# Sustaining Students' Attention and Interest throughout the EFL Lesson

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**Resumen:** Lograr la excelencia en el desarrollo y enseñanza de la clase de idiomas es para muchos instructores todo un desafío. Aún cuando una clase parezca fluir efectivamente hasta cierto punto, esta impresión puede de repente desvanecerse ante los mismos ojos del profesor. Alcanzar el clímax de una clase se logra con una mezcla de emoción y cognición, en primera instancia, y solo permanece en tanto que la inventiva y la habilidad del profesor lo permita. La razón por la cual la atención y el interés de los estudiantes fluctúa frecuentemente responde a las necesidades y características específicas de los estudiantes. Además de un plan de lección bien preparado, los profesores deben construir tácticas de enseñanza especiales para progresar efectivamente a lo largo del desarrollo de la lección. Después de realizar una investigación de campo en la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca acerca de los desbalances en una lección debido a la falta de motivación y la disminución del interés, se desarrolló un análisis completo de las medidas para solucionar el impacto de estos factores durante la clase. Se utilizó una muestra al azar para seleccionar a los informantes así como también dos cuestionarios para recolectar la información. Este análisis detalla diferentes alternativas para que profesores de la enseñanza del inglés como idioma extranjero logren mantener el interés, la motivación y el vínculo de los estudiantes en el transcurso de la lección independientemente de la etapa, el tema o la actividad desarrollada así como también una descripción de un formato para la atención de los estudiantes durante el desarrollo de las actividades.

**Palabras claves:** vínculo, motivación, interés, ideas prácticas para la clase

**Abstract:** Attaining excellence in language class management and teaching is, for most instructors, a complete challenge. Even though a class seems to flow smoothly or beautifully, to a certain extent, this impression may fade away in the very eyes of the teacher all of a sudden. To reach a lesson climax, it is necessary to mix emotion and cognition, and it only lingers as far as the resourcefulness and the skillfulness of the teacher allow it. The reason why learners' attention and interest throughout a lesson frequently fluctuates responds to the very specific needs and features of the students being taught. Besides the well-prepared lesson plan, teachers must build special teaching tactics and moves to progress along the lesson effectively. After doing action research about lesson breakdowns due to some factors like the lack of motivation and interest decline, a thorough analysis to improve the impact of these factors was drawn. A randomized sampling for the selection of informants was used along with two questionnaires for the data collection. This analysis depicts different alternatives for EFL teachers to maintain students' interest, motivation and engagement throughout the lesson no matter the

stage, the topic or the activity carried out included in an engagement and attention frame.

**Key words:** engagement, motivation, interest, practical classroom ideas

# 1. Introduction

Engagement, motivation and attraction are pegs on which the lesson plan must hang. These are elements that, irrespective of the diversity in a class, will always be inherent to every learner in a classroom. Then, the key to a successful EFL class is merely placed on those three fundamentals. The way the teacher struggles to maintain these elements alive during the whole lesson is really a matter of skillfulness and resourcefulness. Students are unpredictable recipients. Their concentration span varies depending on distinct factors. Interestingly, the generation to whom teachers are addressing their classes is becoming more demanding in terms of techniques and strategies. This type of generation, or the so-called Gen Y, has challenged teachers to devise new ways to retain concentration, interest and engagement in the classroom activities.

Although these types of factors may be founded on learners' internal as well as on external aspects, the nature of the classroom activities and the transition moves from one stage or activity to the other play a striking role. These transitions, when planned properly, may do the trick. If a graph of the ups and downs of a lesson were charted, English lessons would look like a cardiac monitor, with its high, low or steady peaks.

Teachers must be aware of the different stages of the lesson, and above all, of how to sustain the students' enthusiasm and interest throughout every specific block of it. This goal should be achieved without deviating from the prearranged scheme, though. In the light of this premises, the following study is founded on action research carried out at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension to provide illuminating insights on how teachers, regardless of the course or activity, can sustain students' attention and engagement in order to maximize English learning.

### 1.3 General Objective

To promote the use of a series of techniques to sustain students' attention, interest and engagement during the development of all the phases of an EFL class

### 1.4 Specific Objectives

1. To determine the factors that disrupt students' attention and interest in the activities performed during class
2. To design a frame of practical classroom ideas to help teachers retain students' interest and engagement in the class activities

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Methods and Approaches to the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Teaching English has progressively evolved to incorporate a broader array of methods, approaches, strategies and techniques since it was first undertaken in the classroom. The Grammar Translation method, the Audiolingual and the Direct Method have almost ignored the communicative function of the language, but succeeded in imparting knowledge of

language forms and rules. In other words, the students could acquire linguistic competence mostly. Currently, instructors have been mindful of the needs of students in a world where international communication is the key. Considering this, they are aware of the need to help learners aim to acquire communicative competence. Consequently, more dynamic and communicative methods such as Community Language Learning (CLL), Total Physical Response (TPR) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology along with the Task-based Instruction (TBI) arouse as the latest trends to contribute to the teaching of English language in a more productive note.

More recently, eclectic approaches have gained impetus in today's EFL classrooms to fulfill the students' needs and expectations. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Mellow (2000) eclecticism describes a desirable, coherent, pluralistic approach to language teaching. They pointed out that

> Eclecticism involves the use of a variety of language learning activities, each of which may have very different characteristics and may be motivated by different underlying assumptions. The use eclecticism is due to the fact that there are strengths as well as weaknesses of single theory based methods. (p.32).

The choice of which method or approach to select is dictated by the theory of language and the theory of language learning in conjunction with the type of syllabus used. Brown's words (2002) exemplified the arduos job teachers exert when selecting the elements for their practices as follows

> The complexity of the second language acquistion process warrants a multiple-treatment, multiphase approach to a language course. It is the teacher's task to carefully and deliberately choose among these many options to formulate a pedagogical sequence of techniques in the classroom. And this is where a teacher's choices must be 'principled'." (p.45)

Nowadays, in today's context the Communicative Approach serves as an umbrella term under which Communicative Language Teaching and the TBI lie.

### 2.1.1Communicative Language Teaching

In 1972, Communicative Language Teaching was aimed at communicative competence, the goal of language teaching. It stemmed in a functional and eclectic approach that nulled the accumulation of grammatical items and structures and enhanced what the learner needed to understand and express through the target language.

Most teachers agree on the fact that English teaching has become an art in itself. Among many other elements a well-crafted plan may ensure the success of a language lesson based on Community Language Teaching. Activities and exercises founded on a CLT basis must target at developing communicative competence in learners so that they become effective communicators in the target language. This is a learner-centered methodology in which meaning is pursued in all the activities rather than linguistic forms. The process of internalizing language is subconsciously undertaken. The goal is to set in full interaction in order to enable learners to develop language automatically and spontaneously. Furthermore, all the four language skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing – are central.

*2.1.2 Task-based Instruction (TBI)*

Task-based language learning (TBLL), also known as task-based language teaching (TBLT) or task-based instruction (TBI), has grown steadily in popularity is a renewed version of a communicative methodology; it envelops current methodologies with current theories of second language acquisition. It was popularized by prof. Prabhu, who concentrated on tasks as activities that urge learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective (Bygate, Skehan and Swain, 2000, p. 76). Task-based instruction throws light upon learner-to-learner interaction in the classroom as an ultimate goal to achieving linguistic success (Richards and Rodgers, 2002, p.25). Furthermore, as Larsen-Freeman (2000) put it TBI engages "students in learning other subject matters, tasks or in problem-solving around issues in their lives" (p. 144). TBLL is a further refinement of the CLT approach, emphasizing the successful completion of tasks as both the organizing feature and the basis for assessment of language instruction.

## 2.2 The Phases of a Language Lesson

Planning a lesson is a seemingly daunting experience. For novice teachers, it turns into a very dramatic duty. For more seasoned teachers, it is a very practical backbone to the teaching process that becomes, in time, easily manageable. The plan determines the direction of a class throughout the different stages of it. The stages of a lesson are delineated by the methodology employed.

There are various types of models for a language class. In the beginning, since the focus was primarily on grammar "lessons followed the pattern grammar explanation followed by exercises, or what came to be known as presentation and practice" (Thornbury, 1999, p.128). Providing that much attention was given to accuracy during the development of those two stages, a downside of the model emerged. The lack of opportunities for learners to elaborate and use the language was being neglected. Consequently, a third element was drawn: production which sparked the importance of fluency. The model with its three stages was later acknowledged as the PPP model: presentation, practice and production. In this model the teacher introduces a situation which contextualizes the language to be taught. The practice stage incorporates the language using accurate reproduction techniques such as choral repetition, individual repetition, and cue-response drills. In the production stage students are ready to use the language forms in contextualized situations.

According to the specific characteristics of the language class and its methodology, the teacher can implement other models. An alternative model to the previously described ignites a process of fluency-to-accuracy sequence. In Thornbury's words (1999)

> Proponents of the communicative approach proposed a fluency-first model of instruction that is called task-based: first the learners perform a communicative task that the teacher has set them; the teacher then uses this to identify language features learners could have used inorder to communicate their intentions more effectively. The model comprises three stages: task, teach, task. (p. 129)

Proponents of the Task-based Instruction have clearly established the different stages to be covered in depth by this methodology. Jane Willis (1996) referred to three basic stages of

TBI: pre-task (introduction to topic and task), task cycle (task, planning and report) and language focus (analysis, practice)**.**

## 2.3 Affective Factors in Learning a Foreign Language

The success of a language lesson hinges on the management of the multiple factors that come into play when teaching. Besides the ordinary linguistic and social factors that students have to learn to cope with, the affective factors seem to be deterrent. Ensuring effective learning involves tactful considerations when dealing with students and the myriad emotional factors they bring into the classroom. Teachers must aim to develop all human capacities through the class activities devised regardless of these factors. Considering that language learners are all "distinct worlds," different backgrounds, needs, learning styles and goals to learn the language must be given high importance to optimize the learning process. Nowadays, it is really difficult to get students involved in their own process since they are not motivated enough to embrace it in a relevant way.

### 2.3.2 Motivation

As part of the affective factors, motivation stands out as one significant aspect teachers must consider to scheme the direction of a language class. Based on Madrid and Perez' words (2001) "the term motivation is usually defined by psychologists as the set of processes which involve the arousal, direction, and sustaining of behavior (conduct). It is employed to indicate, for instance, a subject's persistence and his/her pervasive work on certain tasks and not on other activities" (p. 321). This salient feature learners carry within themselves may hinder or facilitate the effectiveness of the language class. This paramount implication that motivation exerts on learning outcomes is a tall order in EFL scenarios. It must be neither neglected nor deemphasized. Madrid and Perez (2001) concluded that

> the study of motivation in connection with FL learning in formal classroom contexts compels us to focus on the topic in a more restricted manner, taking into account the main factors in the teaching-learning process of the FL/L2, namely, the students, the teacher, the curriculum, and the teaching-learning processes which develop when implementing it. (p.321)

> In this regard, teachers must help learners devise their own affective strategies to struggle falling into a state of demotivation. This urge sparks the reason why all classroom activities must be geared towards increasing and sustaining motivation in the classroom.

### 2.3.3 The Role of Motivation in Language Acquisition Theories

Although the issue of motivation seems to be difficult to tackle, it has historically being addressed to explain students' behavior in the classroom. On this premise, countless researchers have acknowledged the meaningfulness of this element in the rate of acquisition and learning. As a clear result of this struggle to understand the role of motivation in EFL contexts several theories have been drawn. One of these that has clearly stood up among many is Krashen's Monitor Theory (Dulay, Burt,and Krashen, 1982). It includes the Affective Filter Hypothesis that throws light upon the emotional factors and motivation as key elements which control language. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) stated that

> When a student is exposed to a new language, the first internal hurdles are posed by the individual's emotional state and motivations ... filtering sources are the individual anxiety levels, peer identification, and general motivation to learn a language. Together, they make up what we have called the "Affective filter" or simply "Filter". The Filter acts to control entry to further mental processing. (p.4)

This filter when heightened blocks the effective development and performance of the students in the classroom. Due to this fact, the lower the affective filter, the more receptive and willing to learn the students will be.

Another theory that reinforces the prominent role of motivation in learning a second language is Carroll's conscious reinforcement model (1981). He concluded that reinforcement acts as an efficient motivating resource which facilitates learning through successive habit formation. Based on Gardener's viewpoint (1985) "reinforcement involves an increment to an individual's perception of the appropriateness of the behavior to a specific context" (p.128).

*2.3.3 Emotional Quotient (EQ)*

Most recently, theorists have digged into the field of people's intelligences and emotions. Daniel Goleman (1995) introduced the term emotional quotient to refer to "the ability or skill to understand, evaluate and manage emotions of one's self and others"(Riaz, nd, p.1). Riaz went on to propose the difference between IQ and EQ by stating that

> I.Q. is said to be set in stone, no matter when you take an I.Q. test you will receive, basically the same score. E.Q. however, is not set in stone. You can take E.Q. tests at different points in your life and find out that it has increased or decreased significantly. The basic reason is that the strength or weakness of emotions is affected by the age factor and environment.

The age factor as well as the environment could become learners' friends or foes in the sense that they can cause success or failure in the performance of the learning activities. These two factors, when analyzed deeply can help the teacher provide better learning scenarios. The theory of multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner which also embraces the emotional intelligence among many others, has contributed greatly to understand and manage students' behavior in the classroom.

The analysis of this type of intelligence facilitates teachers to control and comprehend students' sudden behavioral changes by bringing into light proper tactics. Knowing that different emotions are aroused at various stages of the learning process, teachers can become more sensitive and implement sensible strategies to raise to the students' expectations for the lessons. At first, the class can be exciting, and in the early stages of the lesson it can be quite enjoyable, but as students' emotions are affected by internal or external factors, the class may drift away and become chaotic. Undoubtedly, by analizing learners' previous reactions to a certain type of activity, exercise or time of the day, teachers can anticipate and preplan better classes by making informed decisions.

**2.4 Attention Span: Valuable Remarks**

Granted, there are factors that block students' effective learning of a language. Besides the emotional factors previously stated, another factor that may heighten the affective filter is

students' age regarding the extent to which attention can expand. Most university classes last more than hour, which excedes the attention span of a typical learner. In Bunce, Flens and Neiles's words (2010)
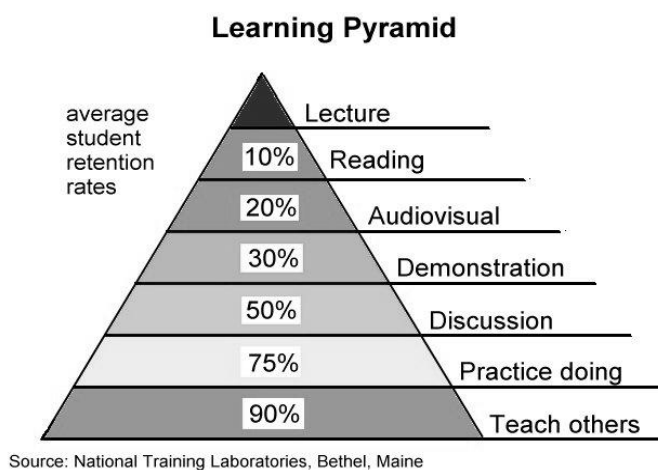
> Sustained attention varies widely, and the quality of attention depends on several factors, including time of day, motivation, emotion, and enjoyment. Instructors use a variety of strategies to increase student's attention during class—from incorporating demonstrations or visuals to requiring student participation, asking students to turn off cell phones and laptops, and waking up the occasional sleeper.

The goal of every language teacher, among many, should be to facilitate students' attention making it more undivided and rapt which, in turn, may result in more memorable retention and meaningful classes. Although no probable evidence of how long learners' attention lasts, various researchers pointed out that the average attention span lapses from 10 to 15 minutes. It is noteworthy to say that insterspersing class content with various techniques to hook students during a period of more than 90 minutes is key to the success in learning the target language. Most recently, research has shown that students retain about five percent of what they hear in lectures; however, five percent is decreasing after the first 20-25 minutes.

Not surprisingly, teachers in this century are at an open battle for capturing students' full attention in the classroom. This fierce battle anchors in the way media and technology have bombarded students' minds. Text messaging, social networks, blogs, podcasts, music and the latest apps have taken over learners' attention in a great manner. However the situation may be, teachers find themselves at a crux in order to gain students' increased attention day after day.

*2.4.2 Learning Retention Rates*

Although controversial it may seem, the learning pyramid has served to better understand the way students process and retain information during the different types of class activities.

**Learning Pyramid**

average student retention rates

| | |
|---|---|
| Lecture | |
| 10% | Reading |
| 20% | Audiovisual |
| 30% | Demonstration |
| 50% | Discussion |
| 75% | Practice doing |
| 90% | Teach others |

Source: National Training Laboratories, Bethel, Maine

This visual distribution of the percentages of the amount of information retained by learners during the development of the activities helps teachers reflect upon the necessary time they must allocate in their classes for students to carry out activities of the nature shown.

> Moving down the pyramid, students become more involved in the learning process, and retention increases.  The method at the bottom of the pyramid involves having the students teach others or use the new learning immediately. …  We have known for a long time that the best way to learn something is to prepare to teach it.  In other words, whoever explains, learns." *(Sousa, 2011, p. 26)*

This analysis guarantees teachers to switch from one type of activity to the other with more accurate moves and tactics. Recently, Abraham (2010) has given a more precise approach of students' engagement by deconstructing the learning piramid and arriving at a conclusion that all the processes happen when experience and retention meet depending on the activity executed.  He went on to call this model "The Engagement Continuum"
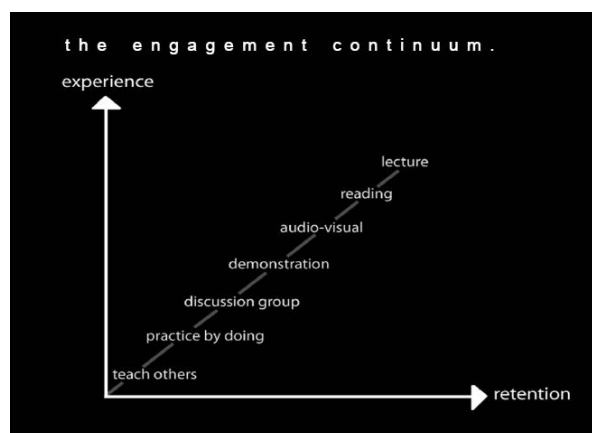


Unfortunately, reality mirrors a different story for those teachers that tend to replicate the way they were "successfully" instructed: just by being passive agents in the classroom. Notwithstanding, a new generation of students has risen and needs immediate techniques to be engaged in the learning process.  How to do this depends widely on teachers' sage decisions to optimize learning in the classroom.

## 2.4. Multiple Intelligences

The contribution of the Multiple Intelligences theory to the field of teaching has been greatly acknowledged to shape learning for the sake of the students'achievement.  Howard Gardner initially formulated a list of seven intelligences in 1983. The first "two have been typically valued in schools; the next three are usually associated with the arts; and the final two are what Howard Gardner called 'personal intelligences'" (Gardner, 1999, p.41-43). The following is the list of the first seven intelligences Gardner discovered:

- Linguistic intelligence: sensitivity to the meaning and order of words.
- Logical-mathematical intelligence: ability in mathematics and other complex logical systems.
- Musical intelligence: the ability to understand and create music. Musicians, composers and dancers show a heightened musical intelligence.
- Spatial intelligence: the ability to "think in pictures," to perceive the visual world accurately, and recreate (or alter) it in the mind or on paper. Spatial intelligence is highly developed in artists, architects, designers and sculptors.

- Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence: the ability to use one's body in a skilled way, for self-expression or toward a goal. Mimes, dancers, basketball players, and actors are among those who display bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.
- Interpersonal intelligence: an ability to perceive and understand other individuals -- their moods, desires, and motivations. Political and religious leaders, skilled parents and teachers, and therapists use this intelligence.
- Intrapersonal intelligence: an understanding of one's own emotions. Some novelists and or counselors use their own experience to guide others.(as cited in Guignon, 2000, para. 6)

**2.5 Generation Y: The Millennials**

Teaching the English language these days has become a challenging endeavor. Students in the information and communication era are surrounded by technological distractions that when properly handled can turn into productive tools.  This generation of students has been given different names, including Net Gen, the Millennials, and Generation Y (McCrindle Research, 2006, p. 56). Lancaster and Stillman (2002) identified different types of generations by analyzing their behavior, needs, characteristics and expectations.  They divided them as follows

> 1. The Baby Boomer generation (1946– 1964). This large generation was due to the many soldiers who returned home after World War II and started families. More people were born in this twenty-year period than at any other time in United States history.
> 2. Generation X (1965–1980). This generation was much smaller than the Boomer generation. Gen Xers have been generally characterized as hard working, independent, and skeptical.
> 3. Generation Y (1981–1999). This generation came into being during the last two decades of the 20th century. Its members are identified as confident and technologically advanced, and they come with a sense of entitlement.
> 4. Generation Z (2000–present). This name refers to those born since 2000, a group that has received little attention (as cited in Reily, 2012, p.3).

Gen Yers make up a significant part of the world's population—20 percent, according to NAS Recruitment Communications (2006). The Gen Yers have different expectations and needs that the educational system seems not to satisfy since it was not designed to teach them. It is obsolete and need immediate arrangements.

Today's generation has quickly adapted their lifestyles to computers and the Internet, and therefore sees information technology as an integral part of their lives. Among the many e-tools that learners easily dominate are wikis, blogs, social networks and chat rooms. Oblinger (2003) concluded that this generation seeks immediate information and understanding from the web and videos, not by looking through a textbook (as cited in Reily, 2012, p.5). This characteristic makes the teaching of English, mainly of more theoretical courses, hard to attain.

The role of EFL professionals nowadays is to accommodate to these students' distinctive features.  If technology is what lures this generation into learning, then teachers must conceive "useful ways to bring new technology into the classroom, including creating

wikis; using WebQuests; implementing video-based activities through sites such as YouTube; incorporating video games and blogs; and making use of instant messages" (Reily, 2012, p.6). According to Faust et al. (2001) "teachers need to get highly visual reading material that focuses on modern-day issues into their students' hands" (as cited in Reily, 2012, p. 6). Using more PowerPoint or, even more current, Prezi presentations, YouTube videos can alleviate the  thirst for technology that these students have.

Therefore, if teachers claim for better quality in their students' attention during the development of their classes, an analysis of what attracts this generation must be carried out in order to expect positive outcomes when planning the class.

## 3 Data Analysis

The following section comprises the results obtained after undergoing critical examination of the
data collected through the instruments designed for this purpose.

### 3.2 The Purpose of the Study

The ultimate goal of this study is to determine the factors that decline students' attention and engagement as a consequence of the way teachers prepare activities for every stage of the language class.
The following research questions are premium to this analysis:

1. What factors wane students' attention and engagement during the class period?
2. What are the most difficult phases for teachers to maintain students' interest in the activities?
3. What techniques can teachers implement to engage students in the development of the whole class?

### 3.3. Research Methodology

3.3.1 The Participants
For the analysis of the results, two groups of informants were designated.  Firstly, a group of students from the English Teaching Major and the Associate's Program in English was randomly selected from the total population (around 80 students) that this group represents at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension.  This group consisted of 15 students, 8 females and 7 males.  Their ages range from 20 to 24 years, ages that clearly represent the type of generation they belong to. Secondly, a group of teachers from high school and university backgrounds contributed to the completion of the instruments.  This group consisted of 15 teachers with ample experience in teaching university students.
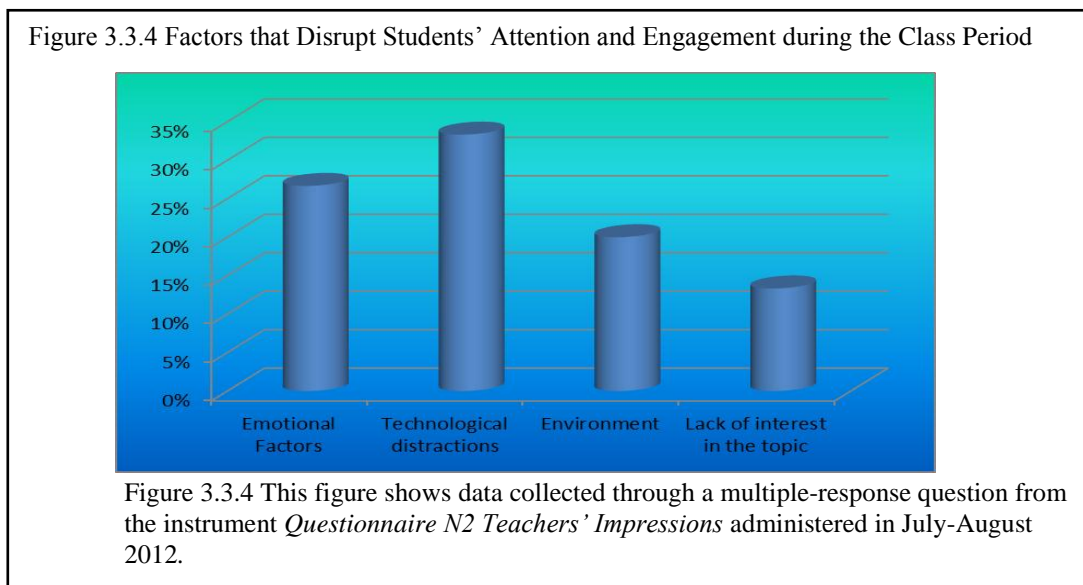
*3.3.2 The Instruments*
For the garnering of the research data, two questionnaires were designed.  One questionnaire is addressed to obtaining students' insights about the different phases of the lesson, their interest in the activities developed in each stage and the reasons why they prefer one phase over the other. The second questionnaire is aimed to gather teachers' impressions about the stages of the lesson, why they think students' attention wanes and the actions they take to bring students' attention back.

### 3.3.3 Analysis and Results

The following graphs and the table depict a thorough analysis of salient information gathered through the data collection instruments.
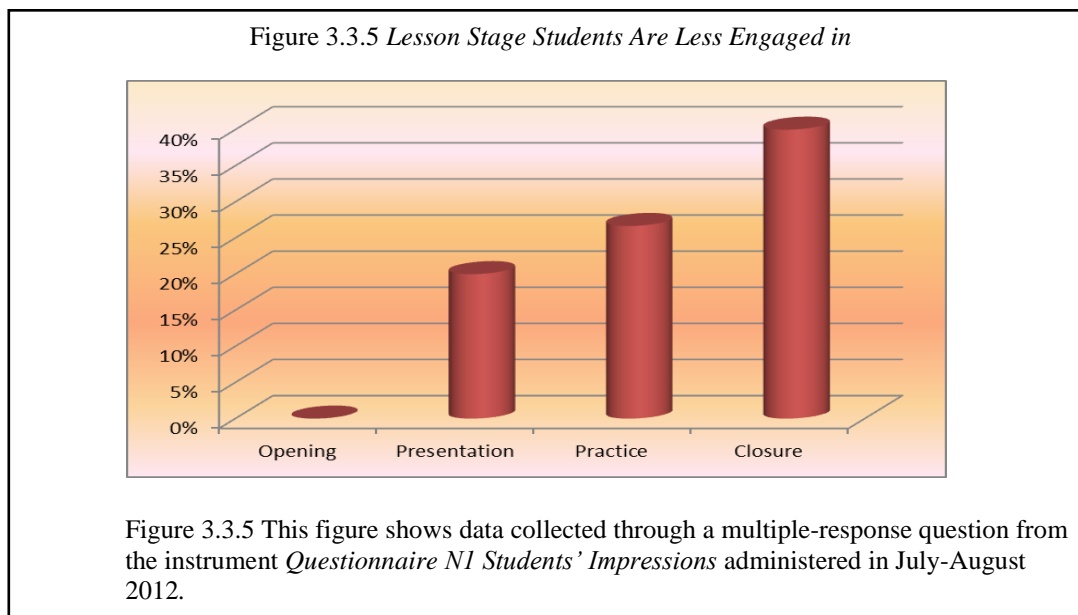
### 3.3.4 Factors that Disrupt Students' Attention and Engagement during the Class Period

Figure 3.3.4 Factors that Disrupt Students' Attention and Engagement during the Class Period



Figure 3.3.4 This figure shows data collected through a multiple-response question from the instrument *Questionnaire N2 Teachers' Impressions* administered in July-August 2012.

The graph above shows the four most distractive factors in the EFL class according to EFL teachers. It evinces a major influence of technological devices on students' attention. This factor rises to 33% over the other factors followed by affective or emotional factors that amount 27%. The classroom environment as well as the lack of interest in the topic are the least chosen with 20% and 13% respectively. The theoretical references support the fact that this type of students' generation is enclosed in a world where technology reigns and learning happens within it. There is no escape of technology and the information gathered shows that even though students attend classes and seem to be physically in the classroom, they are all technologically "plugged in."

This distractor appears in the form of phone-text messages, e-mails, social network posts, phone calls and the like. With regard to the emotional or affective factors, teachers signaled lack of motivation, anxiety and stress as the ones at the top of the list. Depending on the nature of the course, students exhibit disinterest and lack of concern about what is happening in the classroom. Concerning the environment, the classroom atmosphere was pointed out as one of the most implicational factors in the quality of attention students paid during the activities. These results evidence that the topic is the least influential but still part of the list of the factors that disrupt students' attention and engagement in the activities.

*3.3.5 Lesson Stage Students Are Less Engaged in*

Figure 3.3.5 *Lesson Stage Students Are Less Engaged in*



Figure 3.3.5 This figure shows data collected through a multiple-response question from the instrument *Questionnaire N1 Students' Impressions* administered in July-August 2012.

Regardless of the various names teachers have given to the different stages of the lesson, the opening, presentation, practice and closure are the ones that prevail. The graph above depicts the stage in which students declared to be less engaged in or less connected to what is happening in the lesson. Their attention and interest seem to decline as they reach the end of the lesson. The students' choices showed that the closure or consolidation, which amounted 40%, is the one they find more difficult to be in tune with.

At this point, they have lost interest and focus, and fidget while waiting for the "go home" sign. The top second choice is the practice stage which resulted in 25%. Students provided reasons for this and claimed that teachers plan lengthy activities that make the learners' attention wander off and divert. Oftentimes learners find themselves doing nothing waiting for the peers to finish, or the teacher to take the lead again. The presentation stage is the third in the sequence. Students' attentiveness seems to be more focused and sustained during this stage since students' curiosity makes them yearn for what is to come. During the opening, better known as the warm-up, students' full attention is on the first activities that are covered here.

*3.3.6 Actions Teachers Take to Revive Students' Interest*

Table 3.3.6 Actions *Teachers Take to Revive Students' Interest*

| Actions | Use | | Percent of cases |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **N** | **Percent** | |
| Kinesthetic activities | 3 | 20% | 30% |
| Short Jokes | 2 | 13% | 20% |
| Real life examples | 2 | 13% | 20% |
| Songs | 2 | 13% | 20% |
| Review to consolidate knowledge | 1 | 8% | 10% |
| Games | 2 | 13% | 20% |
| Taking a break | 3 | 20% | 30% |
| Total | 15 | **100%** | 150% |

*Note*: The information in this table was taken from the *Questionnaire N2 Teachers' Impressions* which was administered in November, 2012.

The table reflects the choices teachers have equated to solve the learners' inattentiveness issue during the development of the class. From the ones given, two actions, with 20% each, were the most preferred when teachers felt students' attention was fading away; one was kinesthetic activities and the other one giving them a break. Having learners sharing jokes, providing them with real life examples, playing a song and performing a game were also selected the same
number of times, 13%. The least option chosen to bring students' attention back was recapitulating the information to consolidate their knowledge.

## 4 Conclusions

The information gathered and previously analyzed led to draw various conclusions. Regarding the factors that ignite inattentiveness in the classroom, technological devices take the lead. As a result of this finding, teachers must stop resenting students' apparent hostile attitude and get on with the commitment to devise alternatives to engage them. Teachers must give a positive twist to this by responding to the need to incorporate technology in the lesson stages and hook students into a "virtual reality." Engaging and motivating Gen Yers is not rocket science. This type of learners is visual and involves learning by doing. Students prefer kinesthetic and visual learning activities over traditional teacher-centered and text-based tasks. The results support the notion that it is important to "break-up" classes with periods of active learning. The learning pyramid suggests the need to keep learners active by incorporating more hands-on activities in order to turn learning into a more memorable experience. Furthermore, teachers must mix up class activities with *visual, intrapersonal, interpersonal, proactive and energetic* (hands-on) techniques of delivery in order to satisfy students' needs and sustain students' attention.

**4.2 Proposal: The Engagement and Attention Frame**

The results of the previous analysis substantiated the basis of this proposal. Four main aspects will be considered for teachers to keep students awake, attentive and on the alert whatever the stage of the lesson is. These aspects comprise four multiple intelligences: visual, intrapersonal, interpersonal and kinesthetic (hands-on). They account for the four axes of this frame that will be strictly used for each stage of the lesson or move.

The main cross-sectional ingredient will be technology due to the immediate need of this Gen Y. Based on the analysis of the typical student's attention span, the activities during the transitional move must be swapped every certain number of minutes. Additionally, it is worth saying that the aim of this frame is to sustain students' attention and interest throughout all the stages improving their attentiveness and performance until they leave the classroom.    .

4.2.2 *Understanding the Stages of the Engagement and Attention Frame*

The following is a frame of practical ideas for teachers to implement regardless of the age of the students or the nature of the course. As previously described, this particular generation that universities are currently teaching have specific needs and features.   If teachers are really concerned about enlivening their lessons and maximizing students' achievement, these elements must be tackled.

Unquestionably, every lesson goes through three important stages that will be summarized as follows:

**_OPENING MOVE:_**

The procedure the teacher uses to bring students into the mood of learning and experiencing the English language.  For this move teachers can use visual aids, short games, anecdotes or jokes.

**_TRANSITIONAL MOVE_**

This second procedure is the core of the lesson.  It must contain all the possible shifts to ensure the success of the lesson.  It is in this stage where teachers must make sage decisions and sensible swaps.  These changes must be congruent with the different activities and objectives of the lesson. How each move within this stage is sequenced and paced helps a lesson maintain its "momentum and communicate a sense of development" and achievement. This stage must include very interactive activities to prevent inattention lapses or interest declines.

**_CLOSING MOVE_**

This stage endorses techniques to help close the lesson effectively such as summarizing, reviewing, relating the lesson to previous or further lesson objectives, linking the lesson to students' real world needs, and praising students for what they have accomplished during the lesson. These techniques along with the activities shown in the chart help to remedy the inattentiveness of students to the class duties.

*4.2.3 Activities for the Engagement and Attention Frame*

The following chart displays the activities selected to help teachers engage and capture students' attention to a desirable level. The four multiple intelligences are activated throughout the different stages of the lesson since there is a minimum of one activity per intelligence.

Opening Move

1. *VIP agenda*: For learners that like to be in tune with every step in the class and to help the rest keep track of the activities, a visible agenda must be either written or pasted on the board of the classroom's walls. This will make students feel a sense of achievement once they have completed one of the activities scheduled.

2. *Direct questions:* For more intrapersonal learners, questions about previous topics or personal information or routine questions can keep students interested in the other peers' answers and set an instant rapport between the teacher and the students by using students' own input. The teacher can throw in a higher level thinking question that is related to previous or the new lesson to challenge students to keep their brain in gear.

3. *Chin-wagging:* For interpersonal learners asking students to turn around and face a partner to the right, left, behind or in front in order to ask a given question or one of their own helps build a sense of community since the very beginning. Questions could be related to the topic or personal life questions.

4. *Short games:*

This stage of the lesson should be "gamified" to keep students absorbed since the very first moment they start the class. Let us remember that the equation: game plus education results in positive learning. Game-based learning will keep students on their toes and without uttering a peep. Their sense of engagement is boosted when game-like tasks are used. In the appendix section there is an repertoire of short games that can be played during this stage. It is advisable not to last more tan 10 minutes as the students soon lose interest and verify the level of difficulty since a too easy exercise or activity will disengage them, or too hard will provoke the same result.

Transitional Move

1. *Blogging/Mobile Learning:* It will be very interesting to have every teacher open a different blog according to the course taught. Students at this point can post comments about their expectations about the topic the teacher just presented. The chain of comments or questions can start at the beginning of the lesson and be tackled right away or at the end of the class.

Mobile learning can be fun and helpful to enhance students' motivation and engagement, for instance. Activities such as competing to surf the web for information, recording or creating memos in the phone, accessing digital textbooks, creating podcasts, interviewing people, downloading learning staff, taking videos of class presentations and experiments, playing EFL games, communicating inside and outside the classroom, accessing social networks, creating and sharing documents, listening to EFL audios and watching EFL videos.

2. *Soft ball tossing:* Keeping students on the alert is an ultimate goal, so teachers may use this activity to awake students at any time of the class. When the teacher feels students' attention is waning, he/she tosses the ball unexpectedly to any student. The student who catches it answers one question about the topic. This is something teachers can try out to keep track of students' understanding during the development of the lesson.

3. *Popcorn reading:* This is another technique teachers can employ to keep reading sessions alive. This guarantees students' follow the reading since they must be attentive to not lose their turn. As one student reads, the other ones follow the reading. Whenever the student reading wants to stop, yells out the word "popcorn" and another student's name. That student must start reading right where the previous student stopped. The flow of the reading must not be broken. Teachers and students must struggle to keep the flowing going.

4. *Quotations:* Writing important portions of a text related to the topic or compiled quotes on strips of paper may help teachers to sustain students' attention. Once teachers perceive inattentiveness, they can distribute these strips and ask students to comment upon the quote or portion selected.

5. *Tossing a die:* After holding a discussion about a topic or reading, the teacher selects students at random to toss a die at them. The die includes the question, plus and minus symbols on each face of it. The question symbol indicates students must construct a question when the die lands on this face. The plus symbol signifies that students must make up an affirmative statement. The minus symbol represents that students must say a negative statement. Everything has to be related to the topic under study.

6. *Customizing a Prezi/Powerpoint Presentation:* Teachers must be hand in hand with technology. This generation hungers for a technology touch in the classroom. There are tools that conform to these students' needs by giving them the chance to put summaries of the topics such as Prezi or PowerPoint presentations. The final work can be later shared during class time or by an e-mail for further study.

7. *Virginial's Reel*: Given that students love to be on the move, kinesthetic activities result in a very practical solution. This activity is charged with lots of movement and interaction. The teacher can throw a question or bring a list of questions ready. The questions must be rooted in the target topic. The teacher divides the students into two groups, asks the groups to stand up in two separate lines with one member of the opposing group facing. To the sign given, the teacher asks one of the groups to move to their right so that they have the chance to practice or question a different member of the other group.

8. *Graphic Organizers:* Students could use graphic organizers such as a web, Venn Diagram, or T-charts to present the main information. A rule of thumb is that more than getting the students physically connected, they must be intellectually connected too.

Closing Move
1. *Recap sheet:* The teacher keeps a sheet pasted on the wall or board. Here, the main points of the lesson have been written for students and the teacher to recap the information. This should be very visible for students to even stand up during the previous stage and jot down notes. The teacher can ask different students to read the points and go over each one.

*2. Emailing/Blogging:* Although technophobic or ICT-intimidated teachers may be reluctant to use technological devices in the class, they must admit that technology must be

made an allied and not an enemy these days since the target population is the Gen Yers. Students can use these last minutes of the class to brush up on the topic by writing an email to the teacher, a peer or to themselves. This could be a bright idea to keep track of their learning in the cyberspace.

2. *The Human Computer:* A student is given a defined amount of time to recall, at a fast speed, what he/she remembers from the information studied. Another student "records" and repeats. This second student could be selected by the teacher or the previous student. The teacher can decide between forming a chain or just having some students participate at random.

3. *Graffiti Time:* The teacher pastes some newsprint sheets on the classroom's walls. Students are given markers for them to write the main highlights of the lesson. They use either letters, words or drawings to enclose their ideas. Before departing they are asked to explain in a nutshell what the graffiti represent.

The following chart represents the Engagement and Attention Frame containing the four multiple intelligences plus the activities suggested for each stage.

Table 4.2.3 The Engagement and Attention Frame

| | **Visual** | **Intrapersonal** | **Interpersonal** | **kinesthetic** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Opening Move** | VIP agenda | Direct questions | Chin-wagging | Short games | swap every 2 minutes among activities ( if possible) |
| **Transitional Move** | Blogging/Mobile learning | Soft ball Popcorn reading Tossing a die | Customizing a prezi or powerpoint presentation | Virginia's reel | swap every 10 minutes among activities ( if possible) |
| **Closing Move** | Recap Sheet Graphic Organizers | E-mailing Blogging | The Human Computer | Graffiti Time Flyer | swap every 5 minutes among activities ( if possible) |

Note: The row on top contains the four multiple intelligences by Gardener that this frame entails. The other rows represent the different activities for every move or stage that are placed on the column on the left. The first column on the left specifies the different moves throughout the lesson. The last column on the right specifies the time allocated or the intervals at which teachers are suggested to swap from one activity to the other.

The "magic formula" is to have students always on task, physically and intellectually connected, in tune with the topic and the teacher to avoid deadtime.

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# Booklet of A Compilation of 25 Deinhibitizers and Ice breakers

1. **Weekend**: 5 words from each student to describe last weekend.
2. **Anagrams:** cheater (teacher) - admirer (married) - listen (silent) - below (elbow) - beak (bake) - to hum (mouth) - team (meat)
3. **Coffee-pot game (coffee pot substitutes a verb)**: Do you coffee-pot every day? Do you like coffee potting?
4. **Flashing**

   You can flash any of the following for a brief moment: picture mounted on card or in a book; a text on a strip of card; a book cover; a newspaper headline; an object. The students then identify and/or describe what they saw. Encourage differences of opinion and don't confirm or reject any ideas. Flash several times to promote attempts at identification and discussion. In the end, show the text, picture or object.

5. **Oral cloze**

   Read a story or prose a passage, which can be from your course book. Stop occasionally before a key word and get the students to guess what it is going to be: they can either volunteer the word orally, or write it down. If the passage is one they have worked on recently, this can function as a review exercise of key vocabulary.

6. **Recalling words**

   Write on the board between 15 and 20 words the students have recently learned, or that you think they know. Make sure all the words are understood. Give a minute for everyone to look at them, then erase or conceal them. Individually or in pairs or groups, the students try to recall as many as they can and write them down. Find out who remembered the most (and spelt them correctly).

7. **Remember when…**

   Tell your participants that you are going to be taking a trip back in time. Type out random dates on the computer and cut them out. Place the dates into a hat or bowl and have each person draw one. Each person has to write a short blurb about something that happened to him or her in that particular year. Afterwards, everyone shares his/her story from the time period drawn. Include yourself in the activities; it makes the participants feel more comfortable. Finding a flashing light to set off and pretending it's from the "time machine" before you arrive at each year will always get some laughs.

8. **Why have you got a monkey in your bag?**

   Empty a bag -yours or one of the students'. Go up to one of the students, give him or her the bag and ask: Why have you got a monkey in your bag? The student has to think of a convincing or original reason why there is a monkey in his or her bag. After giving the reason and answering any questions from the rest of the class, he or she then takes the

bag and goes up to another student with the same question, only this time using another object, for example: Why have you got an axe in your bag? And so on. This is a good activity for lighthearted relaxation: after exams, for example, or at the end of term.

9. **You write next**

Each student has a sheet of paper, at the top which he or she writes a sentence: it can be a simple statement of fact or opinion, or a question. For example: It's very cold today. This is passed to a neighbor, who adds an answer, comment or further question and passes it on someone else. The activity can, of course, be done in pairs rather than by passing around the group.

10. **All those wearing…**

Simple game where everyone is seated in a circle and the leader stands in the middle. When the leader says "all those wearing blue change" everyone wearing the colour blue must change seats; the leader will also try to find a seat so that one person will be left without a seat standing in the middle. Start the game focused on clothing e.g. all those wearing jumpers change, then combine items of clothing with colours, all those with blue bras etc.

Alternatives: all those with two sisters, all those with a dog, all those who like pizza, all those who have been to Paris, etc are another option.

11. **Word Circle – alphabet**

This is an elimination game. Players form a circle. To start the game, one player says a word beginning with A, the next player must say another word beginning with A, and so on round the circle. A player may begin a new letter any time. Players are eliminated if they cannot think of a word, or if they fail to notice that the first letter has been changed and they say a word from the previous letter. The game continues until there is only one player left. The game can begin slowly, but soon, players should be given only a couple of seconds to come up with a letter.

12. **Questions/No Questions**

Two players are chosen to start. The group establishes the who and where of a scene and the two players must produce a dialogue consisting of questions only. The first player to hesitate for too long or to answer with a statement must sit down and be replaced by another with the same situation or a different one, depending on consensus.

13. **Double Talk**

Students work in groups of three. Player one sits facing players two and three. Player One's objective is to listen and respond fully to each of the simultaneous conversations from players two and three. Player's two and three's objective is to command 100% of Player ones attention at all times. Each may say or do anything short of physical contact to hold P1s attention. Run for two minutes. Player 1 decides which of the two held his attention best. Rotate Player One

14. **Word Association**
The teacher starts the game by saying a word, such as "Hotel".
For example:
*Teacher: Hotel*
Student A: Bed
Student B: Room
Student C: Service
Student D: Food
As you can see, any association is ok. If the student can't answer (5 second limit) he or she must stand up. The last student seated is the winner. If the association is not obvious, the student is asked to explain the association.

15. **Chopsticks Race**: Make two teams.  Have a student name a flashcard and then let her/him try to pick up and transfer a sweet from the bowl to the team's cup.  The team which will transfer more sweets wins!

16. **Hot seat:** A student seats with his/her back to the board or to the teacher. The teacher displays a word or flash cards. Other students describe the card to enable the student guess what it is.

17. **I spy:** T says "I spy with my little eye something that begins with B".  Ss try to guess the object (e.g. "book").  Colors are a good alternative for younger Ss ("... my little eye something that is red").

18. **Monkey/Banana Game**:  Prepare one big dice with pictures of monkey heads on some sides and bananas on the others.  Students answer question and then roll the dice for their team.  If bananas they get the number of bananas shown on that side of the die.  If it is the monkey, the monkey eats some of their team's bananas/points.

19. **Hangman (http://www.manythings.org/hm/)**

Hangman is an excellent choice for use in the ESL classroom. You can use it to practice any type of English vocabulary or phrase and most students are familiar with the game. Still, some schools don't allow ESL hangman games because the idea of killing the stick figure is too violent. If this is the case for your school, you should turn to alternatives to the hangman image, playing the game the same way, but using a different image.

20. **Traditional Hangman**

In the traditional hangman game, you start by drawing the gallows. Think of a word or phrase and place a small line to represent that letter. Students must try to guess the letters in the word. If they guess correctly, you place the letter in the correct position. If they guess incorrectly, you draw a new body part hanging from the gallows, starting with the head. If the students make enough incorrect guesses for you to draw a full man, he "dies" and they lose.

21. **Happy Face**

If the traditional hangman image is too gruesome for your students, use something a little tamer. Start by drawing a funny face on the board, complete with ears, hair and

other details. If students make a bad guess, you erase one feature. If you erase the entire picture, the game is over. This works best when you are guessing simple vocabulary words and short phrases.

**22. Shark Reef**

For a longer game, you can play the shark reef version of hangman. Draw a hill with a cliff. At the bottom of the cliff, you can draw water with a shark waiting. Place a stick figure at the bottom of the hill. As students make wrong guesses, you erase the stick figure and draw him

a little further up the hill, eventually falling off the cliff and into the mouth of the waiting shark. As the man approaches the cliff, be sure to draw a funny, scared face as he sees what awaits him. This version of the game works well because there is no definite ending to the game. If students make several bad guesses, you can simply make the man walk a little slower up the hill. You can take as long as you want and the character never actually has to reach the shark.

23. **Fair Cup:** Write each student's name on a Popsicle stick and put the sticks in a cup. To keep students on their toes, pull a random stick to choose someone to speak or answer a question. Important: When you begin using your fairness cup, prepare a range of questions, some of which all your students can successfully answer. This strategy allows the bottom third of your class to get involved and answer questions without being put on the spot.

24. **Meeting Conversation Reshedule Dice Game**

Select two speakers, one blue and the other black. The speakers move through the list alphabetically. They throw a dice for each letter and then speak the line that corresponds with the number. After they finish, another couple start. When everyone has finished, compare how different the conversation was in content but how similar in context.

25. **Shiritori**: Students will be able to think of words that begin with a specific letter. The teacher says a word and the children must think of a word that begins with the last letter of the previous word. This continues until a child is unable to think of a word in which case, they skip two turns.

*Activities compiled from eslprintables.com and islcollectives.com*