

ENERGIZERS AND THEIR USE IN SPEAKING LESSONS

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Abstract

This article examines the role of energizers in enhancing speaking lessons in EFL/ESL (English as a Foreign Language / English as a Second Language) classrooms. Energizers are short, interactive activities that aim to increase learners' engagement, motivation, and readiness to communicate in the target language. Drawing on communicative language teaching principles, the article highlights how energizers help reduce speaking anxiety, encourage active participation, and foster a supportive classroom atmosphere. Different types of energizers—physical, verbal, and cognitive—are discussed in relation to their contribution to fluency development and classroom interaction. The article concludes that the purposeful integration of energizers into speaking lessons can significantly improve learners' oral communication skills and overall learning effectiveness.

Key words: Energizers, speaking activities, EFL/ESL classroom, communicative language teaching, learner motivation, speaking anxiety, classroom interaction, fluency development, active learning, oral communicative competence

In contemporary language education, the development of speaking skills is regarded as one of the primary goals of English language teaching. However, speaking remains one of the most challenging skills for learners to master, particularly in EFL/ESL contexts where opportunities for authentic communication are limited. Learners often experience anxiety, lack of motivation, and low confidence when required to speak in a foreign language. In response to these challenges, teachers increasingly employ **energizers** as an effective pedagogical tool to enhance engagement and improve speaking performance.

Understanding Energizers in the Language Classroom

Energizers are short, interactive activities designed to re-activate learners' attention, refresh their mental focus, and create a positive learning atmosphere. Unlike traditional drills, energizers are dynamic and learner-centered, encouraging active participation and spontaneous interaction [1]. Although they are often brief, their impact on learners' emotional and cognitive readiness is significant. In speaking lessons, energizers serve as a bridge between passive learning and active communication by preparing learners to use the target language more freely.

From a pedagogical perspective, energizers align with communicative language teaching and task-based learning approaches, which emphasize meaningful interaction

and learner autonomy. By engaging students in purposeful communication, energizers help transform the classroom into a communicative space where language is used as a tool rather than studied as a subject [2].

The Importance of Energizers in Developing Speaking Skills

Speaking requires the integration of multiple linguistic and cognitive processes, including vocabulary recall, grammatical structuring, pronunciation, and real-time comprehension. Many learners struggle with this complexity, which often results in hesitation or silence. Energizers help reduce this cognitive burden by shifting learners' focus from accuracy to meaning. When learners are involved in enjoyable and low-pressure activities, they are more likely to speak naturally and confidently.

Furthermore, energizers contribute to lowering the **affective filter**, a concept introduced by Krashen, which refers to emotional barriers such as fear and anxiety that hinder language acquisition. By creating a relaxed and supportive environment, energizers encourage learners to take risks and participate actively in speaking tasks [3].

Types of Energizers for Speaking Lessons

Energizers in speaking lessons can take multiple forms, each targeting different aspects of learner engagement, interaction, and communication. Broadly, energizers can be categorized into **physical, verbal, and cognitive activities**, although many activities often combine elements of more than one type.

1. Physical Energizers

Physical energizers involve movement and kinesthetic engagement, which help students release tension, regain focus, and increase energy levels during lessons. These activities are particularly effective in long classes or when learners appear fatigued or distracted. For example, a simple “Mingle and Ask” activity requires students to move around the classroom asking questions to different classmates, such as “What is your favorite food?” or “Which city would you like to visit?” Another example is “Stand Up If...,” where students stand and respond to statements or prompts, encouraging both movement and speaking [4].

2. Verbal Energizers

Verbal energizers focus specifically on oral production and fluency, helping learners practice speaking in a low-pressure, engaging context. Games such as Two Truths and a Lie encourage learners to speak creatively while interacting with peers, practicing question formation and sentence structure. “Hot Potato Questions” is another classic verbal activity in which students pass an object while answering quick questions, promoting rapid thinking and spontaneous speech [5]. These activities foster fluency, pronunciation, and confidence, allowing learners to focus on expressing meaning rather than worrying about grammatical accuracy.

3. Cognitive Energizers

Cognitive energizers engage learners' critical thinking and problem-solving skills while simultaneously promoting communication. Examples include mini-debates, role-plays, and guessing games. In a picture description challenge, students describe an image to a partner who has to guess what it depicts, which encourages precise vocabulary use and careful explanation. Story-building activities, where each student contributes a sentence or idea to form a coherent story, require learners to listen, process, and respond creatively in real time [6]. Cognitive energizers are particularly effective for higher-level learners, as they encourage extended speech and complex sentence use.

4. Combined Energizers

Many effective energizers blend physical, verbal, and cognitive elements, creating multi-dimensional engagement. For instance, a "Find Someone Who" activity combines movement, speaking, and thinking, as students move around asking classmates questions to match given criteria (e.g., "Find someone who has visited another country") [7]. Another example is a "Classroom Scavenger Hunt," where students must ask questions, follow clues, and interact with peers to complete a task, stimulating both mind and body while practicing speaking. These hybrid activities maximize participation and can be adapted to suit different levels and classroom sizes.

Pedagogical Benefits of Using Energizers

The use of energizers in speaking lessons offers numerous pedagogical benefits. One of the most significant advantages is increased **learner motivation**. Enjoyable and interactive activities make lessons more engaging, encouraging learners to participate willingly. As motivation increases, learners become more invested in improving their speaking skills.

Energizers also contribute to the development of **fluency and communicative competence**. Frequent opportunities for spontaneous speaking help learners process language more quickly and express their ideas more clearly. Over time, this repeated practice leads to greater confidence and improved oral proficiency [8].

Another important benefit is the promotion of **collaborative learning**. Energizers often involve pair or group work, allowing learners to interact with different classmates. This interaction exposes learners to diverse speaking styles and vocabulary, fostering peer learning and social interaction.

Integrating Energizers Effectively into Speaking Lessons

For energizers to be effective, they must be integrated thoughtfully into lesson planning. Teachers can use energizers at different stages of a lesson: as a warm-up to activate prior knowledge, during the lesson to regain attention, or as a closing activity to consolidate speaking practice [9]. The choice of energizer should align with the lesson objectives and learners' proficiency levels.

It is also important for teachers to provide clear instructions and establish time limits to maintain classroom management. While energizers are designed to be fun, they should remain purposeful and connected to learning outcomes. When used strategically, energizers enhance rather than disrupt the flow of the lesson.

Challenges and Considerations

Although energizers offer many benefits in speaking lessons, their effective use requires careful planning and awareness of potential challenges. One key issue is the **risk of distraction**. Energizers are meant to engage and energize learners, but if overused or poorly timed, they may shift attention away from lesson objectives, particularly in large classes or with younger students. Teachers need to ensure that each activity has a clear purpose and is directly related to the speaking goals of the lesson.

Learner diversity is another important consideration. Classrooms typically include students of varying ages, proficiency levels, personalities, and cultural backgrounds. While some learners thrive in interactive or movement-based activities, others—especially shy or introverted students—may feel anxious or uncomfortable. Teachers must adapt activities to accommodate different needs, for example by allowing alternative participation roles or pairing students strategically to increase comfort and confidence [10].

Time management also plays a critical role. Energizers are designed to be brief and refreshing, but without careful timing, they can consume valuable lesson time, leaving less opportunity for core speaking tasks. Teachers should plan energizers to fit seamlessly into the lesson sequence, ensuring they support rather than interrupt the main learning objectives.

Finally, **teacher preparedness and confidence** are essential. Educators may feel hesitant to use energizers due to fear of losing control, unfamiliarity with the activities, or concern about maintaining academic rigor. Professional development, practice, and gradual integration of energizers can help teachers manage activities effectively while maintaining focus on learning outcomes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, energizers play a vital role in enhancing speaking lessons by increasing motivation, reducing anxiety, and promoting meaningful communication. Through physical, verbal, and cognitive engagement, energizers create a dynamic learning environment that supports the development of speaking skills. When carefully planned and aligned with instructional goals, energizers transform speaking lessons into interactive and enjoyable experiences, ultimately contributing to more effective language learning.

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