TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE WITH USING TEACHING TECHNIQUES TO PROMOTE CHILDREN'S MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN A NON-FORMAL ENGLISH EDUCATIONAL SETTING

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Abstract

In this increasing globalized and internationalized world, teaching techniques reported to be effective in one country are more frequently adopted for use in other countries. However, these techniques may not yield similar effects across educational contexts. This article reports a study that (i) explored teaching techniques that teachers in commercial English Language Centres (CELC) in Southern Vietnam used to promote children's learning motivation and engagement, (ii) examined why they adopted these teaching techniques and (iii) identified challenges associated with the use of these techniques. Content analysis of 21 semi-structured interviews with teachers from four CELC showed that teachers were frequently using games, picture flashcards, videos, miming, role play and storytelling for the mentioned purpose. The study also revealed several challenges for the use of these techniques associated with (i) teachers considering teaching in CELC as an extra job, (ii) educational norms and values ingrained in stakeholders' perception, and (iii) practicality issues involved in their teaching. The article highlights that teachers' adoption of a teaching technique was driven by their beliefs about its effectiveness, about expectations of important stakeholders, and about contextual factors that may affect the use of the technique.

Keywords: teacher beliefs, teaching techniques, motivations, young learners, English teaching

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1. Introduction

Students' learning motivation is found to be connected with their engagement with learning, therefore it plays a crucial role in determining students' learning outcomes (Kennedy, 2010; Mega, Ronconi, & De Beni, 2014). However, not all students possess a high level of motivation and engagement when entering an educational program. Thus, teachers should continuously find ways to promote their motivation and engagement with learning so students can also achieve greater learning results.

In Vietnam, as well as many countries in the world, sending young children to private tuition services is a common initiative for children to achieve higher results in the formal schooling system. These services are also used to prepare children for the competitive entry to good schools and universities as well as develop them for a brighter future (Dang, 2007; Foondun, 2002; Hewson, 2017). However, children may not be aware of the purpose of attending private tuition learning and they may learn to meet their parents' and teachers' expectations instead. Entering these so-called extra classes, they may not possess a high level of learning motivation because the learning results are not as important as those of formal education. This suggests that children should always be encouraged to learn, in this non-formal learning environment.

One of the feasible ways to promote children's learning motivation and engagement is to employ active teaching techniques that can stimulate children's learning. A teaching technique is a particular tactic, stratagem or creative solution used to accomplish an immediate objective in the classroom (Anthony, 1963 cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Indeed, studies have proven that several teaching techniques can elevate children's learning motivation and engagement, such as games, pictures, music, videos, role play, etc. (Al Harrasi, 2014; Ara, 2009; Conesa & Rubio, 2015; Nugroho, Nurkamto, & Sulistyowati, 2012; Wang, 2010). These studies validated that the aforementioned teaching techniques can satisfy students' needs of playing while learning, creating a dynamic learning environment, drawing their attention and stimulating their imagination and creativity. Therefore, they have been widely adopted for use in many classrooms across countries, and somehow create a trend in teaching. However, a teaching technique reported to yield positive effects on increasing students' learning motivation and engagement in one context may not yield similar effects when it is applied in another. Thus, the selection of teaching techniques, the effectiveness and challenges associated with their use should be further explored in specific educational contexts. By doing so, it will provide implications for teachers' professional development, remove obstacles and support teachers to improve their teaching effective and students' learning outcomes.

To help address the mentioned issues, this article will report a study about how Vietnamese teachers adopted, used and faced challenges when using certain teaching techniques to motivate young learners (aged 6 to 11) to learn in commercial English language centres (CELC). The strength of this study is that it addresses teachers' adoption of teaching techniques to promote young learners' motivation and

engagement with learning in a non-formal educational setting of a developing country. Thus, it contributes to deepening our insights into teachers' teaching behaviours and underlying drivers in different socio-cultural and educational contexts as well as with different cohorts of students. It will provide some significant implications for teacher education and professional development.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The growth of private English education for children in Vietnam

English is an important international language, with approximately 527 million native speakers and around 1.5 billion non-native speakers worldwide (Noack & Gamio, 2015). It has also become a useful tool for people to reach success in education, for socio-economic purposes and for cultural exchange. In education, individuals who have a good level of English may have more opportunities to obtain high quality education because most prestigious universities offer courses in English, and latest books and scientific publications are also in English (Coleman, 2006; Van Weijen, 2012). For work, people who speak fluent English have more chances of obtaining a high-paid job, including building a career with overseas employment (Arkoudis et al., 2009). In terms of cultural exchange, most influential media sources are also in English. For example, BBC and CNN are the two channels where reporters in other countries translate the news into their local language to broadcast news to the whole world (Crystal, 2012).

In Vietnam, there has been a boom of CELC - a type of private English tuition service - due to an increased demand for English courses, especially for children and adolescents. Since English has become central in the national language policy (Pham, 2014), the language has been taught as a compulsory subject from grade 3 on, starting in the school year 2010-2011 (Nguyen, 2011; Phyak & Bui, 2014). Under the National Foreign Language Project 2020, teachers are trained to improve their English proficiency and teaching expertise (Phyak & Bui, 2014). Unfortunately, in spite of these efforts, the quality of English teaching and learning in the compulsory education level still falls short of the goals set in the National Foreign Language Project 2020 (Nguyen, 2011; Phyak & Bui, 2014). Regardless of the inflated expense, this has triggered parents to send children to CELC classes, which are organized in the evening and weekends. Parents hope that the private tuition services with qualified domestic and international English teachers and the use of the trendiest teaching techniques, as often advertised, will encourage their children to acquire English in the formal class or will prepare them for a brighter future, including going abroad for international education.

However, young learners, whose ages range from 6 to 11 in this study – the age range of primary school students in Vietnam – may face several challenges in their learning at CELC. First, because they are young, they may not be able to control their own learning process. Secondly, as English classes in CELC are extra, they may not put forth sufficient effort for acquiring English skills. In Vietnam and many Asian countries, scores and exams are a strong driver for student learning behaviours (Nam, 2017; Zhao,

Selman, & Haste, 2015), but in CELC, children are not formally assessed and if they are, the scores seem meaningless to them compared with the score at their schools . This situation is not favourable for ensuring children's learning outcomes, particularly regarding the great expense their parents have to pay for their learning at CELC.

All of these suggest that improving children's motivation and engagement with their learning in CELC is an important task to maintain the quality of teaching-learning. One way to do so is to guarantee that teachers are able to employ different teaching techniques which effectively promote children's motivation and engagement, as these two factors are found to positively impact students' learning achievements (Kennedy, 2010; Mega et al., 2014).

2.2. Student motivation, engagement and learning outcomes

Student motivation refers to "the degree to which a student puts effort into and focuses on learning in order to achieve successful outcomes" (Saeed & Zyngier, 2012, p. 253). Despite different perspectives on classification of motivations, in education, motivation is often referred to as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The former originates from an individual's own purpose, such as fun, interests or satisfaction and exists internally in individuals, whereas the latter is driven from doing or learning something not for enjoyment but for meeting social expectations and earning rewards, or to avoid threats or punishment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In education, intrinsic motivations are often preferred because they trigger students' deeper learning more effectively than extrinsic motivation (Suhre, Jansen, & Torenbeek, 2013).

Student engagement is viewed as "the range of activities a learner employs to generate - sometimes consciously, other times unconsciously - the interest, focus, and an intention required to build knowledge and skills" (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012, p. 16). Engaged students try hard to learn what school offers, not simply to earn high grades, rewards or praise, but to understand the material and incorporate it into their lives (Newmann, 1992). Engaged learners enjoy learning, persistently overcome difficulties to accomplish their desired goals, and appear to possess both personal and interpersonal skills (Schlechty, 2001).

Motivation can greatly contribute to enhancing student engagement and learning achievements. Saeed and Zyngier (2012) explained that motivation is "a pre-requisite of and a necessary element for student engagement in learning". Therefore, motivation is regarded as energy and direction while engagement is considered the manifestation of the energy, which results in actual learning behaviour. Indeed, recent studies have found a correlation between students' learning motivation, engagement and their learning outcomes (Kennedy, 2010; Mega et al., 2014). For example, using data from 5,850 undergraduate students, Mega et al. (2014) found that motivation and self-regulated learning could mediate emotions and help students achieve better results. This suggests that students should be motivated so they can engage with their learning, which in turn contributes to improving their learning outcomes.

2.3. Motivating young learners: Practices and challenges

While there may be several ways to improve students' learning achievements, carefully adopting teaching methods or techniques for use in the classroom is most feasible. This can be supported by a longitudinal study recently conducted by Kennedy (2010) in which teachers' use of pedagogical practices in high-poverty schools was found to enhance primary students' motivations, engagement, self-efficacy and achievements in literacy. However, in order to appropriately select a teaching technique to motivate young learners, it is important to understand their learning process and characteristics as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the technique.

The first step to solve the identified problem is that teachers must understand the nature of children's language learning. Hu (2016) pointed out that the earlier a foreign language was introduced to children, the greater the ultimate achievement they could get. Children can acquire a language faster than adults because they are active, playful and indirect learners (Cameron, 2001; Halliwell, 1992; Nunan, 2010). However, children have short attention spans (Nunan, 2010); as such, learning activities should not last too long. Therefore, CELC teachers must pay special attention to children's personalities and their learning styles in order to remove the perception that learning at CELC is "extra" and to motivate and engage them with learning.

Secondly, teachers would need to understand the effectiveness of different teaching methods or techniques for children. Several studies have recently reported trendy teaching techniques used for young learners, although they were not necessarily conducted in CELC. For example, Wang (2010) found that games could "motivate students' learning with fun enjoyment and excitement" (p.131). Likewise, miming or total physical response was found to provide children with a fun environment to learn, prevented them from being distracted by things outside the classroom and sustained their attention to learning (Al Harrasi, 2014; Widodo, 2005). The use of music or movie clips was also confirmed to promote children's learning motivation and attention with coloured motion pictures and sound and would stimulate them to repeat language phrases in specific contexts (Ara, 2009; Conesa & Rubio, 2015). Like videos, pictures and flashcards can effectively promote children's activeness and motivation, especially in vocabulary learning activities (Baleghizadeh & Ashoori, 2011; Nugroho et al., 2012). Storytelling may require an appropriate level of English, but it has been discovered to promote children's motivation by sharing their social experience, develop their imagination and link it to the real word (Ellis & Brewster, 2014; Soleimani & Akbari, 2013). Finally, role-play or drama can also create a fun, safe and motivating learning environment for children to practise language structures (Demircioğlu, 2010).

The problem here is that even if a trendy teaching technique is effective in one context, it may not produce the same effect in another. Games, pictures, videos, role play, and storytelling can be useful for promoting learning motivation of children in the formal educational sector, but may not be productive in a non-formal educational setting like CELC where students and parents are considered customers, and teachers are staff providing an education-related business service, and may not be seen as

conducting a "noble job", a social status attached to all teachers working in the formal education sector (Pham, 2010). Similarly, if these techniques are successful for the mentioned purpose in the West or other Asian countries, they may not be similarly effective in the socio-cultural and educational context of Vietnam where there are differences in teacher-student relationships, parents' expectations of their children's focus on learning, students' attitudes to learning, etc. (Pham, 2010).

All of these suggest that while it is important for teachers to adopt appropriate teaching techniques for the purpose of motivating young learners and engaging them with learning at CELC, there are several difficulties that teachers face when using these techniques in the context of non-formal educational settings of CELC and the socio-cultural features of Vietnam. Therefore, this can serve as an interesting case to explore how teachers can achieve this mission and what may influence their adoption of teaching techniques as well as factors affecting the effectiveness of implementing them in the class.

3. Research design and Methods

As mentioned earlier, this article will report participants' viewpoints on the usefulness of specific teaching techniques used to promote children's learning motivation and engagement and will also explore challenges associated with using these techniques.
   The article will address the following research questions:
- *What teaching techniques are teachers in CELC using to promote young learners' learning motivation and engagement? Why do they choose these techniques?*
- *What challenges do they encounter when using these teaching techniques in the context of CELC?*

A qualitative research approach was adopted for the study because it explores teachers' experiences with teaching techniques to motivate children's learning at CELC, i.e. exploring participants' social meaning that they attach to their work and behaviours (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010).

A convenience sampling method (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016) was used to recruit CELC teachers inside our social network. The advantage of this sampling method was that our personal relationships could help these teachers more comfortably express their perspectives and experiences, thus it increased the trustworthiness and quality of the data. The potential participants were informed of the research purpose, what they would do and how their identity would be protected. Twenty-three invitations were sent out to teachers who were working for CELC in Can Tho City, the biggest city in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. Twenty-one teachers were willing to join the interviews. The participants aged from 24 to 39 years with an average of 3.5 years of teaching experience (Table 1).

Qualitative data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews because it allowed the researchers to better organize information, and offered us opportunities to clarify ambiguous information or obtain more essential information in the case of

lacking of data (Rabionet, 2011). The interview questions were piloted with two CELC to ensure that these questions were easy to understand and appropriate for collecting the intended data. Before the interview, the participants were informed of the research purpose once more and asked to sign a consent form. During the interviews, in addition to demographic information, the interviewees were invited to discuss the following topics:

- Children's learning motivation and engagement at CELC
- Two teaching techniques they often used to motivate and engage children with learning
- Reasons why they adopted these teaching techniques
- The usefulness of these teaching techniques
- The challenges of using these teaching techniques

All interviews were recorded and transcribed immediately after the interviews for review, requests for clarification, if any, and to facilitate the analysis process.

Table 1: Demographic information of participants

Classification		Frequency
Gender	male	3
	female	18
Age	below 25	6
	above 25	15
Education level	undergraduate degree	17
	postgraduate degree	4
Children teaching experience	less than 3 years	14
	more than 3 years	7
Employment contract at CELC	full time	9
	part time	12
Discipline/Specialisation	English Teaching	10
	English Studies	11

Qualitative data were analysed using a content analysis which helped determine the main themes from the responses through analysing the interviews (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The transcription of each interview was read several times, irrelevant information was eliminated and coded against the themes mentioned earlier: the situation of children's learning motivation and engagement at CELC, how teachers used techniques to stimulate their motivation and engagement, the usefulness of these techniques and challenges of using these techniques. The process was repeated for all 21 interviews, then researchers compared and contrasted to produce a report with a focus on techniques used, their effectiveness and associated challenges when executed in CELC.

4. Results

The interviews with teachers revealed that teachers could sense that children in their class were not engaged and did not possess a high level of motivation, especially intrinsic motivation, toward their learning at CELC. Participants commonly perceived that children learned English as a result of their parents' pressure. Their perspectives can be illustrated in the statements of two teachers below:

> *"I think that they have much extrinsic motivation. They have not been very much aware of their learning responsibility; most of them attend these classes following their parents' decisions." (Interviewee 8)*

> *"I often ask my students whether they attend the class due to their passion for English ' learning or what. In response, just a few of them said yes whereas many said they went to class because their parents promised to buy gifts or because they could play with friends here at CELC." (Interviewee 9)*

Therefore, they believed that using techniques effective to promote children's learning motivation and engagement was an essential and integral part of their teaching. Generally, each teacher adopted a combination of different teaching techniques to motivate young learners and help them engage with their learning at CELC. In total, six teaching techniques were reported as being used frequently for the mentioned purposes, including games, picture flashcards, videos, miming, role-play and storytelling. In the following sections, the adoption of these teaching techniques will be reported independently. Each section will also expand on reasons why teachers adopted the teaching technique and challenges they faced when carrying it out in the context of CELC in Southern Vietnam.

4.1. The use of games

Fourteen out of the 21 interviewees agreed that games were suitable for motivating young learners because games engaged children's preference for playing which was described as one of their characteristics.

> *"Children prefer playing to learning. So they often keep asking me to organize games […], we should let them play. That helps them feel comfortable (interviewee 16)… I think this technique is based on children's psychology that they learn while playing, so they can acquire language faster." (Interviewee 1)*

Five of them further explained that they chose this technique because it was useful for increasing children's motivation and it reduced boredom while attracting the children's attention.

"Some children are bored, fell asleep, or they cause a lot of problems in class, or they stay at one place, but when I organize exciting games in my classroom, they stand up and then, join the games" (Interviewee 8)

However, they reported a number of issues they experienced when they adopted games in class. The first issue was that it required creativity from the teacher:

"It will take your time and grey matter to think and create new effective games because children do not like playing only one kind of game. Teachers must be creative in using games to successfully achieve the objectives" (Interview 16)

Besides, Vietnamese parents usually believe children should remain quiet while learning, listen to teachers and take notes. As a result, when teachers use games, parents assume that they are squandering precious time and cannot handle the class because children make noise and run around.

"Although using games in classrooms is good for kids to learn, it makes a lot of noise. Besides, their parents do not think they are learning through games, they only think that the class is so noisy." (Interviewee 2)

Therefore, teachers were cautious when organized games in their class to ensure that children learned effectively and parents did not get upset. This was also to help CELC retain customers because parents could send their children to another CELC where children would be taught with "appropriate method" in their perspectives.

4.2. The use of picture flashcards

Nine out of the 21 interviewed teachers reported that they knew this technique was effective due to their learning at the teacher colleagues or trained by the CELC. They shared similar opinions that picture flashcards could enhance children's understanding by connecting the concept with the reality and made the words memorable and engaging to children:

"This technique can attract children's attention. With pictures, students can guess the words; we do not need to prompt them a lot. It helps children acquire English better because when seeing the picture, they can tell the word right away, instead of thinking it in Vietnamese then translating that word into English." (Interviewee 17)

They reported that available materials and facilities at CELC such as LCD screens (Interviewee 1) and sets of flashcards (Interviewee 12) encouraged them to apply this technique in teaching language to young learners. Nevertheless, some teachers reported that they had to prepare PowerPoint slides or create picture flashcards for themselves if they wanted to use this technique because their CELC do

not have these available. Thus, they avoided using it sometimes due to cost and time for preparing materials for this teaching activity.

> *"A big drawback in using visual techniques is using a lot of time for preparing and looking for appropriate pictures which are suitable for, both the topic of teaching and the age of the children" (interviewee 1)*

4.3. The use of videos

Among the 21 teachers, eight out of them confirmed that they often used video clips to motivate children with their learning. Some of them were taught to use this technique when they were preservice teachers or when they attended professional development sessions organized by CELC. Therefore, they just followed the teaching trend. These video clips could be a short movie, cartoon, music or anything captured by video, which was easy to understand and useful for children's learning. They explained that because of the vivid scenes, catchy sounds and funny characters, it is suitable for children's learning style, as stated below:

> *"Children learn in different ways from adults who learn English through new words. They need lively scenes and pictures to remember the words longer." (Interviewee 2)*

Additionally, five of them believed that videos, with voices of native speakers, could create a natural environment for children to improve their English accent and pronunciation. A teacher explained the benefit of using music videos in her class as follow:

> *"Singing along helps kids to speak English more fluently and hearing the native voice, so they become more acquainted with native language environment." (Interviewee 14)*

According to Interviewee 15, many CELCs employed information and communication technology (ICT) into teaching; most CELCs installed a TV, computer, projector and speakers in the classroom to help teachers apply ICT assisted teaching techniques so that children can be motivated and engaged with their learning. Nonetheless, several factors were found to inhibit teachers from using videos. For example, Interviewee 1 observed that using videos consumed a lot of time for preparation, especially for those with insufficient ICT skills to cut parts of longer videos for use in the class. Three teachers also reported that using videos sometimes was noisy and could disturb a nearby class, and children could become so excited, which might allow the class to get out of control. Another shared her view as below:

> *"This technique depends greatly on computer so I usually prepare an alternative activity, just in case. It takes a lot of time to select appropriate videos to teach, and sometimes*

there is blackout, I cannot use things that I prepare, so I have to use the alternative activity." (Interviewee 17)

4.4. The use of miming or total physical response (TPR)

Five out of the 21 interviewees asserted that they often used TPR activities for the purpose of motivating young children to learn English. They commonly agreed that TPR activities could reduce stress and help children learn vocabulary through physical activities.

"There is some knowledge, which I cannot teach children to learn by heart, but I can help them to learn through recognizing and acting." (Interviewee 7)

Besides, TPR was found to reduce children's passiveness in learning, and increase their interests in these learning activities because it brought a lot of fun to the class. A teacher reported her observation of the usefulness of TPR in teaching new words in her class as below:

"A kid mimes a word until their friends can guess and sound that word. If a kid can guess the word, he/she can remember it longer. If he/she has a wrong answer, he/she will remember their friends' gestures and movements which also helps to remember the word." (Interviewee 20)

Two of them shared that they were encouraged to use TPR, either by their colleagues or teachers; owing to its simplicity and that its preparation was not too time-consuming prior to going to class.

"Because this TPR technique is simple and does not require a lot of preparation and materials, teachers can use actions themselves that are performed without any plans." (Interviewee 6)

However, teachers noted that this technique required children's creativity to be effective. Unfortunately, in their experience, many children were passive and lacked confidence because many of them were used to the traditional teaching-learning style.

"There are some passive children who are shy, so when I utilize TPR, they stay at their seats and don't follow my movement." (Interviewee 12)

4.5. The use of role play/drama

Only two teachers claimed that they often used role play/drama to engage children with their learning. This technique was mostly used to act out conversations in the textbook, so it was easy for teachers and students to get involved. Interviewee 7 stated that this technique was useful for eliminating obstacles on the first day of class. Then role-play

could increase in difficulty, such as acting out the scene from the conversation without the textbook. The teacher observed that students felt happy because they could play and engage in the process of developing language.

"After using this technique, I found that my students enjoyed it […] they were shy and did not know what to do, but then, they gradually become more active and confident. In addition, they feel like going to class more than before." (Interviewee 7)

Interviewee 13 explained that because many children in her class did not want to stay in one place, she used role-play to meet their needs. The teacher also reported that some children's parents expected her to use this technique so that children could better remember the lesson, which could foster their English learning in formal school because the CELC and the school used the same textbook.

The teachers, however, emphasized that this technique could be used effectively when the textbook had interesting stories or conversations to act out, and it required a lot of the children's imagination and creativity. Both teachers also agreed that this technique was relatively time-consuming to carry out in class (about 30 out of 90 minutes of a class session) because teachers had to teach vocabularies, related structure, and also help children understand and remember a conversation or story before they could act it out, which might also take some time for rehearsal.

4.6. The use of storytelling
Only Interviewee 7 used storytelling to motivate or engage children with their learning. She found that storytelling was a good teaching technique when she observed the class of a colleague.

"I previously observed a class where the teacher told a story about a tadpole seeking its mother. The story is completely told in simple English… For example, the tadpole doesn't have legs, then it meets a bird or a cricket, which has legs… 'I have two legs', 'I have big eyes'… The children could obtain the word 'legs' and 'big eyes' that the teacher repeated several times". (Interviewee 7)

In her own experience, storytelling accompanied with beautiful pictures and a simple but interesting story plot engaged children in learning. She observed that when she told a story, children could acquire new words and phrases that she intentionally emphasized and wanted children to remember.

"Children are easy to be captivated by good imagines and simple stories that give them an opportunity to learn about real life."(Interviewee 7)

She was even surprised because some children were able to tell their own imaginary stories based on the words and structures they acquired from the storytelling

activities. Conversely, she observed that some children failed to develop sentence structures, not words. Thus, she concluded that matching a story with children's English levels is crucial for the success of this teaching technique.

5. Discussions and Recommendations

This study aimed to identify teaching techniques that CELC teachers used to promote young learners' learning motivation and engagement, explore reasons why they used them and find challenges when applying these techniques in CELC classrooms. Through semi-structured interviews with 21 teachers currently working at four CELC in Vietnam, the study revealed six teaching techniques that teachers frequently used and found useful for increasing young learners' motivation and engagement with their learning. The study also found that several challenges impeded teachers' use or intention to use these techniques in the classroom. This section will further discuss (i) the effectiveness and challenges of using these techniques in the context of CELC and socio-cultural and educational aspects of Vietnam and (ii) factors driving teachers to adopt the teaching techniques.

5.1. The effectiveness and challenges of the adopted teaching techniques

Consistent with studies in other countries (e.g. Al Harrasi, 2014; Ara, 2009; Conesa & Rubio, 2015; Nugroho et al., 2012; Wang, 2010), this study found six techniques that the teachers frequently used to motivate young learners, including games, picture flashcards, videos (movies, cartoon, music…), miming or total physical response (TPR), role-play or drama, and storytelling. As suggested by a teacher, these are among trendy teaching techniques used for children classes at CELC in Vietnam. Among the six techniques, games were used the most frequently among the interviewed teachers, followed by picture flashcards, videos, miming or TPR, role-play and storytelling. Commonly, the teachers found that these techniques promoted young learners' motivation by increasing their interest, attracting their attentions and provoking excitement. They all created a learning-by-playing environment in which children were stimulated to use the language, use their imagination and creativity, interact with friends and use physical movements. All of these met children's physiological and psychological needs as well as their learning styles (Cameron, 2001; Halliwell, 1992; Hu, 2016; Nunan, 2010); thus, children's motivation and engagement with learning activities could be improved, as suggested by Suhre et al. (2013). Adopting teaching technique preferred by children is important because in these private tuition services, the children are customers whom teachers should satisfy should they want to keep their job and sustain the business of CELC. It was also noted that teachers did not use these techniques alone but blended them together or used them alternately to create more excitement for students.

In this study, teachers reported they faced several challenges associated with using the six teaching techniques in the non-formal educational setting of CELC. These challenges can be categorized into three groups as below:

A. Teacher-related challenges

Except for paying attention to choosing techniques that they could control children's excessively active participation, none of the interviewed teachers mentioned difficulties related to their pedagogical skills or experience in carrying out the techniques, possibly because they were asked to discuss two techniques they have been using regularly. Frequent use of these techniques helped them gain experience in effectively handling difficult situations that may arise. However, many teachers reported that they had difficulties preparing materials necessary for the use of an active teaching technique. Many CELC teachers moonlighted there in addition to their daytime profession; therefore, they did not invest in teaching at CELC as much as they would for their principal job. That could explain why many interviewees referred to the availability of teaching materials in CELC for their adoption of a teaching technique. They would not choose one that they had to invest much time, effort, and cost into related to the preparation for the use of these techniques.

B. Customer-related challenges

Customers in this study included children and their parents who consumed the services provided by CELC. Teachers found that many children were passive in their class, on top of their low level of English, which was a barrier for the use of active teaching techniques mentioned above. Traditionally in Vietnamese schools, good students are characterized as those being well-disciplined, obedient and sitting quietly and listening to the teachers in class; the teachers hold a great deal of power over the teaching-learning process (Pham, 2010). Children brought these socio-cultural and educational norms into the context of CELC, plus their possible disregard for the importance of learning in these private centres. Thus, these things created challenges for CELC teachers to apply active teaching techniques to promote children's learning motivation. In contrast, as explained in the Finding section, if teacher could stimulate children to be active in the classroom, if parents see that scene, they would frown upon thinking that teachers were wasting time and were not teaching appropriately. Consequently, CELC teachers limited the use of teaching techniques that may lead them to troubles with parents.

C. CELC-related challenges

CELC are for-profit education-related business services. Therefore, they often organized large class sizes to reduce the cost, which can help them compete with other CELC and attract more students. This, unfortunately, hindered the effectiveness of their use of some teaching techniques that could motivate children to learn. Likewise, to generate more income and make efficient use of teachers available, English courses are often run in a short period of time and taught by different teachers. Consequently, a teaching session often covers much knowledge; and teachers are expected to deliver all content

and English skills in designated teaching sessions. If they spent too much time carrying out a teaching technique to promote students' learning motivations and engagement, they would not be able to complete the content of their teaching sessions and this would cause trouble for the teacher who would teach the next session. Poor facilities and a lack of teaching resources were also a concern that teachers considered if they would like to teach effectively.

All of these partially confirm the notion raised at the beginning that a teaching technique proven to be effective in promoting children's learning motivation and engagement in one context may not produce the same effects in another. The study indicated that the effectiveness of a teaching technique relied much on the collaboration of stakeholders involved in the teaching-learning process and the context that condition that process. In the non-formal educational context of CELC in Vietnam, these teaching techniques would be most effective if teachers do not consider it an extra job, if traditional educational norms and values ingrained in many stakeholders' perception are removed and CELC provide favourable teaching-learning environment with adequate time and resources allocated.

5.2. Factors influencing teacher adoption of a teaching technique

The analysis suggests that that teachers' adoption of these techniques was not random at all, but it seemed to be driven by underlying factors. Firstly, their adoption of a teaching technique appeared to be compelled by their beliefs about the effectiveness of that teaching technique. In the interviews, all teachers explained that they selected a technique because it was suitable with young learners' characteristics and effective in motivating them to learn, and would therefore foster their engagement with learning. They often associated this understanding of the suitability and effectiveness of the adopted technique to their knowledge of it when they were at teacher education colleges, from the advice of a colleague, through their self-studies, or via their experimental use of the technique.

Secondly, the interviewed teachers mentioned in the interviews that their adoption of a teaching technique was affected by their perception of requirements or expectations of relevant stakeholders. For example, all teachers selected a teaching technique as a response to children's preference or to CELC managers' requirements. Some teachers were also concerned about the expectations of children's parents' when selecting a teaching technique. A number of them also associated their technique with the general trend of teaching techniques in Vietnam at the time.

Thirdly, CELC teachers' choice of teaching techniques for use was connected to many contextual factors. As reported earlier, many of them did not want to invest excessive amounts of time, effort, and money just for the use of a teaching technique reported to be effective for promoting children's motivation if they could choose other options. Instead, they were concerned about the number of students in class and availability of facilities in CELC that could support the use of a particular teaching

technique. They further analysed whether using a teaching technique would consume too much time and bother neighbouring classes prior to adopting it.

All three groups of beliefs of CELC teachers in this study are somehow consistent with studies in other countries about teacher behaviours, although they are not necessarily about teaching English to children (Chien, Wu, & Hsu, 2014; Underwood, 2012; L. Wang, Wang, & Wen, 2015). They also fit well into the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). Accordingly, our behaviour is guided by three kinds of considerations: behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs. Behavioural beliefs are our beliefs about the results of a particular behaviour (*e.g. using this technique is (ir)relevant to promoting children's motivation*). Such beliefs produce a positive or negative attitude toward the behaviour based on our subjective evaluations of outcomes the behaviours may result in. Normative beliefs are beliefs about the normative expectations of others or social pressure about certain behaviours (e.g. *children expect me to use this technique in class*). Control beliefs are beliefs about the existence of factors that may affect the performance of a specific behaviour (e.g. *I cannot use this technique without access to the Internet*). Some studies critiqued that the theory of planned behaviour assumes that people make decisions rationally; the evidence from this study suggests that most teachers were rational in choosing the teaching techniques to motivate and engage children with learning, reflecting in their reasoning why a teaching technique is suitable for the purpose and what problems they could face if using the technique.

5.3. Limitations and Recommendations

This study has some limitations. The data were collected from teachers who were recruited using a convenience sampling technique. Although this can be useful for exploring the research issues in depth, it could have resulted in some bias in the data and affected the results. It is recommended that future studies should explore the research issues with a larger population, using random sampling techniques to achieve more generalizable results. Particularly, future studies should examine the extent to which each of the three groups of beliefs identified in this study influences teachers' adoptions of a teaching technique, which can further enhance our understanding about drivers behind teacher behaviours.

6. Conclusion

This study identified six teaching techniques that teachers regularly used to motivate and engage young learners with their learning in the non-formal educational setting of CELC: games, picture flashcards, videos, role-play, miming or TPR and storytelling. These techniques were useful for the mentioned purpose because they were able to contribute to increasing children's interests, attracting their attentions and providing fun learning activities. The adoption of these techniques were driven by their beliefs about the effectiveness of the teaching techniques, expectations of stakeholders

involved in the teaching-learning process, and the influence of several contextual factors (time allocation, class size, availability of resources and facilities, etc.). This study is a reminder that teachers should be cautious when following a trendy English teaching technique or method because its effectiveness depends very much on different factors coming from the teachers, the students and the context. Therefore, teachers should closely take into account of these factors prior to adopting a technique for use in the classroom.

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