

WARM-UP ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM AT THE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The purpose of this piece of work is to define the notion of warm-up activities as an effective way to motivate students to learn foreign language. Examples and recommendations are given.

Keywords: warm-up activities; English lesson; University; motivation; entertainment learning

Анотація

У тезах розглядається явище мовленнєвих зарядок (warm-up activities) як ефективний спосіб заохочення студентів вивчати іноземну мову. Наведено приклади та рекомендації.

Ключові слова: мовленнєві зарядки; урок англійської мови; університет; мотивація; навчання з задоволенням

When starting a language lesson, it is important for you as a teacher to get your students into the right mindset first. This applies to all ages and levels. ESL warm-up activities for adults may differ a little from ESL games and activities for kids and teens, but they are of the same importance.

Until students are focused, they're not going to retain new information. Warm-ups provide a way to refocus students' attention. For example, warm-ups can help if your students are tired, stressed or preoccupied with personal problems, or come to class tired.

Warming up activities can foster motivation and this is, in turn, an essential component when planning warming up activities. According to Dornyei (2001), teachers need to try and actively generate positive students' attitudes toward learning. He also claims that the key issue in generating interest is to widen the student's appetite; that is, to arouse the students' curiosity and attention and to create an attractive image for the class so that they will get more involved with it and a better learning process will take place [1].

Motivation plays an extremely important role in learning. It helps to intensify the behavior of the individual, to acquire knowledge, to direct the activities of students to specific goals, to develop socially important abilities and qualities, to improve efficiency and to form a sense of discipline. Motivation is widely recognized by researchers as one of the main factors influencing the pace and success of the process of learning foreign languages [2].

It is typically recommended by educators that warm-ups should take about five minutes. Many teachers, however, are willing to devote them up to ten minutes (46%), whereas only 8% think that a warm-up should be given for no longer than two minutes. Thus, a warm-up takes from 2 to 10% of the classroom time. It is universally acknowledged that university students tend to be late for classes (more than 80% come five or ten minutes late) for a number of reasons (Maile & Olowoyo, 2017). For this reason, teachers cannot start the class adequately with reviewing important information or starting a new topic [3].

In fact, for several decades, there has been a tendency that students do not perceive themselves as adults (Arnett, 1994) [4] and thus respond positively to "entertainment learning" (De Freitas, 2018). [5] At the same time, university students tend to associate themselves with schoolchildren, and react negatively to trivial tasks (Klippel, 1985), [6] so warm-ups should present some complexity not in relation to the language studied, but in connection with cognitive abilities, critical thinking skills or tasks that are similar to real-life situations (Knowles et al., 2015) [7]. What is even more important, warm-ups are a means to adapt the material to the needs of the digital generation.

While mentioning the positive effect of warm-ups on the next parts of the lesson and its outcomes, researchers do not always provide practical recommendations on their design and adapting them for higher

educational institutions. English lecturers are not always aware of the most efficient ways to conduct warm-up. Authors of modern English coursebooks mainly restrict the role of warm-ups to assessing the previous knowledge of students and introducing a new topic, adding nothing new to the textbook activities. It demonstrates that the approach to warm-ups in teaching young and older adults is not consistent enough. Meanwhile, the Internet contains numerous resources and activities, but it fails to provide a methodological and theoretical basis for their effective usage.

Effective warm-up activities for teaching English should be:

- Considerate towards your students' emotional/physical state when they enter the classroom (for example, if students are tired, use a warm-up with movement to energize them)
- Simple to understand and execute
- Easy to carry out that require little to no preparation
- Age- and level-appropriate
- Time-efficient (not take up too much time)
- Interesting and appealing
- Leading towards the lesson content or target language
- Using mostly known vocabulary to increase students' participation and confidence

Now it's worth mentioning the best options for warming-ups on a regular basis in the University classroom.

Sentence scramble

For this activity, you can divide the students into small groups or pairs or they can work on their own. Come up with a few sentences before class, and write the sentence's words on your physical or virtual whiteboard in a random order. The first group or individual student to unscramble the words and read the sentence aloud correctly wins that round.

What does your name mean?

Using a dictionary, google or any other resource, students find and write down an appropriate adjective that begins with each letter of their first name. For example: *Lucky, Unpredictable, Calm, Young-looking.*

Mixed-up question

It's always good to start the class with a question. Write a good one on the board but mix up the word order, then challenge students to reconstruct the question and then discuss it in pairs or small groups. For example: *most gadget you have the ever expensive what's bought?*

Two truths and a lie

An ESL classroom staple. Write or dictate three sentences about yourself. Two statements should be true and one false, for example: *I used to be a librarian. I can ride a bicycle. My favourite food is sushi.* Now invite students to discuss in pairs which statement they think is the lie. Ask each pair which statement they think is untrue and have them explain why. Reveal your answer, and ask students to come up with three sentences about themselves.

Homophone Quiz

Say a word from a list of homophones and challenge students to write both (or more) forms of the word.

Possible words may be:

bear, bare; piece, peace; not, knot; here, hear; witch, which; flower, flour; would, wood; be, bee; heal, heel; soul, sole; air, heir; break, brake; mist, missed; read, red; board, bored; buy, bye; pair, pear; male, mail; jeans, genes; not, knot; where, wear; so, sew, sow.

Provocative statements

Write a provocative statement on the board and then put students into small groups to discuss their opinion of it. For example, *some drugs should be legalised, Facebook should be banned, one child is enough, organic food is a waste of money, AI will kill people the other day* etc. Have students report back to the class. You could make a list of arguments for and against the thesis.

Warm-ups are supposed to start every lesson. There is no need to connect them with the main topic of a lesson. However, when it comes to using warm-ups at a technical university, they remain underestimated for a number of reasons. In spite of evident facts of positive impact of the activity on the whole, it was found out that many university lecturers of foreign languages refrain from this stage for a number of reasons. Lack of time at the lesson (especially because of possible and real air strikes during the wartime in Ukraine now), absence of students' positive reaction to warm-ups, absence of recommendations on how to conduct warm-ups are the main factors. But try we must. Warm-ups are important for ESP because students may not have used that language at home or at all that day. It takes time and mental stimulation to start thinking about the world in another language, so a warm-up activity effectively supports this transition.

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