

The Students' Perception towards the Use of Icebreakers, Warmers, and Energizers in EFL Classrooms: A Tertiary Study

Soran Mustafa Kurdi

English Language Teaching Department, Faculty of Education, Tishk International University,
Erbil, Iraq

Corresponding Author: soran.mustafa@tiu.edu.iq

Reman Sabah Meena

English Language Teaching Department, Faculty of Education, Tishk International University,
Erbil, Iraq

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Abstract

This study examines first-year students' perceptions in the English Language Teaching Department at Tishk International University regarding using icebreakers, warmers, and energizers in the classroom. The research aims to assess the effectiveness of these activities in enhancing student engagement and participation, as well as their impact on the overall learning experience. The study contributes valuable insights into the practical applicability of these techniques in an educational setting. Additionally, the positive perceptions of the students underscore the potential of these activities in establishing a favorable and comfortable learning environment. Data were collected through surveys and interviews, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative aspect, 32 participants (10 males & 22 females) were surveyed, while the qualitative segment involved interviews with 10 students (five males & five females) at Tishk International University. The study's results indicate that the overwhelming majority of students hold a positive perception of the use of these activities. They view them as beneficial for creating a relaxed and comfortable learning atmosphere, fostering interaction and collaboration among classmates, and boosting motivation and interest in the language. The study suggests that incorporating these activities into EFL classrooms can significantly enhance the overall student learning experience and contribute to a more dynamic and interactive classroom environment. The findings are consistent with existing literature in the field.

Keywords: Classroom engagement, English as a Foreign Language, Energizers, Icebreakers, Warmers

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Introduction

Students in the 21st century do not have the same attention span as students did a decade ago. Educational research indicates that students' attention diminishes in the first 10 to 15 minutes of a lecture (Bradbury, 2016). Learning requires attention (Schmidt, 2012). We live in an age where distractions come in various shapes and forms. The distractions may lead to taking teachers and students' attention away from what is being taught in the classroom. Nowadays, smartphones are the biggest classroom distractions. Students can easily be distracted by the notifications they get from various social networking and messaging applications.

So, where do we want to go when we find a way to grab student's attention? The answer is one word: students' engagement. Student engagement is defined as "the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education" (Sabbott, 2016). Bernate (2019) highlights, "Student engagement is the key to building a safe, positive, and creative school culture that increases achievement." The objective of creating an engaging learning environment, as articulated by Bernstein (2023), is to promote learning and development in students, preparing them to lead lives that are both productive and meaningful.

Teachers are the central figures in the learning process, and they need to keep their students in mind as they set standards for their classes. Apart from being competent and possessing knowledge of the subject matter, they need to pass on their knowledge to their students in a creative way. Anwer (2019) quotes Ericksen (1978) as saying that "effective learning in the classroom depends on the teacher's ability to maintain the interest that brings students to the course in the first place" (p.155). So, the learning process is facilitated through building a positive teacher-student relationship in an engaging environment.

This study examines how first-year students in the English Language Teaching Department at Tishk International University view the use of icebreakers, warmers, and energizers in the classroom. The research aims to evaluate how effective these activities are in improving student engagement and participation, as well as their impact on the overall learning experience. The significance of this study is that it provides valuable insights into the practical use of these activities in an educational setting. In addition to that, it highlights the potential of these activities in creating a positive learning environment.

To achieve the purpose of the study and address the perceptions of the university level students on the use of the mentioned activities, the current study attempted to answer the following questions:

- Do icebreakers, warmers, and energizers help the students or do they waste time?
- If they are helpful, how do they help?

Literature Review

Defining Icebreakers, Warmers, and Energizers

DiCarlo (2009) states that "students do not learn by simply sitting in a classroom listening to the teacher, memorizing assignments, and spitting out answers" (p. 262). He argues that they must be able to explain what they are learning, write about it, and use it in their everyday lives. Students gain knowledge by active participation and then processing it via articulating what they have discovered. Icebreakers are activities that aid students to cooperate and encourage classroom interactions (*Interactive Classroom Activities / Sheridan Center / Brown University*, n.d.). Astuti et al (2020) define icebreakers as "an activity that can be used to solve the tension and saturation

of students in learning so that the class becomes fun and more conducive before entering into core activities” (p. 211).

There are many names used for icebreakers, such as warm-ups, tension reducers, brainteasers, feedback/disclosure loops, energizers, and games, yet in one way or another, these terminologies all refer to the same idea. Taylor (2009) believes that “icebreakers, energizers, and simulation games” are activities that can be used “to break down barriers, to bring a group together, as a tool for learning, and of course, for some light relief when needed” (p. 4).

British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), in an educational guide entitled *Using icebreakers and energizers to support online teaching* (2020), defines icebreakers as “short activities and experiences (2–10 minutes) that engage learners, support interaction and learning, and add variety and life to a class” (p. 3). These can create a notable difference in the classroom environment and interactions between teachers and students. The guide uses three different terms: “icebreakers, warmers, and energizers.” The three terms are sometimes used for “the same activity or type of activity. However, the distinction is when the activity is done, and what the purpose is” (*Using icebreakers and energizers to support online teaching*, 2020). According to the BCIT guidelines (2020), icebreakers are utilized at the start of a class, whereas warmers can revisit previously covered topics, and energizers can be implemented to alter the pace of a class.

When to Use Icebreakers, Warmers, and Energizers?

Teachers can find many opportunities to use icebreakers, warmers, and energizers in the classroom. However, the timing of using such activities is crucial and, to a good extent, influences their effectiveness. Thompson (2023) points to four important times when the activities could be effective. They can be used on the first day of school, which can be challenging for students as they may not know each other. These activities help students feel more comfortable with their classmates. They can also be used after holidays when students might feel a bit down about returning to school. These activities allow students to share and interact, helping them get back into the school mood. These activities are particularly useful at the start of the week, a challenging time for students. Engaging in these activities can assist them in preparing for the learning ahead. In addition, towards the end of the week, when students may find it difficult to maintain focus, incorporating icebreakers, warmers, and energizers can effectively redirect their attention back to the class. Ougham (2023) adds one more time. He specifically refers to the energizers as activities that “help our learners to reactivate their brains after extended periods of sitting, writing, and listening; giving them time to re-adjust and re-focus their attention back to healthy learning.” Thus, energizers can be used during the class to grab the student’s attention back.

Why use icebreakers, Warmers, and Energizers?

Desthuis-Francis (2021) believes that “the belonging feeling” and “building relationships with fellow students, professors, tutors, and mentors” are two important key points in students’ engagement, retention, and overall success. Also, students need to take a break from classwork, from time to time, and help disperse the anxiety. Rahmayanti and Saraswati (2019) highlight,

[At] the beginning of the lesson, [icebreakers] is like a warm-up. It can raise the students’ spirit to learn. In the middle, it can regain the students’ concentration and attention. Meanwhile, in the end, it can create addiction sense to the students to learn. (p. 595)

In an EFL classroom, the focus is on language learning. "Language develops best through interaction" (Sinha, 2021, p. 1137). Keeping the interest of today's students alive and harnessing their attention span, in an atmosphere where distractions all around, can often be a challenge. For that reason, constant conversations and interactions among the students and with their teachers are highly encouraging. Students need to make learning a part of themselves. Keeping students engaged in the classroom through icebreakers, warmers, and energizers (*Using icebreakers and energizers to support online teaching*, 2020).

The advantages of icebreakers, warmers, and energizers can be plenty, but BCIT (2020) summarizes them in the following points. The same points have been used as items in developing the survey:

- Create a positive learning experience in the classroom.
- Encourage active learning, interaction, and engagement.
- Restart attention spans.
- Create an opportunity to exchange ideas and opinions.
- Improve teamwork among classmates.

Creating A Positive Experience

According to Dornyei (as cited in Velandia, 2008), "Teachers need to try and actively generate positive students' attitudes toward learning" (p. 11). Dornyei believes the "Key issue in generating interest is to widen the students' 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" (As cited in Velandia, 2008, pp. 11).

Desthuis-Francis (2021) highlights the advantages of implementing icebreakers, warmers, and energizers, citing three key benefits. Firstly, they offer a moment of break and relaxation amid a busy day. Secondly, they create connections and encourage teamwork within a safe environment. Lastly, they provide an entertaining way to engage with others.

Getting the Students Engaged

Kawasaki (2021) writes that icebreakers are intended to keep students engaged as active participants. Sometimes, there is a feeling of nervousness when freshmen students first enroll in a class. The class atmosphere creates much more nervousness for the students if they are not familiar with each other well. Yeganehpour (2016) draws on that point, saying that it is crucial to break the ice in the classroom in a positive way to make sure that the students feel relaxed. For that, icebreakers, warmers, and energizers assist students in overcoming nervousness while they help the students get oriented to the new environment.

Desthuis-Francis (2021) highlights the importance of icebreakers, warmers, and energizers in helping students get oriented in a new classroom. She believes that the activities assist students to get acquainted with one another and form personal connections. She goes on to explain that entering a new environment and meeting new people can be discouraging and intimidating. This is particularly true for first-year students. Thus, teachers must arrange a variety of fun and engaging icebreakers, warmers, and energizers to ensure that students feel accepted and comfortable.

Restarting the Attention Span

When students are bored or uninterested in the material they are taught, they cannot focus on the classroom tasks. The attention span they have will most likely wear out soon and they

become distracted. Allwright (1984) points out that there are activities that teachers can use to grab attention. He argues, "The focusing of attention by underlining words on the blackboard, or by using coloured chalks, is a simple example" (p. 165). Lavery (2017) states that German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus is believed to be the first person to coin the term *Serial Position Effect*. The effect is the psychological process where one remembers the first and last items in a series better than those that come in the middle. The effect includes two periods; the primacy and the recency effect (Cherry, 2022). With the primacy effect, someone tends to remember information presented at the beginning. However, with the recency effect, someone tends to remember information presented at the end (Lavery, 2017).

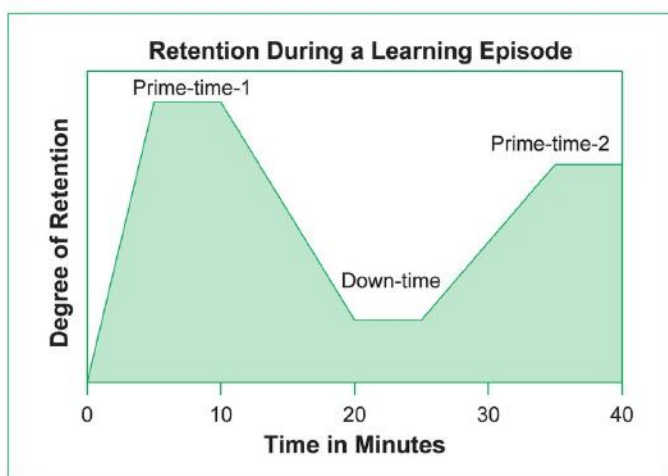


Figure 1 Retention span (Adopted from Sousa, 2016, p. 148)

Sousa (2016) posits that, throughout a learning episode, students undergo periods of prime and down times in cognitive engagement. Optimal learning occurs at the beginning of a class (primacy), followed by enhanced retention towards the end of the class (recency). Lastly, the least effective learning tends to take place during the middle phase (downtime). In Figure One, Sousa provides a clear visual representation of this tendency for a 40-minute learning episode (Curriculum, 2016).

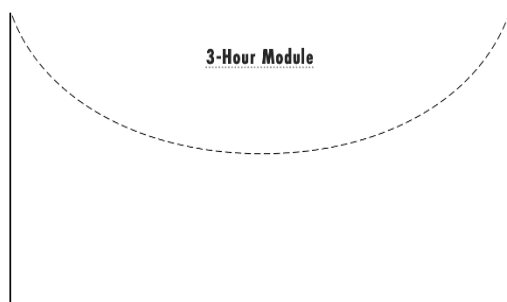


Figure 2. Three-hour Module without Activities (Adopted from Tamblyn, D., 2006, p. 19)

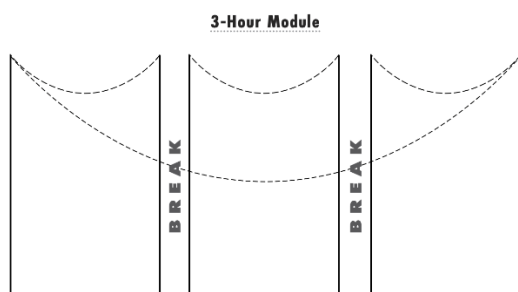


Figure 3. Three-hour Module with Activities (Adopted from Tamblyn, D., 2006, p. 21)

However, by having a warm-up activity with a learning episode, the primacy and recency time can be increased. Each activity resets the attention span and creates a new primacy and it decreases the down time. Figure two and three are three-hour modules of the learning episode. Figure Two demonstrates a class with no activity that has only its primacy and recency effect along with a downtime. However, the *breaks* in Figure Three represent the activities a teacher can implement in the classroom. The figure demonstrates the multiple primacy and recency effect in the attention span of the students.

Improving Idea-Exchange

Encouraging the exchange of different viewpoints among students is an important responsibility for teachers. This is particularly true in the first year of college, where the learning environment significantly varies from their previous high school setting. Engaging in-class activities that prompt students to share their viewpoints with peers enhances educational outcomes (King, 2012). Aimerie (2023) stresses that icebreakers, warmers, and energizers are “designed to discuss, question, share ideas, experiences, feelings, etc. (depending on the nature of the activity chosen) with other students as well as with the teacher.”

The student-to-student relations help to ensure that the students are all getting along well. They also make sure how safe students feel in the classrooms. Yeganehpour (2017) posits that icebreakers, energizers, and warm-up activities can be utilized to facilitate interaction between students and teachers as key players in learning. These activities contribute to creating a more friendly atmosphere among students and between students and the teacher.

Building Team-Work

Icebreakers, warmers, and energizers can be useful for team-building when they involve everyone in a group who works together to achieve a specific task. McGhee (2018) states that icebreakers, warmers, and energizers “may seem trivial, but they can assist with building meaningful relationships with students.”

Fierce Education Staff (2022) asserts that there are some skills that students cannot acquire merely from textbooks. For instance, understanding the art of getting along with classmates goes beyond mere memorization. The website suggests that students acquire essential life skills like communication and collaboration through completing group activities. The staff (2022) stresses, “Engaging, relevant team-building activities for students that can energize classroom and take learning to a new level.”

Icebreakers, Warmers, and Energizers in Language Learning Environment

The student-centered gained significant attention and came under the spotlight in the mid-20th century (Bojana, 2023). Student-centered learning changed the classroom setting by placing students at the center. In this approach, the teacher assumes the role of a “guide on the side,” providing assistance and guidance as students work towards their goals (Overby, 2011). Student-centered learning gives importance to the incorporation of warm-up activities, energizers, and icebreakers in the classroom. The activities serve the purpose of student-centered learning by grabbing students' attention, producing a positive learning environment, and building peer relations.

Apart from that, the use of icebreakers, warmers, and energizers promotes active learning. In an article written for the Cambridge Assessment blog, Morris (2016) defines active learning as learning that “focuses on how students learn, not just on what they learn.” Active learning is a term used to describe strategies that emphasize students' active involvement in the process of constructing knowledge. With this approach, students actively engage as participants, assuming responsibility for their learning and constructing understanding through various activities (*Active Learning: Teaching Guide* | Center for Teaching & Learning, 2001).

Icebreakers, warmers, and energizers play a key role in establishing an interactive learning environment in EFL classrooms. It is particularly effective at the start of a lesson, assisting in the introduction of new topics or smooth transitions between the topics. Moreover, the activities are effective in reactivating students' focus when they feel lethargic or experience a decline in attention span. Additionally, they contribute to promoting a positive atmosphere in the classroom.

In addition to that, the activities are excellent strategies to be used in language-learning settings. They provide opportunities for students to use and reinforce their English language skills in a relaxed and supportive setting. For instance, the activity “marooned” helps students search for and check new vocabulary and practice using English sentences.

Examples of the Activities

A quick online search will give a plethora of resources on icebreakers, warmers, and energizers to be used in classrooms. The following activities are some examples that have been used in the class:

Play ball: A softball is needed for this activity. The students can be arranged in circles or sit in their seats. The idea is that a student throws the ball at someone in the classroom. On catching it, the other students are to disclose something about themselves, before throwing it to someone else. The information they disclose can be adjusted to the purpose of the classroom. For our class, we used this activity for self-introduction. This activity is preferred to be implemented at the beginning of the year (Schweitzer, 2019).

Deserted Island: This activity is based on the theme of being stranded on a desert island. Students pretend to have been trapped on a desert island. They have to think of five things that they will have with them if they want to survive. For our class, the students were divided into four groups, and they were asked to discuss the items they needed. It was an excellent activity for idea exchange and teamwork. It gave them the chance to search for new vocabulary and express themselves in English (VIPKid, 2018).

Blobs and lines: Gonzalez (2015) argues that this activity promotes active student engagement and communication, assisting them in discovering shared interests. The idea behind this game is for students to respond to their teacher's prompts, arranging them either in a *line* (e.g.,

alphabetical order of last names) or in “*blobs*” based on a shared characteristic (such as birth month) (Gonzalez, 2015). This example works as a good warmer or energizer, after a holiday break, to get the students back on track of studying. Here are some examples of prompts we tried:

- Stand in chronological order of your birthdays.
- Arrange yourselves by the number of siblings you have.
- Form a line according to the chronological order of your shoe sizes.
- Line up based on the chronological order of your heights (Gonzalez, 2015).

Random questions and answers: With this activity, each student has a chance to write an open-ended question on a piece of paper. They can ask about anything they are curious about. Once they are done, they can fold the papers and drop them into a box that is passed around. Next, the students will write down random answers on another piece of paper, whether it is just a single word or a complete sentence. Afterward, they will fold their papers and add them to the box. The thrilling part is that the teacher randomly selects one paper from the question box and another from the answer box. The pairing of a question with an unrelated answer creates a fun and unexpected environment. This activity is an engaging and fun way to foster engagement in the classroom.

Beep-Baap: This is an energizer that works well for ESL classrooms (Turner, 2021). Students substitute a number with the word “Beep” and another with the word “Bap” as the teacher goes around the room asking them to count. For example, the students would say, “Beep” for every number that has “four” such as “4, 14, 24, 34, etc.” they would say “Bap” for every number that has “eight” such as “8, 18, 28, 38, etc.” If the students fail to say “Beep” or “Bap” at the right number, they have to sit down. The last one standing becomes the winner. This activity was practiced as soon as lethargic feeling was sensed among the students to restart their attention span (Turner, 2021).

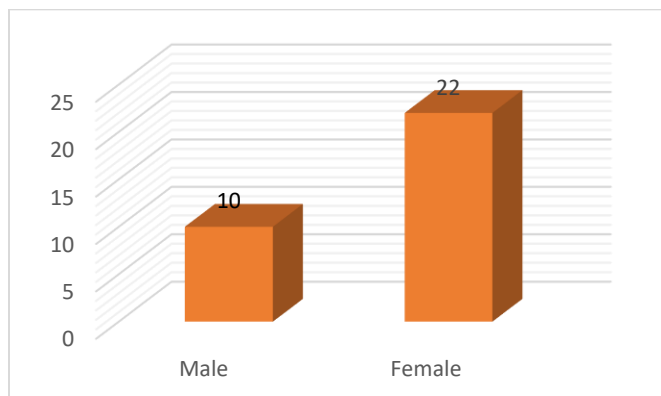
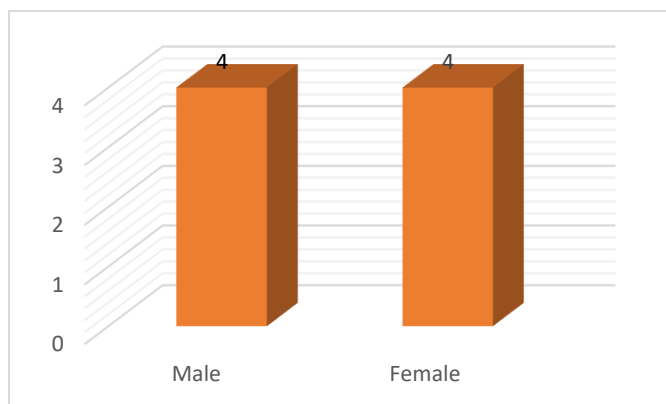
Video: Jackie (2023) says, “Videos are ideal for a quick warm-up activity.” A variety of video content can be used in the classroom. Short videos were used as a warmer easing the students into understanding a new topic or easing the students into the mood of study after a holiday or break.

Research Gap:

The literature review thoroughly covers the definitions, purposes, and benefits of integrating icebreakers, warmers, and energizers in EFL classrooms. However, there is a significant gap in research when it comes to empirical studies assessing the simultaneous application of these activities within an educational setting. While the review emphasizes the importance of these activities individually, their collective influence has not been extensively investigated. This study aims to bridge this gap by gathering participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the three types of activities when implemented in an educational setting.

Method

A mixed-method approach was chosen to analyze the quantitative and qualitative data. By choosing that, diverse perspectives of the students were explored, and a rich picture was created. The quantitative methodology was used to measure the relationship between different variables while the qualitative methodology was used to understand the perceptions of the students about the activities. Furthermore, a mixed-method approach was employed to enhance the validity and reliability of the researcher's data.

Participants*Figure 4.* Participants for quantitative data*Figure 5.* Participants for qualitative data

The participants of this study were first-grade students, from the year 2021-2022, in the English Language Teaching Department at the Faculty of Education at Tishk International University, where the researcher taught reading and writing skill courses. For the quantitative part, 32 (10 males & 22 females) Kurdish EFL students were surveyed. As for the qualitative, 10 (five males & five females) students were interviewed.

For the data sampling method, a homogeneous sampling was used. Homogeneous sampling is a purposive sampling technique used on units that share similar characteristics or identical traits. In this case, the units were the first-grade students who took the class where the teacher used icebreakers, warmers, and energizers. The students were exposed to the experience equally and were able to express their views on the experience easily.

Research Instrument:

The data for the present study were collected using Google Forms. Five single-answer multiple-choice questions and one multiple-answer multiple-choice question were distributed. The researcher designed the survey to determine the perceptions of the students towards the use of the activities, their usefulness, and whether they want to continue having them or not. In addition to that, three specific questions were formulated for the qualitative aspect of the study, which were asked of participants during interviews.

ProcedureTable 1. *Reliability statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.818	.834	8

Before the questionnaire was deployed, a pilot study was carried out for the reliability and internal consistency of the questions in the survey. The questionnaire was distributed among 10 students and then the results were tested using Cronbach's alpha. Many sources consider above 0.70 to be acceptable, but 0.80 or greater is preferred (Cortina, 1993). The alpha coefficient for the eight items of the survey questionnaire was 0.834, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. After being assured of the reliability and internal consistency of the items, the survey was delivered to the participants. The results of the collected data were analyzed by Microsoft Excel.

For the qualitative aspect, 10 students (five males and five females) were individually interviewed. They were asked three questions. The interview duration spanned three to six minutes, depending on their willingness to express their thoughts. The interviews were conducted in a quiet environment that encouraged participants to comfortably share their experiences. Each interview was audio recorded and then transcribed. Once the transcriptions for all the interviews were completed, data analysis was carried out to identify common patterns and themes.

A thematic analysis was used for the qualitative part. A "thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts, such as an interview or transcripts. The researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes" (Caulfield, 2023). After the transcription, the common themes were identified. Each theme was examined to better understand the participants' perception of the experience they had in the classroom with icebreakers, warmers, and energizers. The following questions were asked:

- Q1. Do you think the icebreakers, warmers, and energizers were helpful or they were a waste of time?
- Q2. If helpful? How do you think icebreakers, warmers, and energizers were helpful?
- Q3. Do you think it would be beneficial if we continue doing these activities in the classroom? Why or why not?

Results**Quantitative Result**

The quantitative findings indicated that all participants agree that icebreakers, warmers, and energizers are helpful, and a significant majority do not consider the activities a waste of class time. All participants (100%) confirmed that these activities were beneficial, highlighting their positive effects. While a small number (9.4%) had concerns about these activities being a waste of class time, the majority (90.6%) disagreed, highlighting the perceived value of the activities. Further examination showed that 75% of participants believed these activities created a positive learning environment. Additional advantages included promoting active learning (59.4%), refreshing attention spans (51.3%), encouraging idea-sharing (56.3%), and enhancing teamwork (59.4%).

Qualitative Result

The qualitative aspect reiterated the same findings, with participants highlighting the positive influence of the activities on their learning experience. The participants expressed a strong consensus that icebreakers, warmers, and energizers contribute to creating a positive learning environment. This positivity is associated with increased engagement, active interaction, and renewed attention spans. Students feel that these activities help them overcome uneasiness, connect with peers, and familiarize themselves with the classroom environment. Additionally, participants recognize the role of these activities in promoting teamwork, idea-sharing, and further improving their classroom experiences.

Discussion

Connecting the research findings with the research questions, the results strongly affirm the beneficial impact of these activities on the learning process. Students overwhelmingly stated that these activities are genuinely helpful and play a vital role in creating a positive learning environment.

Quantitative

The questionnaire includes two *yes/no* questions about whether icebreakers, warmers, and energizers have helped them or not and whether they believed icebreakers, warmers, and energizers were a waste of class time or whether they would rather spend the time studying the core topic of the course. As Table Two indicates, all the participants (%100) answered Q1 with *yes*, meaning that they strongly agree that the icebreakers, warmers, and energizers have helped them. Even though a few participants (%9.4) answered *yes* to the Q2, *I believe icebreakers, warmers, and energizers are a waste of class time, I would rather spend the time studying the core topic of the class*, the majority of them (%90.6) answer the question with *no*, meaning that they do not believe the activities are a waste of time.

Table 1. *Students' perceptions on icebreakers, warmers, and energizers*

	Items	Yes	Frequency	No	Frequency
Q1	Icebreakers, warmers, and energizers have helped me.	32	%100	0	0
Q2	I believe icebreakers, warmers, and energizers are a waste of class time, I would rather spend the time studying the core topic of the class.	3	%9.4	29	%90.6

To elaborate on how the icebreakers, warmers, and energizers help them, the participants were provided with a question (Q3) that had five items to choose from. The items address the areas where they believe that icebreakers, warmers, and energizers benefit them. The participants could choose more than one item. As Table Three illustrates below, the item that stands out among all is the icebreakers, warmers, and energizers that “*create a positive learning environment.*” %75 (24 out of 32) of the participants believe that the activities create a positive learning environment. This can be because when first-graders come to college, the first thing that they look for is a positive learning environment. Finding themselves in an environment different from high school, they may feel some uneasiness. Therefore, they need something to free them from the stress and uneasiness. Icebreakers at the beginning of the year offer the students this opportunity to overcome their uneasiness. This result closely resembles those reported by Velandia (2008) and Desthuis-Francis (2021) who stated that arousing the students' curiosity and

attention is crucial to getting students more involved within the class and providing an entertaining way to engage with others.

The other four items, in the question, are equally considered to be beneficial to the participants. For the second item, "*Encourage active learning /interaction/ engagement,*" %59.4 of the participants, which is more than half, are with belief that the aforementioned activities encourage active learning, interactions among peers, and engagement in the classroom. This supports the literature that icebreakers, warmers, and energizers are intended to keep students engaged as active participants. An optimistic classroom ambiance motivates students to join in, understand the subject matter, and start discussions with their peers.

Recognizing and restarting the attention spans during class time was what %51.4 of the participants chose in the question. In an age where students are surrounded by distracters, the icebreakers, warmers, and energizers are designed to keep students' attention intact and prepare them to focus on the activities that come next.

Most of the icebreakers, warmers, and energizers, that were implemented in the class, required interaction among the students, so %56.3 of the participants indicated that the activities "*create an opportunity to share ideas and opinions or to ask questions.*" This shows that understanding of the peers' perspectives is enhanced when direct interactions happen in the classroom.

Finally, the group nature of the majority of the activities necessitated the students to be a part of a team, and for that, %59.4 of the participants agreed that icebreakers, warmers, and energizers improved their teamwork in the class.

Table 2. *Q3 Icebreakers, warmers, and energizers have helped me with the following (Please select your choices)*

No.	Items	No.	Percentage
1	Create a positive learning environment	24	%75
2	Encourage active learning /interaction/engagement	19	%59.4
3	Recognize and 'restart' attention spans	17	%51.3
4	Create an opportunity to share ideas and opinions or to ask questions	18	%56.3
5	Improve teamwork among classmates	19	%59.4

Table Four indicates that %96.9 of the participants answered *yes* to Q4, "*I think it would be beneficial if we continue doing these activities in the classroom.*" This shows that the majority of the participants persist in having icebreakers, warmers, and energizers in their classes. This also underscores the important value of the activities in keeping an engaging and collaborative classroom atmosphere.

Table 3. *Participants' opinions on the activities' continuance.*

	Item	Yes	Frequency	No	Frequency
Q4	I think it would be beneficial if we continue doing these activities in the classroom.	31	%96.9	1	%3.1

The participants also indicate their favorite types of activities in the classroom. Table Five illustrates that %50 of the participants prefer the *energizers* (to change the pace of the class), %37.5

of them choose *icebreakers* (at the start of the year/ to allow students to get to know each other), and %25.5 of them the *warmers* (introduce/ review a topic/ after a long holiday or break) as their preference. The different rate of preferences among the students towards energizers, icebreakers, and warmers provides valuable information about the participants' desires for the classroom activities. Energizers, with a preference rate of 50%, appear as the most favored type. The fact that half of the participants prefer energizers indicates a strong interest in keeping the classroom mood active. It also suggests that participants recognize the benefits of including activities that inspire excitement in the learning environment.

Following energizers, 37.5% of participants chose icebreakers as their preferred category. The percentage underscores the importance the participants place on building a sense of community within the classroom, which contributes to a more comfortable learning atmosphere.

Warmers, selected by 25.5% of participants, indicate that a quarter of the participants identify the value of starting or restarting class sessions with activities that refresh their understanding. This preference reveals that the students appreciate a learning approach that helps continuous learning progress. Together, the various percentages guide educators to tailor classroom activities to meet the students' diverse needs. The patterns identified in the quantitative part are akin to those discussed by

No.	Items	No.	Percentage
1	<i>Icebreakers</i>	12	%37.5
2	<i>Energizers</i>	16	%50
3	<i>Warmers</i>	4	%12.5

Table 4. Activity preference

Qualitative

Similar to the quantitative results, the qualitative results showed that all of the participants (10 out of 10) showed a positive attitude towards icebreakers, warmers, and energizers that they experienced during the year. As to Q1, all the participants strongly agreed that *the icebreakers, warmers, and energizers were helpful*. This positive perspective is attributed to several factors which they answered in the question.

The participants' answers to Q2 share several common patterns and themes. One of the common themes that stands out is "*positive*," whether it be "*positive thinking*," "*positive environment*," or "*positive vibe*." Participant No.1 states, "*The icebreakers, warmers, and energizers created a positive thinking in the classroom... and they made me feel comfortable.*" Similarly, participant No. 2 focuses on the positivity of the activities, highlighting that they "*helped me to create a positive environment.*" The participant also adds that "*At first, [I] was shy, when [I] did those activities [I] felt comfortable.*" Sharing the same pattern, participant No. 9 states, "*The activities created a positive vibe in the class.*" Participant No. 10 shares the same point and also underscores that icebreakers, warmers, and energizers "*created a positive environment where we loved studying and learning... [they] helped us with adapting to the new environment of the college at the beginning of the year.*" Participant No. 7 restates the same point, saying that "*the activities helped us get familiar with each other very quickly.*" Student No. 3 points out that the activities "*helped me enjoy the class more.*"

Another common theme that emerges in the participants' answers is "*attention*." Across the responses, the participants consistently expressed how the activities positively affected their

focus during class. Participant No. 1 mentions, *"They started my attention span, especially when I was getting bored in the class and sleepy. They made me more active and focused on the lessons."* Participant No. 2 elaborates on how the activities are particularly effective at the beginning of the day, saying that *"they helped bring our attention back to the class. In the morning, they made us energetic and brought our focus to the class."* Similarly, participant No. 5 emphasizes the usefulness of these activities in retaining a positive environment when they get bored. Participant No. 3 notes that icebreakers, warmers, and energizers effectively restart the class mood *"after coming back from a holiday."* Participant No. 6 and Participant No. 7 both refer to the *"mood"* transition as well, emphasizing how the activities help them reconnect with the mood of learning after some time away from the classroom. A couple of participants emphasized the *energizing* effect of icebreakers, warmers, and energizers. Participant No. 5 articulates that the activities *"gave us energy when we became sleepy,"* especially during early hours, while Participant No. 9 adds that the activities help them warm up to new topics. The participants' perspectives on the classroom activities underscore their significance in increasing energy levels grabbing their attention back to the class.

Some participants highlight another common theme, saying that icebreakers, warmers, and energizers increase interaction and engagement within the classroom. Participant No. 1 emphasizes that increased engagement, noting that the activities *"made me interactive in the class ... [they] made me more interactive with the teacher as well."* Participant No. 3 also stresses the advantages of these activities in motivating student interaction, especially *"during the group activities."* Participant No. 4 underscores that icebreakers, warmers, and energizers *"made us become friends and interact with each other very fast."* No. 9 confirms the same theme, stating that the activities increase personal activity levels in the classroom.

The participants referred to another common theme, noting that icebreakers, warmers, and energizers promote idea-sharing in the classroom. Participant No. 2 points out that these activities *"helped us get ideas from others and share ours at the same time."* Participant No. 5 and Participant No. 10 highlight that the exercises encourage them to express thoughts and opinions in English, motivating language use. Similarly, Participant No. 6 underscores that the activities increase collaboration in groups. Participant No. 7 echoes idea-sharing in collaborative groups. Participant No. 9 emphasizes that the activities *"created an opportunity to share opinions in the class."*

The participants also draw on another positive influence of icebreakers, warmers, and energizers. They believe that the activities enhance teamwork within the classroom. While Participant No. 2 acknowledges that *"the activities made a great teamwork"* in the classroom, participant No. 3 adds that the activities facilitate teamwork among students with different English proficiency levels. Participant No. 4 underlines that the activities improve teamwork, *"especially at the beginning of the school year when we did not know each other very well."* Lastly, Participant No. 5 emphasizes that, along with promoting *"teamwork,"* the activities *"made us become friends... fast."*

In response to Q3, *"Do you think it would be beneficial if we continue doing these activities in the classroom? Why or why not?"* A strong majority of the participants stress in their responses that they want to have icebreakers, warmers, and energizers in their classes. This collective

sentiment indicates the positive impact of the activities in creating a positive classroom environment, extending attention span, enhancing teamwork, and promoting idea-sharing.

Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the impact of incorporating icebreakers, warmers, and energizers in the learning process for first-year students at Tishk International University. Both quantitative and qualitative findings support the positive influence of these activities. The quantitative results show unanimous agreement among participants on the helpfulness of icebreakers, warmers, and energizers. Qualitative interviews reinforce these results, highlighting the constructive effect of these activities on the overall learning experience. Participants consistently emphasize the creation of a positive learning environment, increased engagement, enhanced interaction, and improved attention spans. Additionally, the study indicates a strong preference among participants to continue these activities in the classroom, with energizers being the most favored, followed by icebreakers and warmers. In summary, the research demonstrates that these activities play a crucial role in cultivating a positive classroom atmosphere, encouraging engagement, extending attention spans, and facilitating teamwork and idea-sharing. These findings align with existing literature, affirming the validity and relevance of such pedagogical practices in educational settings.

About the Authors:

Soran Mustafa Kurdi is an Assistant Lecturer at Tishk International University. He is currently a Ph.D. student at Soran University, pursuing a degree in English literature. He earned his M.A. degree in English from Weber State University. He is also the VESAL Conference Secretary at Tishk International University. His research interests include ELT, translation, and literature. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0465-6384>

Reman Sabah Meena is an Assistant Lecturer at Tishk International University. He holds an M.A. in ELT from Tishk International University. He currently serves as the Program Coordinator for the Foundation Year of the Faculty of Education. His research interests include ELT, TESOL, and Educational Management and Leadership. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6971-4605>

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Appendices

Appendix A: Students' Questionnaire

Dear Students:

This survey is to get the first-year students' perceptions of the use of icebreakers, warmers, and energizers implemented at the English Language Teaching department at Tishk International University. The result of this survey is going to be used for a research paper.

The following activities have been used with students since the beginning of the year:

- Icebreakers (at the start of the year/ to give students a chance to get to know each other)
- Warmers (introduce/review a topic or after a long holiday or break)
- Energizers (during a class to change the pace when energy gets low)

Researchers: Soran Mustafa Kurdi & Reman Sabah Meena

- 1- Gender
 - Male
 - Female
- 2- Icebreakers, warmers, and energizers have helped me:
 - Yes
 - No
- 3- I believe icebreakers, warmers, and energizers are a waste of class time, I would rather spend the time in studying the core topic of the class..
 - Yes
 - No
- 4- Icebreakers, warmers, and energizers have helped me with the followings (Please select more than one choice)
 - Create a positive learning environment.
 - Encourage active learning / interaction / engagement.
 - Restart the attention spans.
 - Create an opportunity to share ideas and opinions or to ask questions.
 - Promote a sense of trust and friendship.

- 5- I think it would be beneficial if we continue doing these activities in the classroom
 - Yes
 - No
- 6- Which type has interested you more?
 - Icebreakers (at the start of year/ to give people a chance to get to know each other)
 - Warmers (introduce/review a topic / after a long holiday or break)
 - Energizers (during a class to change the pace when energy gets low)

Appendix B: Interview Consent Form

Interviews Consent Form

This survey is to get the first-year students' perceptions towards the use of icebreakers, warmers, and energizers implemented at the English Language Teaching department at Tishk International University. The result of this survey is going to be used for research purposes.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated / / and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
- I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.
- I agree for this interview to be recorded. I understand that the audio recording made of this interview will be used only for analysis and that extracts from the interview, from which I would not be personally identified, may be used in any conference presentation, report or journal article developed as a result of the research. I understand that no other use will be made of the recording without my written permission, and that no one outside the research team will be allowed access to the original recording.
- I agree that my anonymised data will be kept for future research purposes such as publications related to this study after the completion of the study.

I agree to take part in this interview.

Name of participant

Date

Signature