



Students' Perceptions on the Use of Warm-up Activities in English Language Teaching

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Abstract

In English language teaching, integrating warm-up activities is crucial for creating effective and engaging learning classes. This research aimed to determine students' perceptions of the use of warm-ups in English language teaching at a public urban institution. A descriptive-quantitative study was conducted using a survey with an adapted questionnaire. 126 students from the first to third years of high school participated. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in Excel. The results showed that warm-up activities are beneficial when applied with the correct principles. They kept students active and mentally prepared, connected prior knowledge with new knowledge, created positive interaction, and increased student motivation. In conclusion, warm-up activities in language teaching promote enthusiasm for developing language skills.

Keywords: warm-up activities; language instruction; motivation; english learning; student perception.

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Percepciones de los Estudiantes sobre el Uso de Actividades de Calentamiento en la Enseñanza del Inglés

Resumen

En la enseñanza del idioma inglés, integrar actividades de calentamiento es crucial para crear clases de aprendizaje efectivas y atractivas. El objetivo de esta investigación fue determinar las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre el uso de calentamientos en la enseñanza del idioma inglés en una institución urbana pública. Se realizó un estudio descriptivo-cuantitativo utilizando una encuesta con un cuestionario adaptado. Participaron 126 estudiantes de primero a tercer año de secundaria. Los datos fueron analizados usando estadísticas descriptivas en Excel. Los resultados mostraron que las actividades de calentamiento son beneficiosas cuando se aplican con principios correctos. Mantuvieron a los estudiantes activos y mentalmente preparados, conectaron conocimientos previos con nuevos, crearon una interacción positiva y aumentaron la motivación de los estudiantes. En conclusión, las actividades de calentamiento en la enseñanza de idiomas promueven el entusiasmo para desarrollar las habilidades lingüísticas.

Palabras clave: actividades de calentamiento; enseñanza de idiomas; motivación; aprendizaje del inglés; percepción estudiantil.

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1. Introduction

At the beginning of each class, every teacher should start by using warm-up activities. According to Le and Nguyen (2022): a warm-up serves as an introductory step towards the lesson in question, making it a vital element of English teaching and learning. Its purpose is to orient students at the beginning of a session. For Loo, Cedeño, and Cedeño (2020): they agree that warm-up activities are fundamental in English teaching, as they act as catalysts for effective learning.

These initial dynamics awaken students' interest, activate their prior knowledge, and create a conducive environment for language acquisition. By strategically employing them, teachers can align lesson objectives with students' specific needs, thus facilitating a more personalized and meaningful educational experience. Ultimately, these strategies lay the foundation for more fluid and successful English learning (Lightbown and Spada, 2013).

In the teaching-learning process, the motivation that students acquire through warm-up activities is crucial. According to Đõ (2013a): motivation plays a fundamental role in encouraging students to maintain their commitment during the learning process.

When using warm-up activities, it is also necessary to include activities related to the topic, activities with physical movement but that also require intelligence, and activities that review the previous topic, as this creates a cheerful atmosphere in class. In turn, students perform tasks with more enthusiasm because sometimes they are not motivated in the usual way that teachers use in class, that is, they only ask questions about the current topic and do nothing else (Đõ, 2013b).

In the Ecuadorian context, especially in the Ramón Barba Naranjo Educational Unit, there is little information about students' perceptions of warm-ups, despite being a common practice. Understanding these perceptions can provide valuable insights for educators and educational policy designers,



contributing to optimizing language teaching methodologies.

Therefore, if this problem is not made visible, teachers would not realize the importance of students' perceptions about the use of warm-ups at the beginning of each class, and this, in turn, would lead to a lack of interest, motivation, and participation from students in learning a second language, in this case English, as evidenced by Savaş (2016): who concluded that by using warm-ups, their classes could become environments in which collaboration between students and teachers could be more effective; which was also suggested by their students.

For these reasons, this research aims to determine students' perceptions about the use of warm-ups in English language teaching at the Ramón Barba Naranjo Educational Unit between August 2023 and February 2024.

This research topic is relevant in the area of English language teaching because teachers should consider the use of warm-ups to start with a good classroom atmosphere and obtain more motivation from students to develop different English language skills, as mentioned by Paulikova (2018): in her study that teachers' creativity in the classroom when applying appropriate warm-ups is what allows students to acquire and maintain motivation and helps them in the development of their English language skills. The research question guiding this research is: what are students' perceptions about the use of warm-ups in English language teaching?.

1.1. Warm-up

To teach English, teachers must apply activities that increase student motivation throughout the class. According to Safriyani, Mahsunah, Munawwaroh, Usva, and Nuriawarti (2020): a warm-up is a simple activity performed at the beginning of a student meeting. Introducing a warm-up activity at the beginning of a class can increase student participation, foster a friendly



environment, increase student engagement, and capture their attention.

Furthermore, Velandia (2008): states that a warm-up activity serves as an inspiring beginning that energizes students and encourages them to work effectively in the language class. Likewise, Miranda and Calle (2004): mention that one of the objectives of employing warm-up exercises is to activate students' prior knowledge.

Warm-up activities foster an environment of trust and comfort among students, which facilitates their active participation in subsequent tasks. This collaborative environment not only reduces anxiety but also promotes meaningful interaction in the target language. As Dörnyei and Murphey (2021): point out: these initial dynamics are crucial for establishing a positive group atmosphere, which is essential for effective language learning.

1.2. Importance of warm-ups

According to Robertson and Acklam (2000a), warm-ups are important in English teaching for several reasons, such as:

Engagement and focus: Warm-ups are designed to capture students' attention and focus their minds on the English lesson. Participating in activities at the beginning of class can energize students and set a positive tone for the rest of the session.

Language activation: Warm-ups often involve activating students' prior knowledge of vocabulary and language structures. This helps connect new information with what students already know, improving comprehension and retention.

Review and reinforcement: Warm-ups provide the opportunity to review and reinforce concepts covered in previous lessons. This helps consolidate learning and ensures that students build on their existing knowledge.

Establishing routines: Regular use of warm-ups establishes a classroom routine, signaling the beginning of the lesson and helping students switch to



learning mode. Consistent routines can create a sense of familiarity and comfort for students.

Promoting communication: Warm-ups often involve student communication and interaction. This can help build a supportive classroom community, improve speaking and listening skills, and create a positive learning atmosphere.

Variety and motivation: Warm-ups can be diverse and creative, incorporating various activities such as games, discussions, or brief writing exercises. This variety keeps students engaged and motivated to participate in class.

Cultural awareness: Warm-ups can include activities that expose students to cultural aspects of English-speaking countries. This not only enhances language learning but also broadens students' cultural awareness.

Assessing understanding: Informal assessment can be integrated into warm-ups to measure students' understanding of previous material. This allows teachers to identify areas that may need further clarification or reinforcement.

Reducing anxiety and creating a positive environment: Warm-ups, being low-risk activities, reduce anxiety and encourage participation without fear of making mistakes. This creates a positive learning environment, links prior knowledge with new knowledge, and lays the foundation for effective English language learning.

1.3. Principles of Warm-ups

To correctly carry out warm-up activities, certain principles must be applied. The activities should be related to the topic that will be developed. They should focus on maintaining students' concentration to help them complete all the activities planned by the teacher. They should also be interesting and entertaining (Akther, 2014a). At the same time, Robertson and Acklam (2000b), agree on the following aspects of applying warm-up activities:



- Warm-ups should be a pleasant exercise that encourages children to use English.
- Warm-up exercises should be quick; they should not occupy a large part of the lesson.
- Warm-up exercises don't always have to relate to the target language of the lesson. Many activities can be modified to fit your teaching point, but the fundamental goal of warm-ups is to prepare students to study and work in English.
- Warm-ups are frequently adaptable to provide revision, giving students the opportunity to practice language they have previously studied.

Although warm-up activities may not effectively serve students because their language organization differs from their minds. Shy students may find these activities intimidating, especially when performing exercises alone in front of the class (Klippel, 1985a). To carry out warm-up activities, principles must be correctly followed and used, which allows for more interactive classes with students.

1.4. Motivation

Motivation is fundamental in language learning. In line with this, Sreena and Ilankumaran (2018a): affirm that it acts as a cognitive engine that drives the development of communicative skills, stimulates interest in new knowledge, and positively influences academic behavior. Additionally, it fosters personal growth and transforms potential into tangible achievements, both in communication and in the integral development of the individual.

For this reason, according to Alaga (2016a): in English learning, motivation and a positive attitude are essential. These factors drive language acquisition, help overcome obstacles, and maintain long-term commitment. An



optimistic approach increases receptivity and fosters perseverance. Experts consider these psychological elements as crucial as linguistic aptitudes for success in English learning.

1.5. The function of motivation

In this regard, Ekiz and Kulmetov (2016a): emphasize that motivation is crucial in learning a foreign language. It drives participation, influences success and learning pace, and acts as an initial catalyst and sustaining force. High motivation can compensate for lack of language proficiency and inadequate environments. A motivated learner puts in more effort, takes on responsibilities, sets goals, and enjoys the process, thus becoming an essential component for language acquisition.

1.6. Principles of English teaching

English teaching involves several principles that educators often follow to ensure effective language learning. Along these lines, Williams (1998) reports some key principles in his study:

Start where the child is: Intellectual progress will be based on age and the impulses obtained to encourage and continue that progress. Teachers sometimes experience difficulties because they see themselves as empty vessels for children's potential and abilities. Therefore, classroom work should be designed so that all children can fully participate and progress, regardless of their intellectual abilities.

Allow children to be active participants in the learning process: Learning is an active process where students are explorers working with language and ideas, not empty vessels. This cognitive process requires learners to take risks and overcome obstacles to develop independence and commitment. Without these challenges, students may stagnate or even fail.

Introduce language at the discourse level: Linguistic exposure allows



students to absorb and employ language fragments, fostering critical thinking and improving academic performance. This mastery facilitates participation in meaningful conversations, respect for diverse perspectives, and valuable contributions to discussions, creating an environment of mutual learning.

Plan meaningful and purposeful activities within a clear and familiar context: In the English classroom, children need clear and comfortable environments with meaningful interactions. They must understand the purpose of their actions. Offer encouragement, direction, and constructive feedback. Assign tasks of varying complexity according to each student's level to challenge them and foster confidence in their language skills in familiar contexts.

Help learners become more independent and autonomous: Autonomy in English learning is crucial. It involves developing skills and motivation to learn efficiently without constant supervision. Although initial dependence on the teacher is normal, activities should gradually foster independence. This allows students to take an active role and develop their own understandings, creating a favorable learning environment for acquiring language skills.

2. Methodology

This study used a non-experimental quantitative approach that provided a detailed analysis of students' perception of the use of warm-up activities in classes to learn English (McBride, 2009).

This study was conducted at the "Ramón Barba Naranjo" Educational Unit, a public school located in the province of Cotopaxi, in the urban area of Latacunga canton, in the Niagara neighborhood. A total of 126 students participated, who were first, second, and third-year high school students, 90 male students and 36 female students. The participant selection process was non-probabilistic with snowball sampling because participants were selected through a list that was made with an average range of 8 to 10 points obtained



by students in the first trimester of classes.

The instrument used was a questionnaire adapted from Pradnya and Pavita (2023). The questionnaire consists of 19 questions. It is divided into three sections: the first, warm-up and principles. The second is prior knowledge of warm-up and the last section is motivation and warm-up. All questions in the questionnaire used the Likert scale. Participants responded on a Likert scale where Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

In this study, we used Excel for a detailed analysis of the data, applying descriptive statistics to transform raw data into percentages and frequencies. The results were then presented concisely in clear tables, serving as visual aids for easy interpretation of the questionnaire findings. This approach ensured a comprehensive analysis and accessible presentation, enhancing the understanding of the research results.

The findings were then presented in tables for greater clarity and easy interpretation. To enhance the process of obtaining consent for this research, a WhatsApp message was initially drafted to succinctly convey the purpose of the study, assuring participants that any data collected would be used exclusively for research purposes and that strict confidentiality measures would be maintained. Subsequently, a user-friendly questionnaire was meticulously designed using the Google Forms platform.

In this questionnaire, the purpose of the data collection instrument was clearly explained, ensuring that participants fully understood the nature of their participation. Detailed instructions accompanied the survey link, facilitating ease of participation and minimizing any potential confusion.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of the questionnaire are presented in three categories: Warm-up and principles, Prior knowledge of warm-up activities, and Motivation

and warm-ups.

Table 1. Demographic Information.

Characteristics	Frequency	
Age	14–15	27%
	16–17	72.2%
	18+	0.8%
Gender	Female	71.4%
	Male	28.6%

Source: The Authors (2024).

Table 1 shows that the majority of students (72.2%) are between 16 and 17 years old, followed by a smaller group (27%) of 14-15 years old, and a very small proportion (0.8%) of 18 years or older. Regarding gender, there is a clear majority of female students (71.4%) compared to male students (28.6%).

This variation in age is due to the fact that students come from different grades where warm-up activities have been applied. It is also noteworthy that the vast majority of the studied population is female.

Table 2. Warm-up and Principles.

Q	Frequency				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
Q1	1.6%	4%	23%	46%	25.4%
Q2	0.8%	4%	15.9%	55.6%	23.8%
Q3	0%	4%	39.7%	38.9%	17.5%
Q4	0%	2.4%	11.1%	49.2%	37.3%
Q5	0.8%	3.2%	20.6%	44.4%	31%

Source: The Authors (2024).

Table 2 presents the results related to “Warm-up and Principles”. This table shows students' responses to 5 questions (Q1-Q5) using a 5-point Likert scale. Here's the breakdown: (SD) Strongly Disagree, (D) Disagree, (N) Neutral, (A) Agree, (SA) Strongly Agree.



- Q1: Do you think the warm-up activities were related to the topic you learned in the English class? The majority (46%) agree, followed by 25.4% strongly agreeing.
- Q2: Do warm-up activities help you promote concentration and start thinking in English? A clear majority (55.6%) agree, with an additional 23.8% strongly agreeing.
- Q3: Do you think the warm-ups were short? Opinions are divided, with 39.7% neutral and 38.9% agreeing.
- Q4: Do you think the warm-ups were interesting and entertaining? A large majority agree (49.2%) or strongly agree (37.3%).
- Q5: Did the warm-up activities help you use the language? The majority agree (44.4%) or strongly agree (31%).

Overall, these results suggest a positive perception of warm-up activities in relation to English teaching principles. Most students found these activities to be related to the topic, helpful for concentration, interesting, and useful for using the language.

Adhering to specific principles when implementing warm-ups is crucial to maximize their effectiveness in language teaching. Effective warm-ups relate to the subject matter, foster concentration, are brief, interesting, and entertaining. They promote optimal performance, create an environment conducive to learning, and motivate students to learn the language.

These results are similar to those of Akther (2014b); Robertson and Acklam (2000c); and Klippel (1985b); who assert that for warm-up activities to be effective, certain principles must be followed. These include relating warm-ups to the topic to be developed and regularly adapting them to review and consolidate previous concepts. This dynamic approach fosters active participation and strengthens content retention through contextualized

repetition.

Table 3. Prior knowledge of warm-up activities.

Q	Frequency				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
Q6	0.8%	3.2%	17.5%	47.6%	31%
Q7	0.8%	2.4%	15.1%	53.2%	28.6%
Q8	0.8%	1.6%	15.9%	44.4%	37.3%
Q9	0.8%	2.4%	18.3%	42.9%	35.7%
Q10	0%	3.2%	15.9%	54%	27%
Q11	0%	0.8%	23%	51.6%	24.6%

Source: The Authors (2024).

Table 3 presents the results related to “Prior knowledge of warm-up activities”. This table shows students' responses to 6 questions (Q6-Q11) using the same 5-point Likert scale. Here's the breakdown:

- Q6: Do you think the warm-up activity helped you identify the new topic? The majority agree (47.6%) or strongly agree (31%).
- Q7: Did the warm-up activities help you connect old and new knowledge? A clear majority agree (53.2%) or strongly agree (28.6%).
- Q8: Do you think the warm-up activities created a more positive learning environment for class participation? The majority agree (44.4%) or strongly agree (37.3%).
- Q9: Do you think the warm-up activities helped you develop confidence to interact with classmates and the teacher? The majority agree (42.9%) or strongly agree (35.7%).
- Q10: Do you think the warm-up activities helped you understand the objective of the class? A clear majority agree (54%) or strongly agree (27%).
- Q11: Do you think the warm-up activities were easy to develop in class? The majority agree (51.6%) or strongly agree (24.6%).

These results indicate a very positive perception of warm-up activities in relation to activating prior knowledge and preparing for class. Students found that these activities helped them identify new topics, connect prior knowledge with new, create a positive learning environment, develop confidence, understand class objectives, and were easy to perform.

The findings suggest that warm-up activities are effectively fulfilling their purpose of preparing students for the main lesson and creating a favorable learning environment.

Moreover, it not only establishes a participative and engaged atmosphere, facilitating knowledge transmission in the classroom, but also generates a positive effect on academic performance. This finding was also reported by Hartina (2020): who stated that warm-ups activate prior knowledge, facilitating understanding and retention of information.

The constant practice of warm-ups allows students to familiarize themselves with the language in a relaxed manner, motivating them and fostering a positive attitude towards language learning. Coinciding with this perspective, Akther (2014c): supports the idea that the inclusion of warm-ups contributes to creating a favorable learning environment, where students feel comfortable and motivated in the classroom.

Table 4. Motivation and Warm-ups.

Q	Frequency				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
Q12	0%	2.4%	16.7%	48.4%	32.5%
Q13	0.8%	3.2%	16.7%	43.7%	35.7%
Q14	0.8%	3.2%	16.7%	49.2%	30.2%
Q15	0%	2.4%	10.3%	43.7%	43.7%
Q16	0%	2.4%	19%	51.6%	27%
Q17	0%	2.4%	20.6%	46%	31%
Q18	0%	1.6%	17.5%	58.7%	22.2%
Q19	0.8%	2.4%	26.2%	42.1%	28.6%

Source: The Authors (2024).



Table 4 presents the results related to “Motivation and Warm-ups”. This table shows students' responses to 8 questions (Q12-Q19) using the same 5-point Likert scale. Here's the breakdown:

- Q12: Did the warm-up activities before classes help motivate you to learn English? The majority agree (48.4%) or strongly agree (32.5%).
- Q13: Did the warm-up activities increase your motivation to study English? The majority agree (43.7%) or strongly agree (35.7%).
- Q14: Did the warm-up activities help you start the class with enthusiasm? The majority agree (49.2%) or strongly agree (30.2%).
- Q15: I like it when my teacher gives us a warm-up activity at the beginning of class. A large majority agree (43.7%) or strongly agree (43.7%).
- Q16: Did the warm-up activities make you a more active student in learning English? The majority agree (51.6%) or strongly agree (27%).
- Q17: Do you think you became more interested in learning English when the teacher gave you warm-up activities? The majority agree (46%) or strongly agree (31%).
- Q18: Did the warm-up activities help you to be more focused on learning English? A clear majority agree (58.7%) or strongly agree (22.2%).
- Q19: I participated in the warm-up activities with interest. The majority agree (42.1%) or strongly agree (28.6%).

Unequivocally, these results indicate a very positive perception of warm-up activities in relation to motivation for learning English. Students found that these activities helped them get motivated, increase their enthusiasm, become more active in learning, become more interested in English, and focus better on learning.

These findings suggest that warm-up activities are effectively fulfilling



their purpose of increasing students' motivation and interest in learning English.

Teachers can stimulate and maintain high levels of motivation with the use of warm-ups in the classroom. As it helps to develop solid and lasting language skills and has a profound impact on their progress and success in learning English. The results are similar to those of Ekiz and Kulmetov (2016b): who argued that performing warm-up activities at the beginning of a class not only motivates students but also helps them engage in learning and contributes to maintaining a conducive atmosphere in the classroom.

Similarly, Sreena and Iankumaran (2018b): argue that motivation is the most important cognitive skill, as it helps foster interest in studies and is an additional factor in the development of a person's personality. In this sense, Alaga (2016b): emphasizes the importance of student participation for effective classroom development. Lack of language proficiency and inadequate learning environments can hinder progress, so integrating motivation with appropriate resources and practice opportunities enhances language learning.

4. Conclusions

This research reveals the fundamental importance of warm-up activities in teaching English as a foreign language. The results obtained demonstrate that, when properly implemented, these activities offer significant benefits that go beyond simple class preparation.

A notable finding is the ability of these activities to create a positive and motivating learning environment. Students reported an increase in their concentration, enthusiasm, and active participation in class. This suggests that warm-up activities not only prepare students cognitively but also engage them emotionally in the learning process.

Another relevant aspect is the effectiveness of these activities in connecting prior knowledge with new concepts. This connection is crucial for meaningful and lasting learning of the English language. Additionally, students



perceived an improvement in their confidence to interact with both their peers and the teacher, which is essential for developing communicative skills in a foreign language.

These results reinforce the importance of adhering to specific principles when implementing warm-up activities. This study provides empirical evidence on students' perceptions, which adds a valuable dimension to understanding the effectiveness of these activities.

It is important to note that this study was limited to a specific institution and a particular age group. Future research could explore the effectiveness of these activities in different educational contexts and age groups. Moreover, it would be valuable to investigate the long-term impact of these activities on students' academic performance in learning English.

In consideration, warm-up activities, when implemented following appropriate principles, are a powerful tool for improving motivation, participation, and effective learning of English. We recommend that educators consistently incorporate these activities into their classes, adapting them to the specific needs of their students and learning objectives. This approach has the potential to significantly transform the English learning experience, making it more engaging, effective, and rewarding for students.

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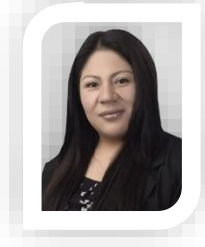


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