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Warm-Up Activities: Student engagement in classes

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of warm-up, lead-in, and ice-breaker activities on student engagement in English language classes at Uzbek schools. Despite the recognized benefits of these activities, their application in classroom settings remains inconsistent, highlighting a knowledge gap in practical implementation. Utilizing a qualitative research design, data were collected through interviews, polls, and questionnaires from B1 and B2 level students and middle-school teachers. The findings reveal that these activities significantly enhance student engagement and participation.

KEYWORDS

Ice-breaker activity, warm-up activity, lead-in activity, positive sides, student engagement Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Preparing an engaging and interactive classroom environment is vital for effective teaching and learning experiences. Warm-up, lead-in, and ice-breaker activities are integral components of instructional strategies that can significantly impact student engagement and classroom dynamics. In this article, we aim to delve into the realm of these activities by conducting classroom investigations among teachers and students. We will present a comprehensive overview of the research conducted on the use of warm-up, lead-in, and ice-breaker activities, shedding light on their benefits and best practices. Warm-up activities should be essential while teaching English as students' attention will be got to the new theme. We have observed some teachers that use warm-up activities in order to distract students from different lessons and make them focus on the teacher. However, the most teachers neglect these activities' advantages and skip that important part even though they are given in the lesson plans of teachers. But we try to explain why they should not be omitted in the procedure of the lesson, as they can motivate the students to participate in class activities, activate the students' background knowledge, help the teachers introduce a new topic in interesting way or help get the students' attention. However, teachers use common techniques such as questioning, reviewing materials from the previous class, chatting with students as warm up activity whereas they can use jokes, songs, funny videos, games, stories or pictures to make the class more interesting. [1] The main focus of lead-in tasks is to lead our learners towards discovering what our lesson's overall aims are. Through this brief activity, our students are

introduced to the main topic of the lesson and are preparing themselves for that comes next. A quick revision of previously taught structures that could come in handy for the upcoming activities or the pre-teaching of key vocabulary and grammar are essential at this stage.... stresses the importance “effective presentation” plays in promoting language learning. In order for our learners to “absorb” the input, we need to present it in a way that can be easily “perceived” and “understood”. In a good lead-in activity learners are “alert” and focus their “attention to the material to be learnt”. Task authenticity and the use of a variety of resources play a crucial role in helping us grasp our learners’ attention from the very beginning of the lesson. Our warmers need to be brief, dynamic, powerful and unpredictable to some extent in order to make a first good impression to our class. We therefore need to select attention-catching materials and realia that will be relevant and meaningful to our class and will foster student participation. [2] Ice-breaker activities make teacher-student interaction more interesting, make every student to talk in English while introducing themselves. These activities literally breaks borders between teacher and students as students need comfortable atmosphere in order to participate during lessons. Benefits of Icebreakers: □Establishes friendly informal climate for the formal learning to follow. Puts participants at ease and in a more positive frame of mind. Helps to break up any cliques that may be existent with the group.

Creates a non-threatening environment and promotes laughter which helps any existing tensions decrease. Facilitates the getting-acquainted process and enhances honest communication. □Encourages self-disclosure and self-discovery. [3] As we have observed, in EFL (English as a foreign language) classes only talented and active students participate and engage in pair-work, group works because passive and unconfident students are not provided with teachers’ trust in order to confidently answer teacher’s questions and co-work with their classmates [4]. This investigation’s objective is to make sure teachers to use warm-up, lead-in and ice-breaker activities during lessons as they provide not only student engagement and participation, but also lessons would be more effective and lessons’ goals would be reached with less effort.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The warm-up is the most important part of the physical education classes, where the student's interest and attention are drawn and motivated towards the lesson purpose. However, many physical education teachers do not give enough attention to the beginning and warm-up part of the lesson when planning their lessons. Faigenbaum & McFarland (2007) stated that warm-up activities help prepare students for dynamic activities and increase their lesson time with physical activity. Warming up activities can foster motivation and this is, in turn, an essential component when planning warming up activities. Warm up: “It is an effective way to help the students begin to think in English and to review previously introduced material. A warm up to prepare students for a period of concentration may involve physical movement with activities that keep them active by standing up, walking, jumping, matching pictures with sentences or vocabulary, drawing or writing personal experiences or stories, and singing or listening to familiar songs and chants. These are, among others, enjoyable and motivating warm ups. Despite the positive feedback, the study uncovered a notable knowledge gap in the consistent application of these activities. While teachers recognize the benefits, the implementation varies significantly, with some educators not fully integrating these activities into their lesson plans. This inconsistency highlights the need for more structured guidelines and training for teachers to optimize the use of these activities in classrooms. [6] The research findings underscore the importance of incorporating dynamic and interactive activities in English language classes to enhance student engagement and participation. The

significant percentage of teachers utilizing warm-up, lead-in, and ice-breaker activities and the corresponding high levels of student enjoyment underscore their effectiveness in fostering a more engaging learning environment. [7] These activities help break the monotony, making the class more lively and interactive, which is crucial for maintaining students' attention and interest. They also facilitate smoother transitions between lesson topics, creating a supportive and positive classroom atmosphere, and help establish a friendly and informal climate essential for effective learning. [8] The study shows that these activities, which facilitate smoother transitions between lesson topics, create a supportive and positive classroom atmosphere. They help establish a friendly and informal climate essential for effective learning, particularly important in language classes where students might feel apprehensive about speaking and participating. The knowledge gap identified indicates a need for comprehensive training programs for teachers. Such programs should focus on the practical application of warm-up, lead-in, and ice-breaker activities, providing teachers with various tools and techniques to incorporate these into their lesson plans effectively. [9] The effectiveness of these activities can vary based on the students' age, cultural background, and existing knowledge. Therefore, it is crucial for educators to tailor these activities to suit the specific needs and dynamics of their classrooms. For instance, younger students might benefit more from physical activities and games, while older students might find discussions and debates more engaging.[10]While the study focuses on immediate engagement and participation, further research should explore the long-term effects of these activities on students' academic performance. Understanding how these activities influence learning outcomes over time can provide deeper insights into their efficacy and help refine teaching strategies. [11]The positive impact of these activities in the context of English language learning suggests potential benefits across other subjects and educational settings. Exploring their application in different subjects can help develop a more holistic approach to student engagement and classroom management[12] In conclusion, the research highlights the significant role of warm-up, lead-in, and ice-breaker activities in enhancing student engagement in English language classes. The positive feedback from both teachers and students underscores the need for integrating these activities into regular teaching practices. However, the identified knowledge gap calls for more structured training and consistent implementation. Future research should focus on the long-term academic benefits and adaptability of these activities across various educational contexts. By fostering a more interactive and supportive learning environment, these activities can significantly contribute to improved educational outcomes.

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