

## USING "ICEBREAKER" TECHNIQUE IN ENGLISH LESSONS TO CREATE A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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### Abstract

In this article I am going to share my knowledge on using "icebreaker" technique that I use in my classes. We can think of an icebreaker as a kind of intermezzo - a stage or activity in a process that stands alone and is not connected to the rest of the process. Because it has little or no connection to the process's overarching objective, it is simply characterized by its appearance to the participants as out of context. On the other hand, it is anticipated that it will result in an increased level of energy as well as attention, which will positively impact the participants' engagement and motivation as well as the remainder of the process.

**Keywords:** icebreaker, technique, teaching English, friendly atmosphere.

When I began working in this academic lyceum that I work now, I waited for the first lesson, in new classes, with unfamiliar students, I felt insecure and awkward. I understood that students may also be nervous during the first lesson, as they may not have spoken English during the summer holidays. Their last experience with an English teacher may have been in the strict, grammatical environment of classrooms for many years. This often creates a number of difficulties for students, as they have not used the language for a long period and are afraid of making mistakes.

The first lesson should be to contribute to the creation of a positive learning environment in which the use of the target language, both correctly and incorrectly, will be considered as something useful for children. In addition, the first lesson is also the main opportunity to build contact with children. It should be used as a time to assess the level of knowledge, needs and wishes of students.

At the first lessons, it is necessary to create a friendly atmosphere in the team, which will allow the children to relax, relieve numbness and "melt the ice". Two questions popped up in my head: "What should I do? And how?" I came up with the idea of getting to know new students using the Icebreaker technique, using art technology.

Icebreakers ("breaking the ice") are interactive exercises designed to work in a group, aimed at getting the teacher to get to know the students, and the students to get to know each other. "Ice-breaker" – a short game, the purpose of which is to establish interaction between participants and create a positive atmosphere in the lesson. In particular, icebreaking is an activity aimed at helping people get to know each other and, as a rule, involves the exchange of names and other background information.

Why icebreakers? They play an important role in:

- creating a positive group atmosphere
- removing barriers
- helping people get to know each other
- help to relax
- motivation
- stimulating cooperation
- ability to hear and listen to other participants

The main goal of icebreakers is to get the students to communicate with each other about as many different aspects of their lives and origins as possible. This obviously makes communication easier, but also makes them aware of the similarities and differences between each other. Icebreakers are usually quick and low-cost activities that encourage students to become more familiar with their peers. Many teachers make an icebreaker in the first days of classes to find out the names of students. Frequent use of icebreakers on a daily or a weekly basis can help children get to know each other better. The participation of all children at the beginning of each lesson can also positively affect the overall participation in the conversation (conversation). One example of icebreakers could be an activity in which participants have to be lined up alphabetically by name, participants will recognize each other's names (typical for an icebreaker), they will work together as a team to line up or in a circle (teambuilding). They will become active by being able to get up and move around the room (energizer). Another option of icebreakers is when the teacher invites the student to imagine what kind of animal or object he could be and why.

*"I would be a lion, because it is strong and brave".*

Everyone shares their associations, and the rest comment. You can vary the task by coming up with associations to the mood.

*I feel like a balloon because I am cheerful and light-hearted.*

What's in a name? This type of activity requires preparation. You need to take a list of students in advance and try to imagine the people and their characters. Write a few sentences about each person, describing their character, hobbies, perhaps appearance. In class, give each student a copy with an "imaginary representation" of him. Students read, then work in pairs, discussing which of the written is true. As a result, we work with the whole class, sharing the results of our discussions.

I used another exercise. Its essence is as follows. Desks, preferably arranged in a circle. We prepare A4 paper, colored pencils and markers in advance. First, we bend the sheet in half, ask the students to write their name. Next, each is presented

"My name is..". Then, we ask you to come up with an adjective in English that, in his/her opinion, best characterizes him/her and also write this adjective below on the sheet. You can complicate this task: the adjective must begin with the same letter as the name. After that, everyone is represented by "My name is..", "I am..". Next, we ask you to find associations with the animal. You can also complicate this task: the name of the animal must begin with the same letter as the name. We write the name of the animal under the adjective. Next comes the creative stage, the students should depict this animal with the sign that they wrote. Here the most pleasant thing is the exuberant imagination of the students. After that, each is represented by "My name is..", "I am..", "I am..".

Then, everyone removes the "business cards" from the table. The task is to call the name of a friend on the right / left, repeat the adjective characterizing him and the animal. "Her name is..", "He/She is..". The teacher does everything together with the students.

This exercise brings a lot of positive emotions and sets you up for further cooperation. I asked the children to bring these "business cards" to lessons throughout September, so I remembered all the children by name much faster.

I would like to tell you in more detail how we use one of the techniques of critical thinking - hexagonal learning. The purpose of this method is to form students' motivation to learn, to awaken research, creative activity, independence. This method makes it possible to use the knowledge already available to students, to create conditions for understanding new material in an active form, which leads to an increase in the effectiveness of classes. The hexagonal learning method is based on the use of hexagonal cards. A hexagonal card is called a hex. Each of the hexagonal cards is in some ways formalized knowledge on a certain aspect. Each of the hexagons is connected to the other, thanks to certain conceptual or event connections. The students' job is to organize the hexagons into categories, and they are placed next to each other to highlight the connections between the described factors. At the end of their work, students must provide a specific result of their activities. Options for using hexagonal learning technology is using hexes with an image. The use of hexes with images is especially justified when working with younger students. Tasks with hex give an opportunity not only to think about the object being studied, but also to have a visual support, an image that will help assimilate new information. Consider the use of hexagonal learning technology in the process of activating knowledge on the topic: "Present Continuous". Set No. 1.

- one hexagon with the time name "Present Continuous";
- six hexagons with images of different activities;

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- six hexagons with verbs.

Students receive randomly arranged hexes.

At the final lessons on the topic of Present Continuous, you can control the knowledge on the topic of Present Continuous using hexes, using the option of working with images and empty

hexagons. The work can be both individual and group. Each of the groups fills its hexagons.

Set No. 2

- one hexagon with the name of the time "Present Continuous";
- six hexagons with images of different activities;
- twelve empty hexagons.

The work is done in pairs: some students need to enter only verbs with an "ing" ending, and others – fully composed hex sentences. Students receive randomly arranged hexes. An option is possible when children are offered an incorrectly compiled hex, and they have to correct mistakes. When studying the topic "These funny animals", we introduce new vocabulary, names of animals. Next, you can use hexes to classify animals: predators, herbivores or omnivores (herbivore, carnivore, omnivore). For each of these categories, children select the names of animals located on the hex. Let's consider the option of using the technology of hexagonal learning in the study of grammatical material, where the use of hexagons helps to group and rank words according to various grammatical features and principles, to build various variants of chains in the necessary sequence, which contributes to the formation of critical thinking among students. On two hex modal verbs: should/should not. And the rules of behavior in the zoo are painted separately on the hexagons. Students distribute what can be done in the zoo, and what can not.

Let's consider working with hex during the formation of grammatical skills on the topic "Prepositions". We will set the following tasks:

- update the acquired knowledge on the topic;
- find out the conditions for the use of prepositions;
- develop the ability to correctly use prepositions with the circumstances of the place.
- promote the development of reading skills;
- remember the words where animals can live;
- repeat the prepositions (in, on) used in these expressions;
- learn how to make sentences using vocabulary on the topic "Animals".

Set No. 3

- one hexagon with the word "Prepositions";
- three hexagons with preposition names (at/in/on);
- six hexagons with place definitions;- six hexagons with animal names;

Students receive randomly arranged hexes.

To consolidate vocabulary and teach monologue speech, we use intelligence cards in lessons. By making such maps, students can express the process of thinking in a graphical way. How can I apply the intelligence card in the lesson? A teacher can use an intelligence card to explain a new topic; systematize and structure information; organize and conduct control; generalize knowledge; create reference algorithms for actions, etc. The student can systematize his knowledge; use it as a plan for his speech. The mental map acts as a verbal support of the utterance. In the center of the sheet, there is a central image that will symbolize the theme from which the work begins, both on the map and in thoughts. You don't have to be able to draw. You can present the idea schematically, use clippings from old magazines, other people's drawings. Branches are depicted from the central image, on which the most important keywords and thoughts related to this topic are located. The use of pictures and images facilitates the translation, understanding and memorization of the meaning of the word.

As a conclusion, I should confirm that in EFL classes, an important component is an ice breaker. Using icebreakers can help the teaching and learning process, especially when it comes to learning difficult material like grammar. As learning facilitators, teachers may therefore view ice-breaking activities as a potential strategy for resolving issues. This article offers a few ideas for ice-breaking activities that can be used in English language classes and a few theories about how to use them. They include jumbled sentences, correcting errors, English songs, activities for telling stories, and humor in English.

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