



ENGAGEMENT STUDENTS' LEARNING IN ENGLISH AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT: - In this article we are going to explore important ways of developing engagement on students' learning in English and different teaching strategies that effectively help on this issue. Moreover, the article covers interactive methods that can be used by teachers to organize student-centred lessons.

KEYWORDS: memorizing, pre-defined assignment, detrimental, classroom dynamics, community, rap sessions, perspective, challenge.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is not a spectator sport, neither is learning. That is why not all the teachers can keep their students engaged in their course or the classroom. Accordingly, students can never learn anything just by sitting in the classroom and listening to their teachers, as well as spitting out prepared answers or memorizing pre-defined assignments[1]. One of the key factors of a learning project success is Engagement. There are some common effective techniques for boosting the engagement. Research suggests that

incorporation of some interrelated activities in any teaching pattern can significantly boost students' engagement. This engagement is done emotionally, cognitively and also behaviorally — thereby positively influencing the learning and knowledge of students. In other words, students can relate the learning to their past experiences and can apply that throughout their daily activities. "Engagement is the secret key to learning. When students actively engage or participate to pursue knowledge, they are actually preparing for

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themselves a better life ahead” said – Tom Dewing, Ho Ho Kus Associate and consultant for Silver Strong.

However, during teaching, it is common to observe the students’ noticeable lack of interest or motivation in the classroom. This particular behavior is not only hard to correct but is also detrimental to the classroom dynamics. It undermines the positive energy for which you work so hard, expecting to build rapport with your students and create a sense of community. Therefore, it is crucial for every teacher to build with their students. Meet them where they are and make an attempt to understand them. To achieve this, teachers need to develop a strategy which actually works as an instructional management plan. This will help in promoting specific thought patterns (between teacher and students) and in achieving desired learning goals effectively. To prevent students stray from the course and to keep them engaged in learning, there are some common teaching tips that every teacher should incorporate into their overall teaching pattern. You can motivate students for learning if, being a teacher, you link the course outline or program with their prior knowledge. Students are rarely interested in taking up lectures when they hold no prior knowledge of the topic. Figuring out what your students already know can significantly assist you in pitching your teachings following the right academic challenge level, and to identify and correct many misconceptions of the students. For instance, you may start your lecture with a few open-ended questions, requiring students to answer them in pairs[2].

Additionally, you may ask some multiple-choice questions which are based on the information you expect them to know already. This will help you in spotting the areas where you need to fill the gaps in understanding and leaving out the ones students are already aware of. Use the gathered information to

build a course that would provide them additional knowledge and link it with their existing understanding. Nonetheless, tapping learners’ prior knowledge is an effective way to start the new course and an even better way to get learners involved with learning projects, right from the beginning. Sometimes there comes the situation when your students do not like your course material and they are quite disinterested or disoriented in learning. To overcome this issue, H. Richard Milner, a Director of the Center for Urban Education at the University of Pittsburgh suggests that students can be more motivated to work if they see the connection between course materials and their personal interests. So, use the fascinations or interest of your students and find out what your learners like the most or passionate about[3]. Use these areas of interests as the natural motivators and increase their engagement in learning. You can use many simple strategies to incorporate such areas of interests in your course outline. This will help them in understanding the material better and in increasing their retention ability. Also, this helps in driving learner’s attention towards the subject and in improving their attention span along with time spent on each task.

Therefore, make the most of this easy-to-incorporate strategy and include the interests of learners throughout their course material. One of the ways to do this is to create assignments that would enable students to share their interests and experiences with other fellow learners. For instance, science students might prefer to explore common factors through various films or video games. This practice also requires you to engage in conversations with students on your own and learn more about and from them. During the learning journey, a teacher shouldn’t always be at the center of discussion. They should encourage the learners to share experiences

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and events from their community or home. When there is an appropriate environment for that, the engagement of the learners is much higher. Let your learners express with each other about happenings of their lives, both inside and outside the learning curve. This will enable them to substantiate their positions and listen to others. They should be allowed to discuss whatever information they like discussing. Once you encourage such 'rap sessions', your learners will develop topics which they like to discuss. Moreover, you can too, decide some topics for them which would allow them to have a debate over an issue and to share their individual perspective, about a specific theme.

In this manner, learners will get an opportunity to develop their own voice, and you being a teacher will gain a lot of knowledge about your students. Aiming for learners' engagement, it is imperative that the learners perceive your designed activities as meaningful and helpful. Some research suggests that students cannot be engaged in learning up to a satisfactory level if they fail to consider their learning activities worthy of putting efforts or investing time. To consider the worst, they may disengage with the course entirely, as a natural response. Therefore, before you design the learning activities you must take the advantage of their areas of interest, and their learning preferences[4]. To make sure that the developed learning activities will motivate the student to get more engaged in learning, you must keep them personally meaningful. For instance, connect these activities in accordance with their prior experiences and previous knowledge, reflecting the value or meaning of the assigned activity in relevant ways. Also, an expert or adult modeling should also assist students; by demonstrating why a particularly designed activity is worth investing time and efforts and

when and how this can be applied in their real lives.

The majority of teachers are leaving out the traditional learning patterns and adopting more advanced application of technology. Such measures are adopted to encourage student engagement in learning at a better level, make them exert more effort in learning and to make them excited to accomplish their learning goals. Students follow through their learning process often using modern technology. Competition is a great way to motivate students to learn better or to make them engaged in learning more naturally. When a teacher develops a sense of competition among his/her students, it encourages the students to do what is needed to remain ahead of others. In other words, the sense of competition is basically student's continuous personal evaluation which they make to understand how well they can succeed in a challenge or learning activity. According to many researchers, if students perform an activity effectively, it can create a positive impact, leading to more learning engagement. Hence, to strengthen this sense of competition amongst learners, the developed learning activities must be:

- A little beyond the current proficiency level of the student
- Designed to help students show understanding throughout the learning activity
- Well incorporated with feedbacks that will eventually assist students in their learning process.

Students need to know the weak areas in which they need to put efforts to improve. And if students fail to recognize such low-performance areas, they fail to improve their learning. Such situation discourages them and often disengages them from their course. Therefore, providing feedback is crucial to give

students an explanation of where they are performing satisfactory and where they need to excel efforts, where they understand the material correctly and where incorrectly. When students receive regular feedback about their performance they respond more positively and remember the experience of what is being learned. However, if you wait too long to provide feedback, the moment gets lost and the student fails to connect the feedback with the required action. However, the feedback focus should always be based essentially on the good learning areas of the students — area in which they are performing well. It is highly productive for students and their learning; to know the accuracy and inaccuracy of their work, when provided with adequate explanations or examples. Also, to keep your feedback effective and action-oriented, use the technique of a feedback sandwich.

To sum up it should be highlighted that all of these effective approaches to boost students' engagement in learning are not complex but they might require you to invest adequate time in planning. Yet, they hold great potential to assist teachers in deepening their students' knowledge, building a strong relationship with students and in developing instructional and curriculum practices which are way more meaningful to students. After all, a good learning pattern is beneficial for both the teachers and students and while you may initially find it hard to incorporate, this will eventually bring positive outcomes for everyone associated with the course.

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