting into better secondary schools. I personally like writing English stories. I'm interested in creative writings.

V. Discussion

1. Perception on teaching in an English environment for teachers

There were no significant differences found in terms of attitudes and ratings of importance towards English learning environment between teachers and students in the findings. However, teachers' motivational strategies was found to be the major variable which positively correlates with their attitudes towards the English environment. This suggested that teachers' motivational strategies could be one of the crucial factors in promoting an English-

rich environment for Hong Kong primary schools. Teachers' perceptions and beliefs reveal their purposes of professional behaviours and practices (Gao & Ma, 2011). Through studying the teachers' perceptions, the relationship between motivation and learning environment could be justified from teachers' professional teaching experiences and judgement.

In the interviews with English teachers, their concerns with using real-life materials were expressed. Some of them believed that by integrating real-life contexts in English teaching, students would be more motivated to learn because there were some 'reasons' and 'purposes' for them to learn English. English should not be seen as a subject for assessment in Hong Kong primary schools only, it was suggested as a way to express oneself, thus it should be connected to students' real-life experiences closely. Hampton and Mason (2003) suggested that students learning in an environment with real-life issues embedded would tend to have positive self-efficacy on that curriculum subject. Schunk (1995) pointed out that students with self-efficacy would engage in learning with strategic efforts and more motivated to reach their goals. Promoting real-life contextualized learning activities was highly encouraged by the teachers teaching in an English environment in order to motivate students' L2 learning. In the primary school for investigation, English activities like Christmas Day is organized yearly to provide opportunities for students to interact with one another using English in a festive context. They are motivated to use English to greet their teachers with Christmas blessings and talk to their teachers by using simple English. This can be seen as a way to motivate students to use English in relaxing atmosphere and in a real-life context.

2. Attitudes towards learning in an English environment at school for students

The findings suggested that students' motivation, their attitudes and ratings of importance towards English learning environment were significantly correlated to one another. As found in the interviews with students, the students pointed out that gaming as a way to learn was highly motivating for them towards English learning. Interaction with peers in group activities was seen as a factor to determine their positiveness towards English learning. According to the research by Sagan (2010), students should be included in the decision-process which would affect what happen in their schools. Thus, students' attitudes towards the current English learning environment of the school should be seen as an important source for the improvement of the learning environment. In this study, students generally had positive attitudes towards the current English learning environment and expressed their opinions towards the hindrance in English learning. For instance, instead of talking to the Native English teacher, some of the students would talk to the local English teachers in Cantonese because they were shy to speak in English and lack of confidence.

Teachers and schools could promote a more positive and relaxing atmosphere for stimulating students' use of English at school. English games as suggested by students could be taken into account when designing school-based English curriculum. Through games, students could have chances to speak in English in a fun and relaxing atmosphere, even for students having lower ability in using English. In addition, collecting feedbacks from students on English learning environment could be done regularly so as to include more students'

voice and participation.

3. Relationship between motivation and English learning environment

As suggested by Smith, Neisworth and Greer (1978), school learning environment could be categorized into five aspects, namely ‘physical environment’, ‘instructional arrangements’, ‘social situation’, ‘evaluation instruments and evaluative practices’ and ‘supportive services’. In Hong Kong primary school context, physical environment, instructional arrangements and social situation could be seen as the three most relevant aspects in language learning environment.

The findings suggested that these aspects were correlated with students’ motivation in learning English, as there were high correlations between experiencing an English learning environment and students’ motivation towards English learning. Thus, Hong Kong primary school should put more resources in promoting an English environment. As stated in the English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) published by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) in 2004, English-rich environment created at schools could arouse students’ interests and curiosity towards English learning in the real world. Wong (2014) also concluded that EFL learners viewed creating a positive learning environment as a motivational strategy. When designing school-based English language curriculum, apart from considering emphases like teachers’ professional training and subject curriculum arrangement, promotion of English-rich positive learning environment should not be

neglected and might be valued as an important factor in enhancing students' motivation and self-efficacy towards English learning.

VI. Conclusion

This research provided new insights and implications in English teaching and learning within an English learning environment in primary schools. It also suggested that in Hong Kong primary school context, there is a positive relationship between learning environment and students' motivation, which echoed with the result found in the study of Hsieh (2002).

When designing school-based English curriculum, promoting English-rich environment is an essential component which educators should consider. Limitations of this study should be noted. In this study, due to ethical issues, the survey and interviews were conducted in only one Hong Kong primary school. Therefore, the generalization of the findings to all Hong Kong primary schools should be interpreted with caution. On the other hand, the group size for both teachers and students in this study were not equal, thus the findings should also be interpreted with caution

This study shed a light on future research. Since the current study was only conducted in a non-EMI Hong Kong primary school, differences may be found in other Hong Kong primary schools, including the EMI ones. Differences may be found between different types of primary schools in terms of their English learning environment. Meanwhile, the findings from this study may help lay a foundation for future research to construct a model, which

aims to find out the relationships between students' motivation, L2 proficiency and learning environment related variables.

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Appendix 1. Survey questionnaire for teachers.**Questionnaire for teachers**

Gender: _____

Years of teaching: _____

Part 1: Motivational strategies:***(adapted from McEown and Takeguchi, 2014)***

Please circle the number.

*In a 6-point scale, 1 indicates 'never', while 6 indicates 'always'.

Items	Always					Never
A1) Circulate around in the classroom to observe each student carefully	6	5	4	3	2	1
A2) Ask students to be quiet when needed to maintain a better learning environment in the classroom	6	5	4	3	2	1
A3) Start the class exactly on time	6	5	4	3	2	1
A4) Make a clear explanation for class assessments and exams	6	5	4	3	2	1
A5) Make clear answers and explanations for students' questions and also the content of the textbook	6	5	4	3	2	1
A6) Provide individual support for each student	6	5	4	3	2	1
A7) Bring a variety of learning materials	6	5	4	3	2	1
A8) Keep pace with the students and get them involved in the activities	6	5	4	3	2	1
A9) Speak in English with proper pronunciation	6	5	4	3	2	1
A10) Speak in a clear and loud voice	6	5	4	3	2	1
A11) Write clearly on blackboard/whiteboard	6	5	4	3	2	1
A12) Provide positive rewards and praise to the students	6	5	4	3	2	1
A13) Provide some background knowledge/supplement information	6	5	4	3	2	1
A14) Bring humour into the classroom	6	5	4	3	2	1
A15) Perform in a positive manner in the classroom	6	5	4	3	2	1
A16) Display enthusiasm of teaching English	6	5	4	3	2	1

Part 2: English learning environment in school:*(adapted from Wu and Wu, 2008)*

2.1) Have you seen / experienced the following items in your teaching and in school?

Please circle the number.

*In a 6-point scale, 1 indicates 'never', while 6 indicates 'always'.

Items (項目)	Always					Never
C1) A small enough student-to-teacher ratio to allow teachers and students to become well acquainted	6	5	4	3	2	1
C2) A place on campus for students to practice English outside of class time	6	5	4	3	2	1
C3) A well-equipped place in school with audio/visual materials for students' independent study	6	5	4	3	2	1
C4) Ample space for multiple class-time activities	6	5	4	3	2	1
C5) Bilingual signs and English learning bulletin board on campus	6	5	4	3	2	1
C6) A variety of teaching activities for learning	6	5	4	3	2	1
C7) Instruction focused on two-way communication	6	5	4	3	2	1
C8) Use of authentic, real-life related materials for teaching	6	5	4	3	2	1
C9) Provide enough opportunities to talk with native English speakers	6	5	4	3	2	1
C10) Provide enough time for students to practice English with their peers in class	6	5	4	3	2	1
C11) The use of real-world, current-affairs learning materials	6	5	4	3	2	1
C12) The use Commercial movies/TV in English	6	5	4	3	2	1
C13) A focus on students' real-life issues in English conversation	6	5	4	3	2	1
C14) Introduction to Western cultures in class	6	5	4	3	2	1
C15) The use of current computer and teaching technologies	6	5	4	3	2	1
C16) Quality printed-text materials in English	6	5	4	3	2	1
C17) Learning strategies taught by teachers to make individual mastery of English easier	6	5	4	3	2	1
C18) Regular in-class drill and practice	6	5	4	3	2	1
C19) Regular translation of English into Cantonese	6	5	4	3	2	1
C20) Requirement for students to engage in English conversation during most classes	6	5	4	3	2	1

C21) Allow class activities suggested by the students	6	5	4	3	2	1
C22) Opportunities to actually use English in my community	6	5	4	3	2	1
C23) Awareness of students' use of English in class	6	5	4	3	2	1
C24) Allow students to have small-group discussions to accomplish English-learning tasks	6	5	4	3	2	1
C25) Student peer tutoring	6	5	4	3	2	1
C26) Have enthusiasm for teaching English	6	5	4	3	2	1
C27) Design small-group tasks focused on collaboration among members	6	5	4	3	2	1

2.2) How important does this item mean to you for your English teaching?

Please circle the number. (請圈出數字)

*In a 6-point scale, 1 indicates 'not important at all', while 6 indicates 'very important'.

Items	Very important					Not important at all
D1) A small enough student-to-teacher ratio to allow teachers and students to become well acquainted	6	5	4	3	2	1
D2) A place on campus for students to practice English outside of class time	6	5	4	3	2	1
D3) A well-equipped place in school with audio/visual materials for students' independent study	6	5	4	3	2	1
D4) Ample space for multiple class-time activities	6	5	4	3	2	1
D5) Bilingual signs and English learning bulletin board on campus	6	5	4	3	2	1
D6) A variety of teaching activities for learning	6	5	4	3	2	1
D7) Instruction focused on two-way communication	6	5	4	3	2	1
D8) Use of authentic, real-life related materials for teaching	6	5	4	3	2	1
D9) Provide enough opportunities to talk with native English speakers	6	5	4	3	2	1
D10) Provide enough time for students to practice English with their peers in class	6	5	4	3	2	1
D11) The use of real-world, current-affairs learning materials	6	5	4	3	2	1

D12) The use Commercial movies/TV in English	6	5	4	3	2	1
D13) A focus on students' real-life issues in English conversation	6	5	4	3	2	1
D14) Introduction to Western cultures in class	6	5	4	3	2	1
D15) The use of current computer and teaching technologies	6	5	4	3	2	1
D16) Quality printed-text materials in English	6	5	4	3	2	1
D17) Learning strategies taught by teachers to make individual mastery of English easier	6	5	4	3	2	1
D18) Regular in-class drill and practice	6	5	4	3	2	1
D19) Regular translation of English into Cantonese	6	5	4	3	2	1
D20) Requirement for students to engage in English conversation during most classes	6	5	4	3	2	1
D21) Allow class activities suggested by the students	6	5	4	3	2	1
D22) Opportunities to actually use English in my community	6	5	4	3	2	1
D23) Awareness of students' use of English in class	6	5	4	3	2	1
D24) Allow students to have small-group discussions to accomplish English-learning tasks	6	5	4	3	2	1
D25) Student peer tutoring	6	5	4	3	2	1
D26) Have enthusiasm for teaching English	6	5	4	3	2	1
D27) Design small-group tasks focused on collaboration among members	6	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix 2. Survey questionnaire for students.**Questionnaire for students (學生問卷)**

Gender (性別): _____

Primary school level (班級): P _____

Part 1: Motivation to learn English (學習英文的動力):**(adapted from Peng and Woodrow, 2010)**

Please circle the number. (請圈出數字)

*In a 6-point scale, 1 indicates 'strongly disagree', while 6 indicates 'strongly agree'.

1 表示極之不同意，6 表示極之同意。

Items (項目)	Strongly Agree (極之同意)					Strongly disagree (極之不同意)
B1) For the pleasure I experience when studying the English subject. 為了得到學習英文的愉悅感	6	5	4	3	2	1
B2) Because I enjoy the feeling of knowing more about the English-speaking community and their way of life. 因為我享受了解更多有關以英文為母語的群體和他們的生活方式	6	5	4	3	2	1
B3) For the satisfied feeling I get in finding out new things. 為了得到發掘新事物的滿足感	6	5	4	3	2	1
B4) For the enjoyment I experience when I overcome the difficulties in English. 為了成功克服學習英文的障礙而得到的快樂	6	5	4	3	2	1
B5) In order to go to a better secondary school / get a more prestigious job later on. 為了考上一間好的中學/得到好的工作	6	5	4	3	2	1
B6) Because I have to pass English examinations. 因為我要英文考試合格	6	5	4	3	2	1
B7) Because I choose to be the kind of person who can speak English. 因為我想成為一個可以用英文與人溝通的人	6	5	4	3	2	1

B8) Because I choose to be the kind of person who can speak more than one language. 因為我想成為一個可以運用多國語言的人	6	5	4	3	2	1
B9) Because I think it is good for my personal development. 因為我覺得學習英文有助我的個人發展/成長	6	5	4	3	2	1

Part 2: English learning environment in school: (英語學習環境):

(adapted from Wu and Wu, 2008)

2.1) Have you seen / experienced the following items in classroom and in school?

你在課堂或學校有沒有以下經歷?

Please circle the number. (請圈出數字)

*In a 6-point scale, 1 indicates 'never', while 6 indicates 'always'.

1 表示從不，6 表示經常。

Items (項目)	Always (經常)					Never (從不)
C1) A small enough student-to-teacher ratio to allow teachers and students to become well acquainted 一個足夠師生融洽相處的師生比例	6	5	4	3	2	1
C2) A place on campus to practice English outside of class time 一個能讓我在課堂時間外練習英文的地方	6	5	4	3	2	1
C3) A well-equipped place in school with audio/visual materials for independent study 一個有足夠視聽材料讓我自主學習英文的地方	6	5	4	3	2	1
C4) Ample space for multiple class-time activities 有足夠空間進行多個課堂活動	6	5	4	3	2	1
C5) Bilingual signs and English learning bulletin board on campus 在校園內有中英對照的標示和貼有英文學習材料的壁報板	6	5	4	3	2	1
C6) A variety of teaching activities for learning 多樣的教學活動	6	5	4	3	2	1
C7) My teachers' instruction focused on two-way communication 老師著重於雙向溝通的講解	6	5	4	3	2	1
C8) Teachers' use of authentic, real-life related materials for learning	6	5	4	3	2	1

老師運用了真實、日常生活的學習材料						
C9) Opportunities to talk with native English speakers 與英文為母語的人交談的機會	6	5	4	3	2	1
C10) Time to practice English with my peers in class 有時間與同學在英文堂練習英文	6	5	4	3	2	1
C11) The use of real-world, current-affairs learning materials 老師運用了現實生活和時事的學習材料	6	5	4	3	2	1
C12) Commercial movies/TV in English 老師運用了英語電影或電視節目作為教材	6	5	4	3	2	1
C13) A focus on students' real-life issues in English conversation 著重學生在日常生活情況的英語運用的教學	6	5	4	3	2	1
C14) Teachers' introduction to Western cultures in class 老師在堂上向學生介紹西方文化	6	5	4	3	2	1
C15) The use of current computer and teaching technologies 老師運用了最新的電腦和其他科技設備(例如:網上學習)	6	5	4	3	2	1
C16) Quality printed-text materials in English 有質素的油印英文材料	6	5	4	3	2	1
C17) Learning strategies taught by teachers to make individual mastery of English easier 老師教授了讓學生容易掌握英文的學習方法	6	5	4	3	2	1
C18) Regular in-class drill and practice 恆常的課堂操練和練習	6	5	4	3	2	1
C19) Regular translation of English into Cantonese 老師恆常地翻譯英文至中文	6	5	4	3	2	1
C20) Requirement for students to engage in English conversation during most classes 老師在大多數的課堂內要求學生使用英文溝通	6	5	4	3	2	1
C21) Class activities suggested by the students 學生能為課堂活動提出建議	6	5	4	3	2	1
C22) Opportunities to actually use English in my community 在我的群體內有實際使用英文的機會	6	5	4	3	2	1
C23) My teacher's awareness of my use of English in class 老師有注意到我在課堂內使用英文	6	5	4	3	2	1
C24) Small-group discussion to accomplish English-learning tasks	6	5	4	3	2	1

以完成英文的學習活動而進行的小組討論						
C25) Peer tutoring 朋輩間的英文支援	6	5	4	3	2	1
C26) My teacher's enthusiasm for teaching English 老師對英文教學的熱誠	6	5	4	3	2	1
C27) Small-group tasks focused on collaboration among members 著重於同學間的協作的小組活動	6	5	4	3	2	1

2.2) How important does this item mean to you for you English learning?

你認為這些經歷有多重要?

Please circle the number. (請圈出數字)

*In a 6-point scale, 1 indicates 'not important at all', while 6 indicates 'very important'.

1 表示極不重要，6 表示極重要。

Items (項目)	Very important (極重要)					Not important at all (極不重要)
D1) A small enough student-to-teacher ratio to allow teachers and students to become well acquainted 一個足夠師生融洽相處的師生比例	6	5	4	3	2	1
D2) A place on campus to practice English outside of class time 一個能讓我在課堂時間外練習英文的地方	6	5	4	3	2	1
D3) A well-equipped place in school with audio/visual materials for independent study 一個有足夠視聽材料讓我自主學習英文的地方	6	5	4	3	2	1
D4) Ample space for multiple class-time activities 有足夠空間進行多個課堂活動	6	5	4	3	2	1
D5) Bilingual signs and English learning bulletin board on campus 在校園內有中英對照的標示和貼有英文學習材料的壁報板	6	5	4	3	2	1
D6) A variety of teaching activities for learning 多樣的教學活動	6	5	4	3	2	1
D7) My teachers' instruction focused on two-way communication 老師著重於雙向溝通的講解	6	5	4	3	2	1

D8) Teachers' use of authentic, real-life related materials for learning 老師運用了真實、日常生活的學習材料	6	5	4	3	2	1
D9) Opportunities to talk with native English speakers 與英文為母語的人交談的機會	6	5	4	3	2	1
D10) Time to practice English with my peers in class 有時間與同學在英文堂練習英文	6	5	4	3	2	1
D11) The use of real-world, current-affairs learning materials 老師運用了現實生活和時事的學習材料	6	5	4	3	2	1
D12) Commercial movies/TV in English 老師運用了英語電影或電視節目作為教材	6	5	4	3	2	1
D13) A focus on students' real-life issues in English conversation 著重學生在日常生活情況的英語運用的教學	6	5	4	3	2	1
D14) Teachers' introduction to Western cultures in class 老師在堂上向學生介紹西方文化	6	5	4	3	2	1
D15) The use of current computer and teaching technologies 老師運用了最新的電腦和其他科技設備(例如:網上學習)	6	5	4	3	2	1
D16) Quality printed-text materials in English 有質素的油印英文材料	6	5	4	3	2	1
D17) Learning strategies taught by teachers to make individual mastery of English easier 老師教授了讓學生容易掌握英文的學習方法	6	5	4	3	2	1
D18) Regular in-class drill and practice 恆常的課堂操練和練習	6	5	4	3	2	1
D19) Regular translation of English into Cantonese 老師恆常地翻譯英文至中文	6	5	4	3	2	1
D20) Requirement for students to engage in English conversation during most classes 老師在大多數的課堂內要求學生使用英文溝通	6	5	4	3	2	1
D21) Class activities suggested by the students 學生能為課堂活動提出建議	6	5	4	3	2	1
D22) Opportunities to actually use English in my community 在我的群體內有實際使用英文的機會	6	5	4	3	2	1

D23) My teacher's awareness of my use of English in class 老師有注意到我在課堂內使用英文	6	5	4	3	2	1
D24) Small-group discussion to accomplish English-learning tasks 以完成英文的學習活動而進行的小組討論	6	5	4	3	2	1
D25) Peer tutoring 朋輩間的英文支援	6	5	4	3	2	1
C26) My teacher's enthusiasm for teaching English 老師對英文教學的熱誠	6	5	4	3	2	1
C27) Small-group tasks focused on collaboration among members 著重於同學間的協作的小組活動	6	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix 3. Interview Guide.

Interview questions for teachers:

1. What do you think about the English learning environment of the primary school? Is it favorable for students to practice English?
2. What has been done for promoting an authentic English environment? Do you think the activities / strategies are effective? What is the feedback from students and teachers?
3. According to your observations and experiences, are students more motivated in learning English through the English activities held by teachers and the school?
4. Do you think 'motivation' is one of the crucial factors for students in language learning? Have you adopted strategies which enhance students' motivation in learning English?
5. In your opinion, how can the environment be improved if there are shortcomings in the current English activities for students?

Interview questions for students:

1. What English activities have you joined in previous years? Which one is the most unforgettable one? Do you like it? Why?
你曾經參加過哪些英語活動? 哪一個是你最印象深刻的? 為什麼?
2. Do you think the activities held by the school help you learn English effectively?
你認為學校舉辦的英語活動能夠幫助你有效學習英語嗎?
3. Have you ever read the English notices / bulletins / articles / quotes on the noticeboards at school? Are you interested in reading the English materials? Do you understand the English materials? Have you ever learnt some new vocabulary through reading the English materials?
你曾經閱讀過學校壁報版上的英文通告/校刊/文章/語錄嗎? 你有否從這些途徑學習到新的英文生字?
4. Do you enjoy your English lessons? What do you like / dislike about the English lessons? Do you feel motivated to learn English after having English lesson?
你喜歡英文堂嗎? 你喜歡/不喜歡哪個方面? 上英文堂後你有否覺得更有動力去學習英文?
5. How often do you use English to communicate at school except in English lesson? Who do you communicate with (e.g. peers, teachers, NET, etc.)?
你多常在學校使用英文(除了在英文堂)? 你會和誰用英文交談?
6. In your opinion, comparing to the in-class activities, do you think the out-class English activities are more enjoyable?
對你而言, 比起課堂內的英文活動, 你是否更享受參與課堂外的英文活動?
7. Do you find any difference between the teaching methods adopted by local English teachers and the native English teacher at school? Which method would you prefer?
你是否覺得學校的本地英文老師和外籍英文老師的教學方法存有不同? 你比較喜歡哪個教學方法?

Appendix 4. Sample interview transcriptions.

1.

Date: 15th December, 2018

Participant: S12, S13, S14, S15, I

I: Have you joined any English activities at school?

S12: Yes. I've joined the English Plan A. We need to revise the things we learnt in the English lessons, like grammar and finish some intensive reading exercise. There are also reading comprehension exercise. We seldom talk to each other in the lesson. We usually go to the computer room to finish the exercise.

S13: Yes. I've joined the preparation class for S.1 interview. We will have mock interviews in the class. The teacher will make use of powerpoint and show some interview question to us.

S14: I've joined the English Plan A too.

I: Do you think the English Plan A is fun?

S12: Yes. There are plenty of exercise in different units. After you finish all the assigned exercise, the teacher will let you pick some difficult words appear in the exercise. Then, the teacher will go through the meanings of the words with me. I will take a look at the words I've written when I go back home. Sometimes, I can use those words in my writings.

I: Have you listened to the announcements about English Day?

All: Yes.

I: Have you noticed the vocabulary being shown during the announcement? Do you know them?

All: Yes.

S12: I seldom memorize those words because they are not very difficult. I did not intentionally memorize them all.

I: Have you noticed the quotes posted in the staircase?

All: Yes.

S12: They are encouragement quotes. There are not that much in our classroom. We have mainly Chinese notice.

S13: We have some quotes in English posted near the windows, “5E is the best”.

S12: In classroom for English, we usually have some mottoes.

I: Do you like having RSP lessons?

S12: I don't really like the RSP lessons now. It was better when we were in P.1 to P.3 because at least we had some interacting activities with our classmates. Now, I think the books we're reading together as P.5 students are too easy. After reading the books, we finish some worksheets related to the stories. There are not many interactions with others. It's quite boring.

S14: I think the activities in RSP lessons are quite boring too. The books are too easy for us, there are not many words in them. Those books I read for RB are more difficult.

S12: RB books are better, but those are not really suitable for P.5 students.

S14: The school shouldn't ask us to do the RB. It seems like we are reading the books just for finding the meanings of words in the books. Checking meaning of words in the dictionary is quite troublesome.

S12: The purpose is good. But I think letting us to read books is already good. No need to ask us to check meanings in dictionary.

S12: We have list of vocabulary in the MWB. They are frequent words.

S14: Those words are too easy.

I: How do you use the MWB to learn?

S12: There are checklists in the MWB. The teacher will ask us to read 10 frequent words every day. After reading the words need to read aloud. If we pronounce the words correctly, we put a tick besides the words.

S14: Our parents will sign after we pronounce the words correctly.

S13: We need to read aloud the words to our parents.

S14: Then our parents will pick some words from the lists randomly and see if we can pronounce them correctly.

S12: We do this every day from P.1 to P.3..

I: Do you like doing group work or individual work more in English lessons?

S15: Both are okay.

S14: Sometimes it is hard for me communicate with others when doing group work.

S12: Because in each group, there are some high-ability students and low-ability students, it is hard to communicate with the low-ability students because they do not have good English. I need to lead them in doing most of the work. It is quite troublesome.

S14: Sometimes the low-ability do not understand most of the words in the tasks, we have to teach them.

S12: After we teach them, when we go out for presentations, the low-ability students will forget how to pronounce the words again.

S14: Sometimes they are not willing to do.

S13: Even we have read aloud with them, they will still forget.

S12: Sometimes I have to finish the parts which are supposed to be finished by the low-ability students. They will just chit-chat with others.

S14: They will use Cantonese to chit-chat and play with others.

S13: Because English is hard for them.

S12: Unless it is necessary, they will use Cantonese normally.

I: Do you hope to have more opportunities to speak in English in the English lessons?

All: Yes.

I: Which aspect is more important in your opinion? Writing or speaking?

All: Speaking.

S12: We seldom have opportunities to speak in English. For those low-ability students, they only know 'I', 'you', 'we', 'they', 'he', 'she' and 'it'. They don't know many other words. They have better performance in writing. It is hard for us to communicate with them.

I: Is there any places at school which you can have English self-learning?

All: No.

S12+S13: We have I-learner.

S14: We have Goodies to read.

S15: Everyone needs to subscribe it. It will be distributed on every Thursday.

S14: The NET will read with us through the PA system. He read the article first. Then we follow him to read aloud.

I: Have you learnt some new words through reading Goodies?

S12: No.

S14: Yes.

S13: We don't remember the words after the NET reads.

S14: We can understand the meaning of words by looking at the Chinese translation at the bottom.

I: Do you think there are differences between the teaching style of NET and local teachers?

S12: There are small differences. For NET, he will let us try something first. The local teachers seem to control quite a lot on us, like they are reading and doing things all by themselves. In my opinion, I think the NET will let us try something before telling us how to do.

I: What is your motivation towards learning English?

S12: I think English is fun. For me I think it is easier to communicate with others in English. I sometimes speak in English at home if our family members want to.

S14: I quite like English.

I: Will you treat it as a tool to communicate with others when you are travelling to other places?

All: Yes.

S13: Because many countries use English to communicate with others.

S15: We can also speak in English when we travel to Japan. If you don't know how to speak in Japanese, you can speak in English.

S14: More and more people are using English.

S13: Mainly learning about others' cultures.

I: What is the ideal way to learn vocabulary in English lessons in your opinion?

S12: Actually not many vocabulary items are taught in lessons. There will be more vocabulary to learn in P.1. But now we don't usually learn vocabulary in lessons.

S13: Only learn through reading the RB books.

S12: We have revised text which we need to check the meaning of the words we don't know before reading the whole text in class. But it is more beneficial for those low-ability students. The level of difficulty of revised text is quite low.

I: Do you speak in English outside class? Like talking to the NET?

S14: I seldom meet him.

S12: I tried several times. I use English to ask local teachers if I have questions, but not much.

S13: I will talk to English teachers in English even outside class.

S12: If we are not having lessons, I will talk to them in Cantonese.

I: Do you think it will be more interesting to learn English if you're able to make or create something by yourselves when you're leaning certain topics? Like setting up a restaurant when you're learning how to order food?

All: Yes.

S14: We've done something like this before, like making a menu.

S13: We've tried some contexts like being in MTR stations.

S14: Sometimes when we've done part of the activity, the teacher will say we will continue in next lesson. But actually we didn't finish the other part in the next lesson.

S12: Same situation also happened in RSP lessons. We did more of this kind of activity in P.1 to P.3. Now the activity and the curriculum is more exam-oriented.

2.

Date: 15th January, 2018

Participant: Miss Wong (V), Interviewer (I)

I: Good morning Vince, I would like to ask about the English activities held by the school. And... what do you think about the English learning environment of the primary school.

V: I think our school comparing with many other primary schools in Hong Kong, is quite good already because we have language day every week. But, in the past, we had English Day every Wednesday, but because there were so many other activities going on, it's quite overwhelming having so many activities on different days. After different departments communicating and talking about how to reorganize everything, we decided to have language day on Wednesdays. So on every alternate week, we have Putonghua Day and English Day, so on that day we have English morning assemblies, doing some simple activities with students. Like sometimes we have the tongue twister competition or we have some simple games playing with the kids in English or some thematic things to do with the kids, for example, if there're exams coming up or special festivals, or special school events, then we're going to go through terms in English with the kids. And we have Lunchtime Stories for junior primary students. We have all these and also we have some festive events every year. This year we had

Halloween activities, in which all the parents came and played games with the kids and gave out candies. Things like that. This year we try something really new to us, we have the Christmas English-speaking Day that they (the students) will have to all speak in English. We have all the student teachers designing English activities, like English booths for students to play games and also we have classroom activities for the game part in the Christmas Party. Also we have lots of life-wide learning activities, I think it's quite good already.

I: Do you have the feedback from students saying that the activities help them to learn English?

V: Yes, every year we have a (set) of questionnaire asking them how much they like the activities. From the questionnaires, it seems that they enjoyed the activities.

I: If we talk about the in-class activities, what strategies do you use to help them learn English in your lesson, like help them learn the vocabulary especially?

V: We always use the cooperative learning approach, which they (students) have to work with others, help each other. There are also individual accountabilities. We will do short assessments after the group work to see if they really work well. I think this is one of the very effective strategies teaching vocabulary. When we teach vocabulary, we do not teach vocabulary alone. We try to give them useful structures which they could use in everyday lives, like a more communicative approach. They could see how the vocabulary items could be used in real-life context.

I: Have you tried to use some situated learning, like when they are learning about the food items, maybe they will set up a food stall?

V: Yes, we will set up a context for them. Sometimes we set up a context for them, sometimes we set up a task for them like a problem they have to solve.

I: Do you think students are motivated when they are learning in a context, a situated learning?

V: I think a classroom is quite a complicated place. There are so many different factors affecting the motivation and what they like to do and what they don't like to do. For example, how much they like the teacher. But if you are talking about the approach alone, I think contextualized and activity-based classroom can motivate students more because there is a real reason for learning. The context and also the activities could help them see the importance of learning those things more easily.

I: In the school, do you think there are something to be added to help them learn English by themselves?

V: We have done a lot to help them learn by themselves. We have tremendous resources on the school homepage for all the aspects. I would say all the aspects which they could learn by themselves. We have the day readers recordings online. We have the phonics, even the videos online, showing them how to articulate different sounds. We have the Magic Word Bank audio clips. And we have the dictation revision recordings online. We have the dictation revision sheets online. We have grammar activities online. And even the textbook units in PowerPoint format with recordings online. For P1 and P2, in our new programme, we have QR codes on every page. In the past, some companies made the electronic reading pens. They had to scan some codes and read. Now, we're using the phone as a device to read aloud the content and even we make videos of stories for students to listen at home. I think we've taken care of all the aspects they could do something by themselves at home. We have provided more than enough resources for them.

I: How about in the classroom, do they have some vocabulary stick on the board for them to read?

V: The English room is a very print-rich environment. On the staircase, we also try to put some English posters around. In the classroom, it depends. Some teacher will put more things which they could use, but it's a little bit difficult because every time they have dictations, tests and exams. They have to be taken down. I think in reality, we need to balance teachers' workload and students' needs. It's quite frequent for the dictations and exams. It's really troublesome. We have thought of other areas. English Room will not have this problem and the staircase will not have this problem too. But still, teachers, especially for lower forms, they will put up phonics chants or signs which promote a positive learning environment, or some quotes, or some free-writing materials. I think that's may not be really focusing on vocabulary teaching, I mean the key or the focused vocabulary items, but it also benefits vocabulary teaching because the teachers are for example putting free-writing materials on the board. It really encourages students to use new vocabulary or learn new vocabulary. So you cannot say "Oh, we're not putting the taught items on the boards so it doesn't encourage them to learn more words."

I: The last question, do you think there is a positive relationship between promoting an authentic environment in English and the vocabulary acquisition of students?

V: It means promoting authentic environment could help students learn vocabulary better? Or learn English better? (I: Vocabulary.) I don't think there is a direct relationship. It's not a

causal relationship, but it's correlated. Because to be honest, a lot of vocabulary items like I've mentioned during morning assemblies, maybe there's exam coming, we introduce some study tips or some tips for them to stay healthy so they can try their best in exam. Things like these. I don't think they can really remember everything we talked during the assemblies or during the activities. But it helps set up a positive environment. It helps provides students a reason to learn and then it shows students like how to speak in English or do things in English. It's such a normal thing. I think in long term, it helps change students' learning attitude towards English or it changes students' way of seeing English, and seeing the importance of English, knowing how closely it is related to their everyday lives. I think that's why I say there's a strong correlation, but it's not a causal and direct relationship. It won't really improve so much just after one activity or two activities. But in long-run, I think it will be an initiative for them to learn English.

I: This is the end of the interview. Thank you so much.

3.

Date: 23rd January, 2018

Participant: Miss Wu (W), Interviewer (I)

W: This is my second year to be teaching in this school, not a very long time. But I can see that the English proficiency of students here is not very high, which means their motivation towards learning English is relatively lower. Therefore, I think that the teachers here have made use of all methods they could think of already. As you can see for the student in Key Stage 1, we organize a lot of activities for them. In this kind of environment, I think the children definitely like learning English through playing games. This is particularly useful for students in Key Stage 1 because they love playing a lot. If they could play games and learn English at the same time, they would be benefited as they could have profound memory.

For the environment of learning English, I think it is not very English-rich, but I think some element are there. Some English teacher even when they are not having lessons, they insist to talk to students in English. The more the students are exposed to English, they faster they could learn. Since they are only have one to two English lesson every day, it is not enough for them to be exposed to English. Some teachers are willing to do something that is out of the curriculum to help them learn English, for example some teachers teaching Key Stage 2 student, they will ask the students to write about newspaper-cutting. It is not within the syllabus. Those teachers may think that these tasks could help students who are willing to learn English. Or some teachers will make a lot of notes for students as reference. They will revise the learning focus with students together, like the grammar items, because the students are having a comparatively weak foundation of English, it is quite hard to make them

understand by just using context-based approach. We hope to carry out context-based approach all the time ideally, but some students need the techniques to learn English more, I think the teachers in this school are willing to do all these things to provide a better English learning environment for students.

I: For the vocabulary learning, what strategies do you use in class?

W: When I teach students in Key Stage 1, I will read the vocabulary items with them first. Because if you don't read with them, they won't know how to spell the words. That's why I usually read with them first. Then, I will chunk the words by using phonics. After using phonics to help pronounce the words, I will use the common 'cut small words' method to teach them the spelling of words, as they know more small words rather than a long word. Since they are still small, they have short-term memory. The trend is still quite exam-oriented, so in most of time they are learning the words (speaking and spelling) for exam purpose. This is quite sad, but in the current situation these methods could really help them for exams. The 'cut small words' methods and phonics can actually be used continuously. Also, I will match the words with pictures. I will not only teach the words solely because they are visual learners, especially they are children. They recognize the pictures better than the words. It will be more interesting to them too. I usually use these methods to teach vocabulary. First, learn the pronunciation of the words by using phonics, then learn the spelling of the words. I have a class which I teach them from P.1 to P.6, I can see they've got used to this type of learning pattern already. When I introduce some new vocabulary items to them, they already know how to chunk the words and pronounce them. But the lower primary students are not yet similar with the pattern. It needs to be developed gradually.

I: Do you usually have group work learning in lessons?

W: Yes, most of the time. Sometimes we have pair works. For group work, it requires 4 to 5 students to be in a group. When you assist them by taking turns, 1 to 2 students will usually be left out, they may wait for others to help them do or read their parts. They may not be very engaged. Group work is good, but pair work is also beneficial, because there are only 2 students in a pair, they will really need to do by themselves. I think the frequency of taking turns in speaking in English will be higher. We adopt both methods. We also have these activities for Key Stage 2 students, but we will carry out these activities more in Key Stage 1. We hope to instill these knowledge to their brains by playing games. Most of the Key Stage 2 students are self-aware, they know that they are going to get into secondary schools, so they will pay much more attention to their studies. We do not need to provide a lot of activities for them to understand.

I: When teaching Key Stage 1 students, will the medium of instruction always be English?

W: No. Sometimes when I am introducing some difficult concepts, for example I am explaining the concept 'subject-verb-object', they will not understand. But if I use Chinses to talk about it, like this is talking about people, this one is action, this one is place, they will understand when we are talking them precisely in Chinese. If I only talk about 'subject', 'verb' and 'object', they could not understand and internalize. Therefore, sometimes when I am introducing some important concepts, I will use some Chinese to explain to them. It is quite unavoidable because if you really want them to recognize the meanings, it could not be done in only 1 to 2 lessons. I think it is okay to use some Chinese in these situations as I am not talking in Chinese for whole lesson. I am teaching the Cantonese class, when I am teaching some language focus, although the students are in Cantonese class, it does not mean they do not understand English at all, I will repeat some patterns again and again to make them understand a certain sentence means a certain kind of meaning. It really takes time. So when I am introducing some important concepts, I will use some Chinese.

I: Will they depend on the Chinese translation of meaning a lot?

W: A few times only. Since when we are teaching Key Stage 1 students, we've matched the words with pictures already. They can realize the meaning by looking at the pictures. We also have both English and Chinese meanings for the words in SLB. For example for verb table, it is impossible for me to match every word with a picture, so we include the Chinese meanings right besides the English words. It facilitates both students and their parents for revision because not every parent know how to teach them English, so we hope to help students and the parents at the same time by knowing how to read the words. The students will not be very dependent on Chinese, there are a lot of resources provided for them already. And they know how to make use of dictionary. They may not know how to use the paper version, but they know how to use the online version. I also encourage the P.2 students to check meanings in dictionary by themselves. Although they are still small, but it is not proper if they come to me every time when they encounter words they don't know. They should check the meanings by themselves first. They need to pre-learn by themselves first.

I: What is the difference between the old P.2 curriculum and the new P.2 curriculum?

W: I think the new curriculum has richer vocabulary than the old one. We have the core vocabulary items and the advanced vocabulary items. These are for supplements only, not for students to memorize hardly. They may not be examined. These are for those who have higher ability in English and those who are willing to learn English to know more. The content of the new curriculum we are doing in these 2 years is quite focused. We group all those things we

think that are taught in pieces in different booklets, instead of putting them into different sets of worksheet. Also, we are focusing on particular modules by organizing and squeezing them into related topics, we are not teaching less things. So I think they are learning more vocabulary items in the new curriculum as we provided more to them. We have recordings, pre-learning activities and exercises related to the vocabulary items taught in every topic for them. In the past, we may only have 9 squares of pictures and we ask them to find out the words to match with the pictures. We may even provide the words at the top for them to fill-in. It is very straight-forward. Now they may need to refer to the previous passages and apply the vocabulary, not only matching the words with pictures all the time. Now, they will need to read the sentence first and to find the suitable words to fill-in. The new curriculum provides more aspects and methods for them to learn vocabulary.

I: In your classes, do you have your own methods or activities to help them learn English?

W: Yes. Indeed it is my future plan. As it is my first time to teach them, I am still trying to get to know their English abilities. In the coming term, I am trying to ask them to spell a word every day, one word only. They need to be pushed to spell words. When you ask them to spell the words only before dictations and exams, they will not be able to absorb. Too many words. So I hope to ask them to spell a word per day. On the next day, they will need to spell the words of yesterday and today. It is a kind of accumulation. I usually select students randomly to write the word on the blackboard. If they write the words correctly, they will be upgraded for two level. It is a kind of small award only. If they tried but failed to write the correct word, they will be upgraded for one level as they have participated. Perhaps they are still small, they like this kind of award. It does not have to be something tangible, this kind of intangible award is already enough to motivate them to do so. I am going to carry out this plan. They are quite weak in spelling. They can recognize the word, they understand the word 'elephant', but they can't spell the word. But it really takes time to build up, not something that can be achieved once you approached it.

I: At school students are provided with lots of resources, will they be provided the same amount of resources when they are at home?

W: Some of them, not all. As by location, we are in a district that is not high in socio-economic status. Most of them are newly arrived students from Mainland or live in grassroot families. Their parents depend quite a lot on teachers. For those who have better family background, they will have tutorial classes. Maybe their families are able to provide computers and iPads for them to use. We have students who do not have computers at home. Nowadays, we talk quite a lot about technologies, at the same time not all students could be favored in having these technologies and e-learning methods. They may get in touch with a

bit of the technologies at school, but they do not have them at home. Resources depend on family backgrounds. And the families which do not have these kinds of technologies depend on teachers only.

I: Are there some places at school where students can use these technologies, like English Corner?

W: Maybe this would be common for secondary schools instead of primary schools. First of all they could not go back to school during holidays, teachers will need to be there when there are some students, no matter they are P.1 or P.6 students. I know some teachers will help those who have poor family background but willing to learn English by asking them to go back to school at weekends. The teachers will guide those students to finish their homework. They cannot finish the homework by themselves just by letting them to sit there alone. It is dangerous to let them stay there alone too. So sometimes we will do this kind of thing. I think there is no such area as English corner at school which is opened during lunchtime for students to stay there and do some kinds of English activities.

I: Do you think motivation is one of the most important factors in learning English?

W: Definitely yes. English is second language for students. If they do not have the motivation, they will not learn English. If you do not motivate them, they will not have the motivation and interest to learn English. To be honest, motivation is mainly come from teachers. The motivation comes from how you are engaged in teaching that lesson or to what extent you understand students' needs by hearts. The students may not tell you 'oh you understand me', but you will know they understand you when they cooperate with you. Motivation is a crucial factor. I think most of the time motivation comes from recognition. If you recognize the things the did well, they will have a feeling to do better after your praise, in order to have your recognition. And they will continue to do so. Children have this kind of mindset. Especially for Key Stage 1 students, I will show their good works to show to whole class, even RB. Today I showed a few of them (RB), the students then realized RB could actually be done in this way. They realized that it could be done in such a good way and teacher would praise those who did well. Those who have their works being showed will have a sense of accomplishment. Teachers will have also feel good. It is a win-win method. They will put in more efforts when they are doing their work. They will not only treat it as something they need to do only. Recognition for them is a kind of motivation. It can also be applied on Key Stage 2 students. They may not realize the teachers actually recognize such things. If you recognize such things, they will appreciate you a lot, but they won't tell you they appreciate you a lot. They will be very happy and they will keep on the good work and improve. Motivation is important.

I: Under the current environment of the school, do you think students receive enough motivation to learn English?

W: We do not really do such kind of evaluation to collect feedback from students to see if the English activities can boost their motivation. In my opinion, I think students are engaged in those activities on Christmas English Day. Even in classroom period, they learnt a lot of new English knowledge. Although we did not intentionally asking them to spell some words and things like that, they got to know more about things in the world, instead of grammar, comprehension or exercises. They knew more fun facts and the histories, even the teachers did not know these things before. This kind of environment not only enhances their understanding towards Christmas, but also helps them learn English at the same time. These activities are quite successful, but these cannot be done frequently. They can usually be held near festival times only, a certain kind of theme is needed to be built to do such kind of activities. Despite the fact that it is our first time to have the Christmas English Day, indeed we hope to carry on the activity every year. The responses from students are quite positive. They enjoyed it, though it was quite different from last year. I can see that they are very happy and they are willing to speak in English, although they are using not so good English. But it is the first step to learn English. They do not have opportunity to speak in English in normal days. We also have activity for each form. The upper primary students will have the chance to go to the airport to do interviews with people in English. These activities will provide them with new experience to use English, as you really need to talk to a foreigner outside in English. It is necessary because you have to finish the task. When they are pushed in this way, they will find that it is not really that difficult and anxious to do so.

I: Do you think there is a significant relationship between promoting an authentic English environment and the vocabulary acquisition of students?

W: Sure. If you set the bubble as that English-oriented, when all the things they encounter is all English, they may not absorb and understand the things at once, but if they are exposed to English more, when they are immersed in this kind of environment, there is a positive influence on them. When I was in secondary school, I've joined some summer programmes to learn English. In that programme, you can only speak in English from day to night. Even when you go to toilet or have a meal, you will need to use English. If we can really provide this kind of environment, and my English has been greatly improved during that five weeks, not very good but at least I'm not afraid to speak in English. At least I will have the confidence to speak in English. Although I did not learn a lot of vocabulary and be able to apply them after the activity, but the power of the programme is that your English could be greatly improved under the authentic environment. But for school, it is very hard to promote

such an authentic environment, maybe it is only within that 35 to 40 minutes or in double lessons. The environment could only be built in that period only every day, because it is difficult for local schools to be that English-oriented, except for EMI primary schools. In my opinion, I think there is a certain extent of significance between these two things since I have experience before. I am also a ESL learner. I agree that under an authentic English environment, students can learn English in a faster pace. Especially for children because they have high ability in learning new things. So I think if they are under such environment, they will learn English better too. Just like the Christmas party, suddenly the students were able to learn and understand a lot of things. I hope we can have more occasions like this, but teaching the syllabus is the top priority. The education system of Hong Kong is still very exam-oriented. It is not that easy to promote, but we teachers could try our best to promote.