Increasing Learners' Motivation Through STAR (Student's Token forActive Response)

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ABSTRACT

Motivation plays a crucial role in learners' academic success, and understanding the factors that influence motivation is essential for educators. This study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of STAR in increasing learners' motivation during the Academic Year 2023-2024 at a public secondary school in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental. The research utilized a Classroom-based Action Research design, selecting 35 students through purposive sampling. Researcher-made questionnaire and interview guide questions were used to gather data. The data is interpreted using statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, t-test, and thematic analysis. The results indicated a significant increase in the learners' motivation levels after incorporating STAR into the learning process. Furthermore, there were noticeable enhancements among the learners after the implementation of STAR in the classroom, such as, increased interest in learning and improved confidence. The study concluded that using tokens and prizes enhances student motivation levels, demonstrating STAR's effectiveness as a motivational strategy. Recommendations include conducting further research to study the long-term and diverse impacts of STAR or giving rewards, exploring enhancements, and additional outcomes to validate further and improve its effectiveness.

Keywords: motivation, prizes, rewards, STAR, tokens

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

In education, motivation greatly affects how well learners do in their studies. Hence, those who want to help learners improve their grades should know and understand the factors that affect student motivation (Xu et al., 2020). Motivation catalyzes actions, supplying the energy necessary to pursue and engage in activities. Two primary types of motivation in learning activities are intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drive to achieve goals inherent to learning, stimulated by factors within the individual (Novalinda et al., 2020; Timor et al., 2021). Extrinsic motivation arises from external sources influencing the learner. These external influences can encompass reinforcement systems, environmental conditions, and social influences. These external elements often manipulate student behavior and are commonly linked to physiological urges and stimulus-response learning (Asmus, 2021).

Motivation and learning behavior are pivotal in shaping learners' academic success. Motivation to learn, stemming from internal and external sources, profoundly influences how students engage with their studies (Tokan & Imakulata, 2019). Learners may lose motivation for several reasons, such as unclear lesson delivery, a teacher's lack of confidence, dissatisfaction with the lessons, or personal issues (Rone et al., 2023). Given the current educational landscape, marked by relentless pressure to elevate test scores, foster accountability, and ensure learner progress, every educator from kindergarten through twelfth grade must actively cultivate prominent levels of learner motivation (Hussain et al., 2023). Teachers can significantly enhance learners' motivation by making lessons more engaging, designing activities that align with learners' interests, creating supportive environments, and reinforcing positive behaviors in ways students value (Rone et al., 2023).

Research indicates that the fundamental principles of both reinforcement theory and equity theory elucidate the

potential of incentive systems to enhance motivation levels. According to reinforcement theory, behaviors can be reinforced by establishing direct associations between actions and environmental outcomes. Consequently, providing rewards for desired behaviors increases the likelihood of their repetition in the future. The efficacy of this motivational impact hinges on both the quantity of the reward and the timing of its delivery (Hussain et al., 2023).

Learner motivation is critical in all aspects of the educational journey, encompassing attendance, academic performance, and involvement in extracurricular pursuits. Numerous factors, including learner preparedness, confidence, fear, and classroom size, influence participation in the classroom (Saro et al., 2022). These variables significantly impact learners' willingness to engage, affecting their motivation. It is recommended that helping learners pay attention during class exercises their motivation, leading to beneficial outcomes (Mauliya, 2020).

Educators must utilize various media and resources in the classroom to engage learners and stimulate their learning motivation (Sari & Yudi, 2019). Previous studies have indicated that learner motivation is the most significant factor in determining their learning success. Teachers must develop strategies and methods tailored to the learners' levels, actively engage them, and recognize their efforts through rewards and appreciation (Rone et al., 2023).

This action research aims to explore and implement a token-based incentive system designed to enhance learner engagement and motivation. By systematically incorporating the STAR program, this study aims to determine the effectiveness of using extrinsic rewards to foster active participation and improve learners' motivation.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide educators with a practical and evidence-based strategy to enhance learner motivation. The findings of this research could be utilized to inform classroom management practices, particularly in designing reward systems that effectively encourage active learning behaviors. Moreover, this study can contribute to the broader educational discourse on motivational strategies, offering insights that may be applicable across various educational settings and grade levels. Teachers and educational stakeholders who aim to improve learner engagement and achievement can benefit from understanding how structured reward systems like STAR can positively influence learning outcomes.

Proposed Strategy

The proposed strategy involves implementing a token system known as STAR to reward active learner participation in the classroom. Rewards play a key role in fostering high levels of motivation among learners. As learners receive rewards frequently, they become increasingly accustomed to them and develop a stronger desire for continued recognition (Rogti, 2021).

Some learners become more active, enthusiastic, and not bored while studying. It was stipulated that such mechanism, i.e., positive notes and small things, help minimize behavioral issues and disengagement from class discussions and activities (Kuhfeld et al., 2022). Furthermore, the rewards system has been shown to statistically influence the attentional priority of salient distractors, thereby shaping overall learning outcomes in the classroom (Gbollie & Keamu, 2017; Le Pelley et al., 2022). Since learners' active participation in class activities can foster motivation, some professors have employed incentives to maintain students' focus and encourage task completion (Filgona et al., 2020; Bekele, 2022).

Learners who engage actively in class will be awarded star stickers throughout the discussions. Each correct answer or participation earns a star sticker, ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to contribute to class discussion and receive recognition. To maintain fairness, each learner can earn a maximum of five stars per class session. Friday is designated the "harvest day," when learners tally the star stickers accumulated throughout the week. A scoreboard will track the learners' progress, rewarding those with specific scores or sticker levels with corresponding prizes. This approach fosters a positive learning environment, encouraging active involvement and providing tangible rewards for academic engagement.

Action Research Questions

This action research aimed to improve the learners' motivation through STAR (Student's Token for Active

Response) during the School Year 2023-2024.

Specifically, the study sought to address the following questions:

1. What is the learners' motivation level before the implementation of STAR?
2. What is the learners' motivation level after the implementation of STAR?
3. Is there a significant difference in the learners' motivation level before and after the implementation of STAR?
4. What other developments are observed among the learners after the implementation of STAR?

ACTION RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study adopted a classroom-based action research design. Classroom-based Action Research (CBAR) is a form of applied research that teachers utilize in the classroom setting. CBAR is focused on identifying and potentially resolving specific issues or problems within an individual teacher's classroom. It is described as the application of "ideas-in-action," where teachers put strategies into practice and evaluate them to address challenges in the classroom (Qi, 2019). The core concept of CBAR is to find practical solutions to problems to foster positive changes or improve the quality of educational outcomes (Burns, 2019). This approach enables teachers to gain deeper insights into their teaching practices, classroom dynamics, and learner behaviors.

Site

The study was conducted at a public secondary school in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental. The school's administration is under the leadership of a school principal. The Secondary School Principal II oversees the school's overall functioning, with the Secondary School Principal I responsible for the Junior High School section and the Assistant School Principal II managing the affairs of the Senior High School division. The school offers a variety of curricula, including the Open High School Program, Regular Curriculum, and Special Curriculum Programs such as Special Program in the Arts, Special Program in Journalism, Strengthen Technical-Vocational Education Program, and Science, Technology and Engineering Program.

Participants

The participants of the study were 35 Grade 8 learners selected using a purposive sampling technique. The participants were selected based on the following criteria: 1.) Students enrolled at a particular secondary institution in Ozamis City as Grade 8 learners for the academic year 2023-2024; 2.) Students who gave their full consent to serve as participants of the study; and 3.) Only students from the Moonstone class were chosen because the researchers teach in this class. The researchers ensured that these conditions were met before conducting the research.

Data Gathering Methods

This action research gathered quantitative and qualitative data. The motivation level of the learners was assessed using the researcher-made questionnaire and interviews.

A. Pre-Implementation Phase. The researchers noticed the challenges that learners face regarding their motivation to learn. The researchers reviewed previous studies on the topic to gain a deeper insight. Subsequently, the researchers created a research proposal, designed lesson plans, and formulated a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire and interview questions, along with the sticker design and corresponding prizes for the learners' accumulated stickers. Eventually, the researchers obtained approval from the Superintendent of the Division of Ozamiz City and permission from the principal and cooperating teacher to conduct the research at the public secondary school in Ozamiz City.

B. Implementation Phase. During the strategy's implementation phase, several crucial steps were taken. First, pre-tests were administered to gather initial data from participants. The strategy was then applied to the

participants with a one-month timeline. Throughout this time, the participants' performance and attitudes were monitored. Post-tests and interviews were conducted to evaluate the strategy's effectiveness. Subsequently, all data were retrieved, tallied, analyzed, and interpreted, allowing the researcher to assess how well the strategy worked.

C. Post-Implementation Phase. In the post-implementation phase, conclusions were drawn, recommendations were developed, and the research study was proofread, edited, and finalized. This phase also included appropriately disseminating the research findings to the targeted audience.

Ethical Issues

In studies with human participants, the Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), overseen by the Office of Human Research Protection, verified adherence to ethical standards before conducting the research (White, 2020).

The researchers strictly adhered to ethical protocols throughout the study. Before implementation, explicit informed consent was meticulously obtained from participating students and their respective parents or guardians, ensuring complete transparency and voluntary participation. Maintaining strict confidentiality, the researchers utilized anonymized data and employed measures to safeguard the identities of all participants throughout the research process. Furthermore, the study was designed to mitigate potential harm or discomfort to the participants, primarily focusing on enhancing educational outcomes. Approval and permission were secured from the relevant authorities, including the school principal, before conducting the research. These ethical considerations were implemented to prioritize the well-being, privacy, and dignity of the participants, thereby strengthening the study's credibility and integrity.

Data Analysis

With the use of Minitab statistical software and Hyper RESEARCH, the following tools were utilized:

Mean and Standard Deviation were used to determine the level of learners' motivation before and after the strategy.

T-test was used to determine the significant difference in the level of learners' motivation before and after implementing STAR.

Thematic Analysis was conducted to explore other improvements observed among the learners after the implementation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Learners' Motivation Level Before the Implementation of STAR

Table 1 presents the learners' motivation level before using the STAR program. The data indicates low motivation for learners (M = 2.23; SD = 0.34). This suggests that learners need to be more highly motivated in their academic activities. Moreover, the standard deviation of 0.34 indicates a relatively narrow data spread around the mean, indicating a certain consistency level in the learners' low motivation levels.

Motivation is one factor that influences learners' performance in learning language skills, alongside interest, learning style, or intelligence (Aminatun et al., 2019). These findings highlight the need to address the gaps in learner motivation in the classroom by implementing interventions or strategies to boost their motivation. Many learners lack motivation to learn English because they find it difficult and become easily bored and lazy. Teachers can address this by offering rewards such as smiles, stars, and praise to motivate learners (Kasyulita, 2019).

Cotton (1988) categorized rewards for children into five types: 1. Verbal praise or reinforcement; 2. Symbolic rewards, like certificates or medals; 3. Token rewards, where tokens can be exchanged for prizes; 4. Tangible rewards include sweets, toys, or school supplies; and 5. Activity rewards, like granting free time for activities.

Implementing a reward or token system, such as STAR, will help increase learners' motivation. According to Skinner's theory of reinforcement, the academic performance and motivation of learners can be significantly enhanced through the use of positive reinforcement as a feedback mechanism. The quality of teaching and learning in language classes can be further enriched when learners are sufficiently motivated by well-structured rewards (Rogti, 2021).

Table 1 Learners' Motivation Level Before the Implementation of STAR

Learners' Motivation	M	SD
Low	2.23	0.34

Note: 4.20-5.00 (Very High); 3.40-4.19 (High); 2.60-3.39 (Moderately High); 1.80-2.59 (Low); 1.00-1.79 (Very Low)

Learners' Motivation Level After the Implementation of STAR

Table 2 presents the learners' motivation level after using the STAR strategy. The data indicated high motivation for learners (M = 4.03; SD = 0.48). This result implies that STAR had a significant positive impact on learners' motivation. With a mean score of 4.03, the learners' motivation is categorized as high, indicating that the majority of the learners experienced a substantial boost in their motivation levels. The relatively low standard deviation (0.48) suggests consistency among the learners' responses, implying that the increase in motivation was relatively uniform across the group. The high level of motivation among learners following the STAR suggests that the strategy effectively motivates and engages learners.

This result coincides with the study findings of Chen (2023), which stated that reward systems attract learners' interests, foster good learning habits, establish a positive learning atmosphere, and increase learners' motivation. When the teacher provides suggestions for improving grades and rewards learners for their progress, their performance improves. This is also supported by the research findings of Kasyulita (2019), who showed that from 60 samples of their research, 57 students can be classified as having a strong motivation to learn English after given rewards, and 3 students can be classified as having fair motivation.

Table 2 Learners' Motivation Level After the Implementation of STAR

Learners' Motivation	M	SD
High	4.03	0.48

Note: 4.20-5.00 (Very High); 3.40-4.19 (High); 2.60-3.39 (Moderately High); 1.80-2.59 (Low); 1.00-1.79 (Very Low)

Significant Difference in the Learners' Motivation Level

Before and After the Implementation of STAR

Table 3 presents the difference in learners' motivation levels before and after the implementation of the STAR program. The data indicates that before the implementation of STAR, the mean motivation level was 2.23 (SD = 0.34). After the implementation, the mean motivation level significantly increased to 4.03 (SD = 0.48). The t-value for this comparison is 18.02, and the p-value is 0.000, which is highly significant ($p < 0.01$). Since the p-value is less than 0.01, we reject the null hypothesis (Ho) that there is no significant difference between learners' performance before and after integrating the STAR program.

The significant increase in the mean motivation level from 2.23 to 4.03 ($t = 18.02$, $p = 0.000$) suggests that the STAR program substantially impacted learners' motivation. The highly significant p-value confirms that this change is not due to random variation but is a direct result of the intervention provided by the STAR program.

This finding indicates that the STAR program effectively enhances learner motivation and enthusiasm for learning.

In practice, most teachers primarily use rewards to boost learners' academic motivation. This result is supported by the study of Ahmed et al. (2023), which revealed that reward systems significantly influence learners' motivation and performance. However, recent research indicates that excessive use of rewards in the classroom can diminish learners' intrinsic motivation and, over time, negatively affect their academic achievement (Wong & Thomson, 2014). Therefore, to further enhance and sustain this motivation, it is recommended that educators integrate similar motivational strategies into their regular teaching practices. Regular feedback, setting achievable goals, and creating a supportive learning environment helps maintain high motivation levels (Miao et al., 2020).

Table 3 Significant Difference on Learners' Motivation Level Before and After the Implementation of STAR

Variables	M	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
Before Implementation of STAR	2.23	0.34	18.02 p**	0.000	Reject Ho
After Implementation of STAR	4.03	0.48			

Ho: There is no significant difference between learners' performance before and after integrating STAR

Note: **p<0.01 (Highly Significant); *p<0.05 (Significant); p>0.05 (Not significant)

Other Developments Observed Among the Learners

After the Implementation of STAR

The researchers evaluated the effectiveness of STAR in improving Grade 8 learners' motivation in learning. By collecting personal insights and sentiments from participants, the researchers carefully analyzed these responses to identify significant patterns and classify them into emerging themes: improved interest in lessons and increased confidence.

Improved Interest in Lessons

The STAR Program made English lessons more enjoyable and meaningful for learners. Introducing stickers and a positive learning environment sparked greater interest and enthusiasm in the subject matter, increasing motivation to participate and learn actively.

"My experience with STAR has been positive. It has added motivation and excitement to the English lessons, encouraging me to actively participate, express my thoughts, and learn from my peers." (P1)

"My experience with STAR transformed the way I perceive English lessons in a good way." (P3)

"I always look forward to our class now because I'm eager to know what tricks or twists our teacher has prepared in the lesson so that we can collect stickers and actively participate in class." (P4)

"The opportunity to earn stars for active participation has motivated me to interact more in class discussions and enhanced my overall learning experience." (P7)

Interest in learning does not arise spontaneously or suddenly but because of experiences, habits, and participation in learning (Nugroho, 2020). Interest is also closely related to comfort and needs (Iqmaulia & Usman, 2019). Some argue that extrinsic rewards, such as tokens or stickers, can motivate learners to begin engaging with complex material. Some teachers find rewarding learners to make them accomplish a task more manageable. While extrinsic motivation may not foster self-directed learning, it significantly influences behavior change through the reinforcement provided by repeated rewards (Rogti, 2021). Once learners are engaged, their interest

and intrinsic motivation can be nurtured and developed (Kang et al., 2018).

Increased Confidence

Learners reported a boost in their confidence levels as they received recognition and rewards for active participation. The sense of achievement and validation from earning star stickers and prizes enhanced their self-assurance and encouraged them to participate more actively in class discussions.

"Receiving stickers for participating in class discussions makes me feel a sense of pride and accomplishment. It motivates me to continue to actively participate and share my ideas." (P1)

"Receiving a sticker for participating in class discussions makes me feel proud and motivated. It boosts my confidence and encourages me to continue sharing my ideas." (P2)

"Getting stickers for participating in class discussions makes me feel happy and proud." (P5)

Learning motivation makes the classroom atmosphere more active and positively affects learning (Margolang et al., 2019). Learners may lose motivation for various reasons, such as unclear lesson delivery, a teacher's lack of confidence, dissatisfaction with the lessons, or personal issues (Rone et al., 2023). Various factors, including learner preparedness, confidence, fear, and classroom size, influence participation in the classroom (Saro et al., 2022). These variables significantly impact learners' willingness to engage, affecting their motivation. Mauliya (2020) recommended that helping learners pay attention during class exercises their motivation, leading to beneficial outcomes. By fostering a classroom environment that promotes both motivation and learning, teachers can positively influence learners' intellectual and socioemotional experiences (Rone et al., 2023).

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of STAR in increasing learners' motivation during the Academic Year 2023-2024 at a public school in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental. The research utilized a Classroom-based Action Research design, selecting 35 learners through purposive sampling. Researcher-made questionnaire and interview guide questions were used to gather data. The data is interpreted using statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, t-test, and thematic analysis. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to: (1) determine the learners' motivation level before the implementation of STAR; (2) determine the learners' motivation level after the implementation of STAR; (3) determine any significant differences in learners' motivation level before and after the implementation of STAR; and (4) explore other observed developments among the learners following the implementation of STAR.

Findings

Based on the data collected, the following were the findings of the study:

1. The learners' motivation level before the implementation of STAR is low.

2. The learners' motivation level after the implementation of STAR is high.

3. There is a significant difference on the learners' motivation level before and after the implementation of STAR.

4. Following the use of STAR in the classroom, additional improvements were observed among the learners, such as, improved interest in learning and increased confidence.

Conclusions

This study explored the effectiveness of using STAR (Student's Token for Active Response) in increasing

learners' motivation. The results of the study revealed that:

1. Learners have low motivation before introducing STAR, indicating a need for an intervention or strategy.

2. Learners' motivation significantly increased after implementing STAR, demonstrating the effectiveness of the strategy.

3. STAR improves learner motivation levels, showing its effectiveness as a motivational strategy.

4. The STAR's interactive nature, feedback mechanisms, and collaborative features contribute to the learners' improved interest in learning and increased confidence.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the researchers suggest that:

1. Teachers should recognize and address low motivation levels among learners before introducing an intervention or strategy, tailoring them as needed, and continuously evaluate learners' motivation levels after implementing them to measure its effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.

2. Teachers should explore ways to integrate the STAR strategy with other effective teaching methods to create a more holistic and engaging learning environment.

3. Instructors should have continuous monitoring and feedback mechanisms throughout the STAR program to trace the forward movement of the learner's motivation, underlining the huge difference in motivation levels before and after the intervention.

4. Educators should continuously develop and enhance the interactive elements of the STAR strategy to keep learners engaged. They should incorporate technology and multimedia resources to create more dynamic and immersive learning experiences.

5. Future researchers may conduct further research to study the long-term and diverse impacts of giving rewards, exploring enhancements and additional outcomes to validate and improve its effectiveness.

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