TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE IN USING ICE BREAKING TO INCREASE EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN ENGLISH LEARNING

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Abstract
The present study aims to explore and analyse teachers' views and experiences in using ice breaking as a strategy to increase motivation to learn English in early childhood. Ice-breaking activities are recognised as a pivotal component in establishing an conducive learning environment, enhancing student engagement, and mitigating affective barriers. The present study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through an open-ended questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to 30 teachers from preschool to junior high school levels who have experience using ice-breaking activities. The findings indicate that the vast majority of teachers have incorporated ice-breaking activities into their lessons, with the most prevalent forms of activities being songs, physical games, and quizzes. Teachers have perceived the efficacy of ice-breaking activities in enhancing students' focus, active participation, and enthusiasm. Nevertheless, challenges such as time constraints, a paucity of activity variety, and classroom management persist. Furthermore, these findings lend further support to the theory of the importance of a positive classroom climate, intrinsic motivation, and the reduction of affective barriers in language learning. Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of ice-breaking activities have been shown to significantly influence their successful implementation. The present study concludes that ice-breaking activities are a strategic element in early childhood English language learning, with their success heavily dependent on teachers' preparedness and creativity.
Keywords*: English language learning, early childhood, ice-breaking, learning motivation, teacher perceptions.*

INTRODUCTION

Creating a fun learning atmosphere for early learners is a crucial aspect of education. A positive and interactive environment can help learners feel more comfortable and enthusiastic in receiving learning materials. When the classroom atmosphere is fun, learners adapt more easily to the learning process, increase their confidence and are encouraged to participate more actively in the activities provided by the teacher (Pinter, 2017). In addition, a fun learning experience also has a long-term impact, forming a positive

perception of education from an early age, so that it can foster their interest and motivation to learn in the next stage of development.

Therefore, ice breaking plays an important role in building interaction and increasing the engagement of early learners by creating a more relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. With various interactive activities such as word games, movement or light discussions, learners are encouraged to be more confident in communicating and more actively participating in learning(Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Furthermore, ice breaking also contributes to improving students' focus and motivation, making them more enthusiastic in understanding the material.

From the statement above, it can be seen that the teacher's experience in implementing ice breaking is very important because the teacher is the party who directly interacts with the learners and determines the effectiveness of this method in early childhood English learning. After creating a pleasant learning atmosphere and students are more involved in learning, teachers have a crucial role in adapting ice breaking according to class characteristics and student needs. Their experience in choosing the type of activity, overcoming challenges, and evaluating its impact on student motivation and involvement can be the basis for developing more effective strategies.

Various previous studies have explored the effectiveness of ice breaking as a method to create a more dynamic learning atmosphere. For example, a study conducted by (Pranata et al., 2021) entitled The Effectiveness of Ice Breaking to Increase Students' Motivation in Learning English confirmed that ice breaking activities can significantly increase students' intrinsic motivation. In addition, according to research by (Sari et al., 2021) entitled Improving the Students' Learning Concentration Through Ice Breaking, ice breaking not only functions as a motivational tool but also increases students' learning concentration. Finally, research by (Astuti et al., 2020) in the article The Influence of Ice Breaker to Students' Motivation in Teaching English strengthens previous findings by showing that ice breaking has a positive influence on increasing students' interest and confidence in using English in class.

Based on various studies, the use of ice breaking has been proven to contribute significantly to increasing students' learning motivation, especially in English language learning. However, most studies focus more on the effectiveness of this method from the learner's perspective, while teachers' experiences in designing, selecting, implementing, and evaluating ice breaking have not been studied in depth. In fact, teachers have a central role in determining the success of implementing ice breaking in the classroom, including in facing practical challenges and adjusting strategies to the characteristics of students (Borg, 2015). Therefore, this study seeks to answer the main question: how do teachers view the use of ice breaking in English learning for early childhood students, and what are the benefits and challenges they face in implementing it in the classroom? By understanding direct experiences from the teacher's perspective, this study aims to provide deeper insight into the dynamics of ice breaking implementation and its implications for the teaching and learning process.

METHODOLOGY

Research Type

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach. The choice of this approach is based on the research objective to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' views and experiences in using ice breaking to increase motivation to learn English in early childhood. By using a qualitative approach, researchers can comprehensively explore the perceptions, experiences, and obstacles faced by teachers in the field. As explained by (Cohen et al., 2018), qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena from the perspective of participants in their natural context, which is particularly relevant for exploring teachers' subjective experiences .

The descriptive approach allows for the presentation of a rich and detailed picture of the phenomenon under study, capturing the complex nuances of teaching practices and classroom interactions. Silverman also asserts that qualitative descriptive research focuses on the detailed depiction of a phenomenon, process, or experience as it is (Silverman, 2020).

Research Subjects

The subjects of this study are English teachers who teach early childhood to junior high school and have experience in integrating ice breaking in their learning process. The selection of subjects was done through purposive sampling technique, which is a non-probability method in which informants are purposively selected based on certain criteria relevant to the research questions. Lungu highlighted that purposive sampling is an effective strategy in qualitative research to select informants who have specialized knowledge and experience on the topic under study, so as to provide rich and relevant data (Lungu, 2022).

The criteria set for participants include: (1) active teachers or individuals who have experience teaching English for early childhood; (2) have had experience using ice breaking in learning; and (3) willing to complete the questionnaire via Google Form. The total number of participants targeted was 30 teachers, who were expected to provide diverse and in-depth perspectives on the use of ice breaking.

Research Instruments

The main instrument used in this study was an open-ended qualitative questionnaire distributed through Google Form. The questionnaire was specifically designed with a number of open-ended questions to elicit comprehensive information from the respondents. The questions focus Son several key aspects, including: teachers' understanding of ice breaking, their experience in implementing it in the classroom, the perceived impact on students' learning motivation, and the obstacles or challenges that may be faced during implementation.

Open-ended questions in surveys allow respondents to provide in-depth answers and nuances that may not be captured by multiple-choice questions, particularly suitable for qualitative research. The use of Google Forms became a strategic choice due to its ease

of distribution to respondents, ability to reach a wider range, and efficiency in data collection in a relatively short time (Vogt et al., 2012).

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. This analysis process was conducted systematically through several stages to identify patterns and themes that emerged from teachers' responses. Braun and Clarke, in the latest edition of their book on thematic analysis, continue to emphasize this method as a flexible yet rigorous approach to identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) in qualitative data. The first step is data reduction, where the researcher will review and select the respondents' answers that are most relevant and in line with the research focus (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Next, coding and categorization were carried out, namely giving codes to each answer and grouping data based on coherent themes, such as teachers' understanding of ice breaking, perceived benefits, forms of ice breaking used, and challenges faced. The data presentation stage involved organizing the findings in the form of rich descriptive narratives, often reinforced with direct quotes from respondents' answers to provide concrete illustrations and support the researcher's interpretations. Finally, inference was conducted, formulating the meaning contained in the respondents' responses as a whole to answer the research questions and provide an in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences in using ice breaking.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

English for Young Learner

English language learning in early childhood is based on second language acquisition theory, which emphasises children's natural ability to absorb new languages. Lightbown and Spada explain that children have an advantage in second language acquisition compared to adult learners through a more implicit and natural process (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Ellis reinforces this argument by stating that second language acquisition in children occurs through meaningful and contextual exposure, not through explicit learning of grammatical structures (Ellis, 2015).

Furthermore, the communicative approach is the primary strategy in English language learning for children. Garton and Copland emphasise that communicative learning should prioritise authentic interactions that encourage language use in real-life contexts (Garton & Copland, 2019). Pinter adds that learning activities should be designed to provide opportunities for meaningful communication practice, not just mechanical drills. This approach requires a conducive and enjoyable learning environment from the outset (Pinter, 2017). On the other hand, the cognitive development characteristics of young children influence language learning design. Piaget and Inhelder show that young children learn through active exploration and concrete experiences, while Woolfolk emphasises the importance of adapting learning strategies to children's cognitive development stages (Piaget & Inhelder, 2008; Woolfolk, 2020). .

The integration of these theories results in a holistic paradigm for early childhood English language learning. The combination of the communicative approach with play-based learning creates optimal conditions for language acquisition. However, effective implementation requires specific strategies to create a supportive learning environment from the outset. Therefore, learning opening techniques are a crucial element in conditioning children to be ready to receive new language input and actively participate in communicative activities.

Ice Breaking in Learning

Ice breaking in the context of language learning is defined as an opening activity aimed at creating a relaxed atmosphere and building positive relationships between teachers and students. Silberman explains that ice breaking serves to reduce psychological tension and prepare students' mental state to receive the upcoming learning (Silberman, 1996). Scrivener reinforces this concept by stating that appropriate opening activities can lighten the classroom atmosphere and increase student engagement in the learning process (Scrivener, 2011).

In language learning, opening activities play a strategic role in facilitating the transition from the mother tongue to the target language. Harmer emphasises that opening activities in English language learning should be designed to provide an enjoyable initial exposure to the target language while building students' confidence (Harmer, 2015). Effective opening techniques also can serve as a bridge between students' experiences and the new material to be learned, thereby creating continuity in the learning process (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Furthermore, ice-breaking in early English language learning has specific characteristics tailored to children's developmental needs. These activities not only serve as warm-ups but also as stimuli to activate children's cognitive schemas related to the target language. The implementation of ice-breaking activities must consider children's limited attention spans, their preferences for activities involving movement and games, and their need to feel psychologically safe. Thus, ice-breaking becomes an integral component in the holistic design of early childhood English language learning, where its success depends on the teacher's ability to create a conducive classroom climate for language learning.

Motivation for Language Learning

Motivation in language learning is a determining factor that influences the success of second language acquisition. Deci and Ryan explain through Self-Determination Theory that intrinsic motivation, which stems from an individual's internal satisfaction, is more effective in promoting long-term learning than extrinsic motivation, which depends on external rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In the context of second language learning, motivation has a more complex dimension. Dörnyei and Ushioda identify that motivation in language learning is not only influenced by internal factors of the student but also by the learning context, the relationship with the teacher, and perceptions of the target language.

Furthermore, Reeve in his engagement theory explains that student motivation can be stimulated through the creation of a supportive and engaging learning environment (Reeve, 2014). This theory suggests that opening activities such as icebreakers play a role in activating students' initial motivation by creating a positive emotional state that facilitates further learning. This positive emotional state allows students to be more open to new language input and reduces anxiety in using the target language.

Motivation in early English language learning has unique characteristics related to children's psychological development stages. Young children tend to be motivated by activities that are fun, interactive, and provide immediate positive feedback. Therefore, learning strategies that can increase intrinsic motivation from the beginning of learning are key to creating meaningful and sustainable learning experiences.

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

Teacher beliefs are a fundamental factor influencing teaching practices and pedagogical decisions in the classroom. Borg explains that teacher cognition, which includes beliefs, knowledge, and perceptions, acts as a filter in interpreting information and determining instructional actions (Borg, 2015). Pajares reinforces this argument by stating that teacher beliefs have a greater influence on teaching behaviour than formal pedagogical knowledge (Pajares, 1992).

In the context of implementing learning strategies, Bandura through Teacher Efficacy Theory asserts that teachers' perceptions of their ability to implement certain strategies will influence the quality and consistency of their implementation (Bandura, 1997). Teachers with high self-efficacy in using ice breakers tend to be more creative, persistent, and adaptive in designing and implementing learning opening activities. Conversely, teachers with low self-efficacy may implement ice-breaking mechanically or even avoid it altogether.

Teachers' reflection on their teaching practices is an important mechanism for developing professionalism and improving the quality of learning. Systematic reflection allows teachers to re-examine their beliefs and practices, enabling them to make necessary adjustments to improve learning effectiveness (Brookfield, n.d.). Thus, the reflection helps teachers identify the assumptions underlying their actions and consider alternative perspectives in teaching.

The Correlation Between Ice Breaking, Motivation, and Teacher Implementation in Language Learning

Ice breaking, learning motivation, and teacher implementation form an integrated system in early childhood English language learning. Based on Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, students' affective conditions such as anxiety and motivation act as filters for second language acquisition. Ice breaking reduces affective filters by creating a relaxed atmosphere, allowing language input to be absorbed more effectively (Luo, 2024). Synergy between classroom climate, student engagement, and teacher efficacy creates optimal learning conditions. Teachers with high self-efficacy implement ice breaking more effectively, creating a supportive classroom climate and increasing student motivation.

However, variability in teacher perceptions affects implementation effectiveness, making understanding teachers' perspectives essential.

Empirically, Rusman's (2022) research proves that ice breaking is effective in creating a pleasant learning atmosphere and improving student focus (Rusman, 2022). Pranata, Susanti, and Jannah (2021) show an increase in intrinsic motivation through ice breaking (Pranata et al., 2021). Tamamala, Setiawan, and Nursalim (2020) prove the effectiveness of ice breaking in remote areas of Papua, overcoming cross-cultural psychological barriers (Tamamala et al., 2020). Sari, Fauziyah, and Ghozi found that ice breaking enhances motivation and concentration among young students, preparing their mental focus for complex material (Sari et al., 2021). Astuti, Solihat, and Satriani (2020) identified positive impacts on interest and confidence in English language learning with long-term effects (Astuti et al., 2020).

However, while previous research has quantitatively proven the effectiveness of ice-breaking activities for students, exploration of teachers' perspectives as primary implementers remains limited. Based on Teacher Efficacy Theory and Innovation Implementation Theory, teachers' perceptions determine the quality of learning strategy implementation. Qualitative research on teachers' views, experiences, and challenges is needed for a holistic understanding.

In this context, this study integrates multiple theoretical perspectives to understand the use of ice-breaking activities from the teachers' perspective. Teacher Efficacy Theory and Innovation Implementation Theory serve as the primary lenses for understanding the influence of teachers' beliefs on implementation. Classroom Climate Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis provide the theoretical foundation for the mechanisms contributing to ice-breaking activities.

Teachers with good theoretical understanding, positive experiences, and positive perceptions tend to implement ice-breaking activities consistently and creatively. Conversely, limited understanding or sceptical perceptions result in minimal implementation. Exploring teachers' perspectives will reveal the factors of success and barriers to implementation for recommendations to improve early childhood English language learning practices.

RESULT AND DISSCUSSION

This chapter presents the research findings obtained from data collection through an open-ended qualitative questionnaire distributed to English language teachers. The findings will then be comprehensively discussed and analyzed with reference to the relevant theoretical framework to answer the research questions regarding teachers' experiences in using ice breaking to increase motivation to learn English in early childhood students.

Findings

This section presents descriptive data obtained from 30 teacher respondents who met the research criteria. The data is presented based on the categories of questions in the questionnaire.

Respondent Profile

From a total of 33 initial respondents, 30 respondents were selected and reviewed as they fit the research objectives. The distribution of respondents by teaching level showed that the majority were junior high school grade 7 teachers (54.5%), followed by elementary school teachers (36.4%) and early childhood teachers (9.1%). Regarding the grade level taught, 33.3% of respondents taught grade 7, 21.2% taught grade 1, and 9.1% taught grades 4 and 5.

Use and Frequency of Ice Breaking

The results show that the majority of teachers (97%) have used ice breaking in learning. Regarding the frequency of use, 57.6% of teachers stated that they used ice breaking every meeting, while 30.3% of teachers used it only when needed. This indicates that ice breaking has become a common practice among respondent teachers.

Type and Time of Ice Breaking

The most common type of ice breaking used by teachers is English songs and chants (54.5%). This was followed by simple physical games with English instructions (39.4%) and English quizzes (30.3%). This shows teachers' preference for activities that involve auditive and kinesthetic elements in language learning.

Regarding when ice breaking is done, 72.7% of teachers answered that they do it in the middle of teaching or when students start to pay less attention. As many as 33.3% of teachers also use ice breaking at the beginning of teaching, and 18.2% use it as a transition or movement between learning activities. The majority of respondents (63.6%) thought that the ideal time to do ice breaking is 5-10 minutes.

The Effect of Ice Breaking on Student Motivation

The majority of respondents (69.7%) stated that ice breaking highly increases student motivation in learning English. The most frequent indicators of success observed by teachers are students look happier during learning (69.7%), students participate more actively in learning (66.7%), and students are enthusiastic and ask for ice breaking again next time (36.4%).

Teachers' Perceptions of Ice Breaking Success

Based on the question "What makes an ice breaking activity successful in increasing student motivation?", several key themes emerged from teachers' responses:

- Creation of a Positive and Fun Atmosphere
  Many teachers highlighted that the success of ice breaking lies in its ability to create a fun, comfortable, positive and relaxed classroom atmosphere. Teachers stated that ice breaking makes "students like the lesson and the teacher", "generates excitement, confidence, pride, or fun", and "is able to create a fun learning atmosphere, building intimacy between students".

- Improved Focus and Concentration
  Teachers reported that ice breaking serves as "refreshing for the brain so that it is more focused on learning", makes "students more focused, rarely anyone is sleepy", and restores students' concentration.
- Increased Participation and Physical Activity
  Activities that "involve movement" and "actively involve students" are considered successful because they encourage "active participation of students in the learning process". Some teachers also mentioned that activities with "a lot of physical movement" made the classroom atmosphere "livelier".
- Relevance and Appropriateness
  The success of ice breaking was also attributed to its suitability to the age of the students, relevance to the learning materials, and the ability to insert English elements lightly.
- Energy and enthusiasm generation
  Respondents mentioned that ice breaking makes "students more excited to continue the lesson" and "increases students' enthusiasm for learning".

Teachers' Perception of Ice Breaking Failure

Regarding the question "What makes an ice breaking activity fail in increasing students' motivation?", teachers' responses can be grouped into several points:

- Monotonous and Boring
  Many teachers pointed out that ice breaking that is "monotonous, just that", "repetitive", or "ordinary" causes failure because students are "bored".
- Inappropriateness and Irrelevance
  Failure occurs when ice breaking is "too difficult", "irrelevant to the material", "inappropriate to the age or needs of the students", or "has no connection to the learning material at all".
- Inappropriate Duration
  Too long is a failure factor because it can make students "bored" or even "lack interest in learning again if not well controlled".
- Lack of Preparation and Management
  Teachers mentioned "lack of preparation so that it is not effective", "lack of experience to apply ice breaking", "unable to manage the class", and "the teacher's attitude when ice breaking is not firm" as causes of failure.
- Lack of Attractiveness and Inclusiveness
  Ice breaking can fail if "not all students are interested", "it causes discomfort", or "it doesn't capture students' hearts". Lack of variety and reference to ice breaking ideas was also highlighted.

Teachers' Suggestions for Effective Use of Ice Breaking

In the question "What suggestions would you share about using ice breaking to increase early learners' motivation in English language learning?", teachers gave various suggestions:

- Variety and Creativity

  Teachers suggested "varied use of ice breaking", "diverse ice breaking", and "explore more about fun and exciting ice breaking ideas" to avoid boredom.

- Appropriateness and Relevance

  It is important to choose ice breaking that is "age-appropriate", "relevant to the lesson/material", "based on the subject matter", and "involves brain and physical power".

- Activity Characteristics

  The teacher suggests activities that are "simple, fun, interactive", "involve movement and songs", "picture guessing", "interactive stories", and use "simple English".

- Time Management

  "Managing time" and finding ice breakers that are "short" and "do not hinder the delivery of the material" were important suggestions.

- Appropriate Implementation Time

  It is suggested to provide ice breaking "at the beginning of every lesson" to raise the spirit, "when the class atmosphere is not conducive", or "in between lessons" as an interlude. Also, "as a reward" at the end of the lesson.

- Focus on Vocabulary and Confidence

  The teacher suggested "increasing vocabulary and interesting ice breakers", as well as using easy vocabulary to "boost students' confidence".

- Sensitive to Students

  It is important to "pay attention to the child's condition", "students' interests and interests", and "observe students' responses" so that the teacher can adjust the activity.

- Preparation and Reference

  Teachers suggested "preparing interesting ice breaking", "explaining the rules clearly in advance", and using "online platforms for ice breaking references".

Consensus on the Importance of Ice Breaking

All respondents (100%) agreed that ice breaking is important and necessary in teaching English to young children. This confirms the very high value placed on this practice among the teacher community.

Discussion

This discussion interprets the research findings with reference to the theoretical framework described in Chapter II, namely English for Young Learners, Ice Breaking in Learning, Motivation for Language Learning, Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs, and the Correlation between Ice Breaking, Motivation, and Teacher Implementation.

Relevance of Ice Breaking in Early Childhood English Language Learning

The findings show that most teachers have adopted ice breaking in their teaching practice, often in every meeting. This is in line with the view that English language learning

in early childhood requires a conducive and fun environment from the start. Ice breaking serves to create a relaxed atmosphere and build positive relationships between teachers and students, as well as prepare students' mental state to receive learning materials. The use of ice breaking at the beginning of instruction and as a transition greatly supports these goals, helping to facilitate the transition from mother tongue to target language and providing a pleasant initial exposure to the target language.

The predominant use of songs, chants and simple physical games as types of ice breaking is also very relevant to the characteristics of early childhood cognitive development. Children learn through active exploration and concrete experiences, and utilize play as the main medium of learning. These activities serve not only as a warm-up but also as a stimulus to activate children's cognitive schema related to the target language. This supports the perspective that ice breaking is an integral component in the holistic design of early childhood English language learning (El'konin, 2014).

Increased Student Motivation Through Ice Breaking

A key finding of the study is that the majority of teachers strongly believe that ice breaking significantly increases students' motivation in learning English. Indicators such as students looking happier, participating more actively, and enthusiastically asking for more ice breaking directly reflect the increase in intrinsic motivation.

This is consistent with Reeve's in Classroom Climate Theory which states that a positive learning environment, which can be created through ice breaking, directly affects students' intrinsic motivation and engagement in learning. The positive emotional atmosphere generated by ice breaking reduces students' anxiety and makes them more open to new language input (Jörg Krauter, 2023).

The increase in students' active participation also aligns with Deci and Ryan's, Self-Determination Theory which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation, which comes from internal satisfaction, for more effective long-term learning (M. & Deci, 2018) When students feel happy and voluntarily engage in ice breaking activities, they experience a sense of autonomy and mastery, which are drivers of intrinsic motivation. This finding is reinforced by Rusman and Andesti's research which proves that ice breaking is effective in creating a fun learning atmosphere and increasing student focus, as well as Pranata, Susanti, and Jannah who showed an increase in intrinsic motivation through ice breaking (Andesti et al., 2024; Pranata et al., 2021; Rusman, 2022).

Challenges and the Role of Teachers' Perceptions in the Implementation of Ice Breaking

Although the benefits are clear, teachers face several challenges in implementing ice breaking, especially related to limited learning time and difficulty integrating ice breaking with the material. Other challenges such as lack of references and difficulty managing the class also arise. This challenge can be attributed to Bandura's in Teacher Efficacy Theory, where teachers' perceptions of their ability to implement certain strategies will affect the quality and consistency of implementation. Teachers with low self-efficacy may struggle to manage time and integrate ice breaking seamlessly into the curriculum.(de la Fuente et al., 2023)

In addition, Rogers' in Innovation Implementation Theory explains that the adoption and implementation of learning innovations are influenced by teachers' perceptions of the relative advantage, compatibility and complexity of the strategies. Difficulties in integration and lack of references may reflect teachers' perceptions of the complexity or lack of compatibility of ice breaking with existing curriculum structures (Ball et al., 2020).

Solutions proposed by teachers, such as managing time and finding ice breaking variations, indicate the need for professional development focused on time management strategies and creativity in ice breaking design. The use of online platforms for reference also highlights the need for easily accessible resources, which can increase teachers' self-efficacy and reduce perceptions of complexity. This will enable teachers to be more consistent and creative in designing and implementing ice breaking activities.

The Strategic Role of Ice Breaking in the Context of Early Childhood English Language Learning

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that ice breaking is not just a distraction activity, but a strategic component in early childhood English language learning. The synergy between positive classroom climate, student engagement and teacher efficacy creates optimal learning conditions. Ice breaking effectively reduces Krashen's affective filter by creating a relaxed atmosphere, which allows language input to be absorbed more effectively (Luo, 2024). This result supports previous studies that prove the effectiveness of ice breaking in creating a fun atmosphere (Rusman, 2022), increasing intrinsic motivation (Pranata et al., 2021), and even overcoming cross-cultural psychological barriers (Tamamala et al., 2020)

The variability in teachers' perceptions and the challenges faced suggest that although ice breaking has been widely adopted, a deeper understanding of teachers' perspectives as the main implementers is crucial for its optimization. By overcoming the challenges of time, classroom management, and availability of references, as well as by increasing teachers' self-efficacy, the full potential of ice breaking in increasing children's motivation to learn English can be fully realized.

Teacher Agreement and Practical Implications

The consensus of 100% of teachers agreeing that ice breaking is important and necessary underscores the widespread acceptance of this practice. This provides a strong basis for recommending ice breaking as an essential strategy in early childhood English language teaching. Teacher suggestions such as choosing activities that are short, fun and relevant as well as considering students' interests and using plain English offer valuable practical guidance.

Overall, the findings and discussion reinforce the argument that ice breaking plays a vital role in creating an engaging and motivating English learning environment for young children. Its success depends on teachers' ability to select and implement ice breaks that are appropriate to students' characteristics, intelligently integrated with the material, and varied to maintain enthusiasm. The challenges teachers face need to be addressed

through professional development that focuses on time management, creativity and access to relevant resources.

Conclusion

This study revealed that ice breaking has become a common and widely recognized practice among English teachers who teach early childhood, with almost all respondents (97%) having integrated it into their teaching and 100% of them stating that ice breaking is very important and necessary. The consistency of this implementation can be seen from the majority of teachers (57.6%) who use it in every meeting. The success of ice breaking in increasing student motivation is highly dependent on its ability to create a fun, positive learning atmosphere, and make students feel comfortable, which in turn increases their focus, concentration, and active participation. Teachers observed that students became happier, more active, and even asked for more ice breaking, especially when the activity involved physical movements, songs, or chants in English that were age-appropriate and relevant to the learning material.

However, there are several factors that can cause ice breaking to fail in achieving its objectives. Monotonous and less varied activities often trigger student boredom, while age-inappropriateness or irrelevance to the material can also hinder its effectiveness. Too long a duration, lack of preparation and effective classroom management by teachers, and the absence of attractiveness or inclusiveness in activities also contribute to this failure. To overcome these challenges and optimize the use of ice breaking, teachers suggested the importance of variation and creativity in selecting activities. They also emphasized the need for ice breaking that is age-appropriate, relevant to the material, interactive, and uses simple English. Aspects of proper time management, implementation at strategic times in learning, and utilization of online platforms to enrich references for ice breaking ideas also became important recommendations. Teachers also highlighted the importance of sensitivity to students' conditions, interests, and needs in order to be able to adjust ice breaking activities effectively.

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