

Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of Boredom in EFL Classrooms
at University of Zawia

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**Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of Boredom in
EFL Classrooms at University of Zawia**

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the factors that influence boredom in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom at University of Zawia, and its impact on students' comprehension and academic performance among second –semester students at the IT College. Data were collected using a mixed- methods research design by using an open ended questionnaire completed by 121 participants and semi -structured interviews conducted with 8 English teachers. The findings revealed that boredom was mainly associated with traditional teaching, teacher-centered methods, lack of instructional variety, and limited classroom interaction, with students' limited background knowledge may also contribute to disengagement. The results further indicate that boredom negatively influences students' concentration, comprehension, participation, and overall academic performance. However, teachers pointed out that integrating technology and interactive activities, connecting lessons to real-life contexts, simplifying explanations, and providing positive feedback can effectively reduce boredom and enhance engagement. The study ends with a discussion of the implications of the results and provides suggestions for further research.

Keywords: Boredom, EFL classrooms, Student engagement, Motivation, Teaching strategies, Classroom interaction, Academic performance.

تصورات الطلبة والاساتذة للملل في قاعات تدريس اللغة الانجليزية كلغة

اجنبية بجامعة الزاوية ليبيا

زاكية الكامل شلغوم

جامعة الزاوية كلية تقنية المعلومات

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الملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة الى استقصاء العوامل التي تؤثر في الملل داخل فصول تدريس اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية بجامعة الزاوية، وأثر ذلك على استيعاب الطلاب وادائهم الأكاديمي بين طلبة الفصل الدراسي الثاني في كلية تقنية المعلومات بجامعة الزاوية، تم جمع البيانات باستخدام تصميم بحثي بالمنهج المختلط من خلال استبيان مفتوح الاسئلة أكمله 121 مشاركا، ومقابلات شبه منظمة اجريت مع 8 اساتذة للغة الانجليزية.

كشفت النتائج أن الملل ارتبط بشكل رئيسي بالتدريس التقليدي والاساليب التي تركز على المعلم، ونقص التنوع في طرق التدريس، ومحدودية التفاعل داخل الفصل، كما إن ضعف الخلفية المعرفية لدى بعض الطلاب قد يسهم أيضا في عدم الانخراط في الدرس وتشير الدراسات إلى إن الملل يؤثر سلبا على تركيز الطلاب، وفهمهم ومشاركتهم و أدائهم الأكاديمي العام ، ومع ذلك اشار الاساتذة إلى إن دمج التكنولوجيا والأنشطة التفاعلية، وربط الدروس بسياقات الحياة الواقعية، و تبسيط الشرح، وتقديم تغذية راجعة ايجابية، يمكن إن يقلل بفعالية من الملل ويعزز الانخراط. وتختتم الدراسة بمناقشة الآثار المترتبة على النتائج، وتقدم مقترحات لأبحاث مستقبلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الملل، فصول اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، انخراط الطلاب، الدافعية، استراتيجيات التدريس، التفاعل الصفّي، الأداء الأكاديمي.

Introduction

Recently, there has been a growing interest in studying English as a foreign language (EFL). People differ in their reasons and motivations for learning a language, depending on their goals and interests.

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Researchers have shown that learning another language can make learners more creative, improve their personality, support self-confidence, increase concentration, and enhance their sense of self-worth. However, learners may experience various emotions during the language learning process, such as boredom, frustration, or anxiety. When students' motivation levels are low, they tend to lose interest and perceive a lack of meaning in the tasks they perform. As a result, they become disengaged and are affected by negative emotions.

Boredom is one of the most frequently experienced emotions in educational contexts, especially in second language (ESL) learning. It often leads students to lose focus on the tasks presented by the teacher and to become less involved in classroom activities.

The importance of the study

Improving students' level in English classes remains a crucial process. The present study is an attempt to discover what fundamental teaching methods can reinforce students' learning levels. It also reduces boredom during English classes in ways that catch students' attention, make them interested and, consequently, make them active participants in the classroom. Furthermore, this study is expected to be useful to curriculum designers by offering empirical evidence and practical recommendations that can contribute in improvement in English language education. Finally, the findings may help to reduce classroom boredom, increase students' active participation, and raise English language teaching and learning.

Purpose of the research

The main purpose of this research is to achieve an effective learning process by examining the teaching methods preferred by both teachers and students. Additionally, it emphasizes the essential role of teachers in creating an engaging and supportive classroom environment that motivates students and enhances their academic performance.

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Research Questions

Q1_What factors contribute to boredom among EFL university students?

Q2_How do students perceive the effect of boredom on their English comprehension?

Q3_How do teachers 'perceive the cause and effects of boredom in EFL classrooms?

Q4_What strategies can teachers use to reduce boredom and improve engagement?

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

1_To evaluate whether the instructional materials used in English classes are suitable for the students' language level and learning needs.

2_To identify the extent to which teachers employ modern and varied teaching methods that help reduce boredom and increase students' engagement during English lessons.

3_To examine the qualifications and professional training of English language teachers in relation to their ability to apply effective and contemporary teaching approaches.

4_To suggest recommendations to improve classroom practices and enhance students' motivation in learning English.

Literature Review

Different Perspectives on Boredom in Education

This passage explores how various scholars define boredom in the classroom setting, highlighting its negative impact on students.

Affective vs. Cognitive: Boredom is described as both an emotional state with unpleasant feelings and a lack of stimulation Pekrun et al., (2010)

Leary et al. (1986) conceptualized boredom as an affective experience that emerges from failures in cognitive and intentional processes, particularly when individuals are unable to sustain attention or find meaning in ongoing activities.

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The Impact of boredom on Learning

Boredom is a frequent complaint among students and is negatively associated with academic outcomes like motivation, learning strategies, and achievement (Daschmann, 2013). Understanding the factors that worsen student boredom is crucial.

Kruk (2016) highlighted that boredom in EFL classrooms is influenced by both instructional monotony and lack of personal engagement. Students experience higher levels of boredom when learning activities are repetitive or fail to capture their interest, which can negatively affect their motivation and performance.

Monotony and Lack of Motivation:

Several definitions emphasize

Tedium and lack of attention: Khan (citing Eren, 2013) defines tedium as a negative feeling that distracts students from the present task.

Lack of Activity and Engagement: According to Gurycka (1977), boredom is a state of emptiness that arises from a lack of activity or engagement in classroom learning.

Attentional Theory: The attentional theory (Barnet & Klitzing, 2006; Carrier et al., 2008; Harris, 2000; Lepper et al., 2001; Mercer-Lynn et al., 2013) defines boredom as an inability to self-regulate and maintain attention due to poor attentional control (Kruth & Zawodniak, 2017). Students with low attention control may struggle to find meaning in classroom tasks (Cheyne et al., 2006). In EFL classrooms, this lack of attentional control may lead to higher levels of boredom, which can negatively affect students' engagement and learning outcomes.

This suggests that in EFL classrooms, students with low attentional control may experience higher levels of boredom, which can negatively impact language learning.

A survey was carried out by Nakamura et al. (2021) among Thai university students. This study focused on the antecedent of boredom in L2 class. A whole class survey was distributed to the student in a particular class over 7 weeks course to obtain learner's boredom experience. In the meantime, a focus group interview was conducted five times to gain an in depth view of antecedent

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boredom. The survey resulted in many factors that cause antecedent boredom in L2 learning context, such as learner's physical fatigue, task difficulty, lack of comprehension, insufficient L2 skills and negative behavior of classmate.

In addition, a study on boredom in language learning was conducted by Derakhshan et al. (2021). This study is attempted to explore causes and solution to boredom experienced by Iranian EFL students. 208 teachers were taken as a sample of the study which has been done during covid _19 health crisis by learning online. Through written and an ended questionnaire, the study showed that lack of learner's participation, teacher's long monotonous, monologues and repeated tasks are the main causes of boredom in English classrooms, while the solutions that make the class livelier and more interactive and teacher and learners ' interaction, solving technology issues.

State boredom vs. Trait boredom

As mentioned by Pawlak et al. (2020b), state boredom refers to a temporary, context-dependent condition that arises when individuals perceive their learning environment as unstimulating or unengaging. Whereas trait boredom is considered an inherent part of an individual's personality (Bench& Lench, 2013). it is typically classified into two types: external boredom proneness, which stems from an uninteresting environment, and internal boredom proneness, which reflects an individual's difficulty in finding meaningful activities to engage in (Macklem, 2015).

Teacher's Role in Enhancing Engagement

Teachers play a fundamental role in shaping students' attitudes toward English learning. Effective teachers use varied instructional techniques, adapt materials to students' proficiency levels, and create a classroom atmosphere that encourages participation and curiosity. Studies (e.g., Harmer, 2007) have shown that teachers who apply flexible and innovative teaching strategies are more successful in keeping students attentive and motivated.

Professional development programs also contribute significantly to teachers' ability to implement modern pedagogical approaches.

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Ongoing training enables teachers to integrate technology, collaborative learning, and differentiated instruction in ways that meet diverse learners' needs.

The impact of teaching materials on learning outcomes

Nunan (2004) argues that instructional materials are another key factor influencing students' engagement. Materials that are relevant, visually appealing, and linguistically appropriate can stimulate learners' interest and improve comprehension. Authentic materials such as videos, songs and real- life texts help students connect classroom learning with real- world communication.

However, when materials are outdated, monotonous, or too difficult, students may lose motivation. Thus, adapting teaching materials to learners' levels and cultural contexts is essential for maintaining interest and ensuring effective learning.

According to Nunan (2004), language learning tasks should be effective, meaningful and engaging; when such tasks lack variety or relevance, learners' attentional focus decreases, which may contribute to increased boredom in the EFL classroom.

Challenges in English Language Classrooms

Despite numerous advancements in teaching methodology, many EFL classrooms still face challenges such as large class sizes, limited resources, and insufficient teacher training. These issues often lead to passive learning environments where students become disengaged and uninterested. Previous studies (e.g., Brown, 2007; Ur, 2012) highlight that overcoming these obstacles requires a combination of institutional support, teacher innovation, and the integration of modern instructional tools.

Research design

The present study adopts mixed-methods: quantitative survey+ qualitative interview, as it aims to investigate the teaching methods used in English language classrooms and their impact on students' motivation and engagement. The descriptive approach allows for the identification and analysis of current teaching practices, while the analytical competent helps to interpret the relationships between

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teaching strategies, teachers' qualifications, and students' levels of interests and participation.

Participants

The participants of the study were eight English teachers, 121 second semester students of information technology (I T) students. The participants were undergraduate students. They had one lecture a week where the lecture lasts two hours. The participants were between 19 and 20 years old. They had been learning English for eight years. None of the students contact with native speakers of English. They were mostly limited to using the Internet and watching English-language movies.

The data was obtained by means of background questionnaire and interview and subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis. The following questions were asked:

1. Do you think that the teacher is well qualified?
2. Do you think that the lecture duration is too long?
3. Do you think that the curriculum is appropriate for the students?
4. Does the teacher employ any instructional aids?
5. Does the teacher take up all/ most of the time of the lecture?
6. Do you think being hot makes you feel bored?
7. Does the teacher accomplish all / the majority of the activities?
8. Do you think that the students boredom is the fault of the teacher?
9. Do you think that the teacher's way to introduce the material bores you?
10. Do you think the student's low background is the main reason that makes students feel bored?
11. Does the teacher encourages you to participate in the class?

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The results of the questionnaire and the statistical analysis of the results

Table (1): Students' Responses of the Teachers' Professional Qualification

	agree	Strongly agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
The teacher is well qualified	73	38	7	1	2

As shown in table (1) the majority of students (agree 60.3%, strongly agree 31.4%) agreed that their teacher is well qualified. This indicates that students generally hold positive perceptions of their teacher's professional competence and teaching abilities.

Table (2): Students' Perceptions of the Lecture's Length

	agree	Strongly agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
The lecture is too long	60	10	37	12	2

As shown in table (2) 70 students (57.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that the lecture is too long, while 14 students (11.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed and 37 students (30.6%) remained neutral, indicating that lecture's length may be contributing factor of boredom for many students.

Table (3): Students' Perceptions of the Curriculum Appropriateness

	agree	Strongly agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
The curriculum is appropriate to the students level	80	9	20	10	2

As shown in table (3) 89 students agreed or strongly disagreed that the curriculum is appropriate to their level, including 80 students (66.1) who agreed and 9 students (7.4%) who strongly disagreed. In

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contrast, 12 students (9.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 20 students (16.5%) remained neutral.

These results suggest that the majority of participants perceive the curriculum as suitable for their academic level. Therefore, the curriculum itself does not appear to be a major factor of boredom among the students. Nevertheless, the presence of some neutral and negative response may indicate that a small proportion of students experience difficulties.

Table (4): Students' Responses of the Teacher's Employing Instructional Aids

	agree	Strongly agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
The teacher employs instructional aids	10	3	23	14	71

As shown in table (4) only 13 students (10.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that instructional aides are used in class, whereas 85 students (70.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The remaining 23 students (19.0%) were neutral. This finding highlights a significant lack of instructional aids, which may contribute to students' boredom and reduced engagement.

Table (5): Students' Responses of Whether the Teacher Take all / Most of the Lecture

	agree	Strongly agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
The teacher takes all / most the time of the lecture	85	11	16	8	1

As shown in table (5) 95 students (78.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that teacher occupies most of the lecture time. Only 9 students (7.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 16 students (13.2%) were neutral. This finding may be attributed to the teacher's extensive involvement in explain the lesson, supervising classroom

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activities, providing feedback, and correcting students' mistakes. Therefore, this result should not necessarily be interpreted as evidence of teacher- centered instruction. Rather, it may reflect the teacher's active role in facilitating learning and ensuring students' understanding of the lesson content.

Table (6): Students' Perceptions of the Effect of Hot Weather on Their Boredom

	agree	Strongly agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
Being hot makes you bored	49	60	6	2	4

As shown in table (6) the unanimous response (agree 40.5%, strongly agree49.6%) suggests that the participants believe that being in hot environment or experiencing high temperature can contribute to feeling of boredom or disengagement during lectures.

Table (7): Students' Responses of the Teacher's Completion of Most Classroom Activities

	agree	Strongly agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
The teacher accomplishes all / the majority of the activities	77	41	1	0	2

As shown in table (7) nearly all students (118 students. 97.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that the teacher accomplishes all or most classroom activities. Only two students (1.7%) disagreed, while one student (0.8%) was neutral. This finding reflects students' satisfaction with the teacher's fulfillment of instructional duties.

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Table (8): Students' Perceptions of the Teacher's Responsibility for Their Boredom

	agree	Strongly agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
The student's boredom is the fault of the teacher	2	0	18	90	11

As shown in table (8) most participants rejected this statement. Only 2 students (1.7%) agreed, whereas 101 students (83.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 18 students (14.8%) were neutral. This suggests that the students do not consider the teacher to be the primary cause of boredom.

Table (9): Students' Responses Whether the Teacher's Method of Introducing the Material Causes Boredom

	agree	Strongly agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
The teacher's way to introduce the material bores you	8	1	14	91	7

As shown in table (9) the vast majority of students (98students, 81,0%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with statement. Only 9 students (7.4%) agreed or strongly agreed, while 14 students (11.6%) were neutral. Therefore, the teacher's method of presenting lessons does not appear to be a major source of boredom.

Table (10): Students' Perceptions of Low Background Knowledge on Boredom

	agree	Strongly agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
The students 'low background is the main reason that makes students feel bored	69	25	12	12	3

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As shown in table (10) most students (94 students, (77.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that insufficient background knowledge contributes to boredom. In contrast, 15 students (12.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 12 students (9.9%) were neutral. This finding indicates that learner-related factors significantly influence boredom.

Table (11): Students' Perceptions of the Teacher's Encouragement of Participation to Reduce Boredom

	agree	Strongly agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
The teacher encourages you to participate in the class	57	53	11	0	0

As shown in table (11) the majority of participants (110 students, 90.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that the teacher encourages classroom participation. Only 11 students (9.1%) were neutral, and none disagreed. This reflects positive perception of the teacher's efforts to involve students in the learning process.

Results and discussion

The results reveal that students generally hold positive perception of their teacher and curriculum. Most participants considered the teacher is well qualified, believed that the curriculum was appropriate to their level, they reported that the teacher encouraged classroom participation. Moreover, students largely rejected the notion that boredom resulted from the teacher's teaching style or competence. However, several factors were identified as significant contributors to boredom. The most prominent factors were high classroom temperatures, lengthy lectures, limited use of instructional aids, and insufficient background knowledge. In addition, the majority of respondents indicated that the teacher occupied most of the lecture time, reflecting the teacher's active role in facilitating learning and ensuring student's understanding of the content.

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Overall, the findings suggest that boredom in EFL Classrooms is influenced primarily by environmental conditions, instructional practice, and learner _related factors rather than by the teacher qualifications or teaching approach. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that most students did not blame the teacher for their boredom and expressed satisfaction with the teacher's classroom performance and encouragement of participation.

An interview

In this study, semi -structured interviews were conducted with eight EFL university instructors to identify their perception of reasons that contribute to boredom in English language classrooms, the impact of boredom on students 'comprehension and performance, and how to overcome these reasons.

The questions interview

- Q1_ in your opinion, what are the main reasons that make students feel bored in English classrooms?
- Q2_ How does boredom influence students' comprehension and performance?
- Q3_ what techniques do you use to keep students motivated and engaged?
- Q4_ Do you think that the students' low background contributes to feeling bored? What should you do in this situation?

The first interview question aimed to explore teachers' perceptions regarding the main factors that lead to students boredom in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom.

All teachers agreed that boredom mainly results from several factors. These include using traditional teaching methods to introduce the material. In addition, most teachers ignore using technology in classrooms, lack of interaction among peers as well as limited communication between teachers and students.

Some teachers added that students feel bored when lessons are too long, repetitive, or not related to their real lives, lack of variety,

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ineffective teaching practices, and negative feedback may contribute to a disengaging learning environment.

All these factors collectively hinder students motivation, reduce active participation, and consequently feeling bored.

The second interview question aimed to identify teachers' opinions about the impact of boredom on students' comprehension and performance.

The teachers generally emphasized that boredom negatively affects students' attention and concentration regardless of its causes. It reduces students willingness and enthusiasm to attend or participate actively in classroom activities and neglect school work, which impact in comprehension. Consequently, result in low grades and lower academic achievement.

When asking teacher about techniques they use to reduce boredom and keep students motivated and engaged they explained that maintaining student's motivation requires creating supportive learning environment, encouraging active participation through questioning, assigning meaningful tasks, integrating technology.

Other participants emphasized that students need to feel that they are an essential part of the academic process by using learner-centered approach, so involving them actively in lessons by employing group work, discussion, and short games, trying to relate lessons to student's daily life and interests.

Others explained that offering incentives, such as higher marks or small rewards may stimulate students' motivation and mitigate boredom.

Most participants agreed that low background may cause students' boredom

The fourth interview question investigated whether low language background contributes to feeling bored in EFL classrooms. In addition, it aimed to highlight the strategies that the teachers adopt to support students in such situation and prevent boredom.

Most teachers agreed that students' low background may contribute to students' boredom, but it should be considered alongside other classroom factors. To address this issue students can be asked to take an active role in learning process by preparing the expected lessons in advance and seeking about additional information. Such

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strategies may enhance learners' autonomy, self-confidence and mitigate the negative effects of boredom in EFL classrooms.

Teachers should conduct brief reviews to evoke the previous learned material connected to the lesson.

Other participant said that using interactive activities such as group work, discussion, and short games. Also trying to relate the lesson to students real life and interests. Using different teaching materials like videos, picture and real examples help to create variety and maintain attention. Encouraging students and giving positive feedback also increase their engagement.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the factors contributing to boredom in EFL classrooms at University of Zawia and its impact on students comprehension and academic performance, drawing on the perceptions of both students and teachers.

The findings revealed that students generally hold positive perceptions of their teacher's qualifications, the appropriateness of the curriculum, and the teacher's efforts to encourage classroom participation. Consequently, boredom was not primarily attributed to the teacher's competence or teaching style.

Instead, several environmental and instructional factors emerged as the main contributors to boredom, most notably high classroom temperatures, lengthy lectures, limited use of instructional aids, and insufficient student background knowledge.

The interview with EFL instructors further confirmed that traditional, teacher-centered methods, lack of variety in classroom activities, and limited interaction between teacher and students increase feelings of boredom and reduce students' motivation and engagement.

Addressing this issue therefore requires improving classroom conditions, integrating technology, adopting more varied and interactive strategies, and paying more attention to students' individual needs and motivation.



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Recommendations

- 1_ Addressing students boredom: Support autonomy and motivation; teachers should create a supportive and positive learning environment that encourage students to participate without fear. A comfortable classroom atmosphere can enhance students' engagement and willingness to learn.
- 2_ Active teaching strategies: Teachers should employ diverse instructional strategies and meaningful, challenging tasks to maintain students' attention and engagement.
- 3_ Positive classroom atmosphere: Creating a cheerful and supportive environment enhances students' concentration, motivation, and overall achievement.
- 4_ classroom temperature management: Teachers and school administrators should ensure that classrooms are adequately ventilated and, where possible, equipped with cooling systems in hot weather.
Maintaining a comfortable temperature can help prevent cognitive fatigue, reduce students' boredom, and sustain attention and engagement throughout the lesson.
- 5_ Integrating technology: When technology tools effectively used that can create enjoyable learning experiences, increase motivation, and promote active participation in language learning.
- 6_ Use of social networking platforms: Students can practice language skills, exchange ideas and collaboratively solve problems by using platforms like Facebook which serve as web-based scaffolds.
- 7_ Variety of language activity and resources: Teacher should design diverse language tasks and provide links to reliable online resources to support different learning styles and sustain students interest.
- 8_ Segmented lectures: Breaking lectures into shorter segment with brief breaks helps refreshing students' minds, improve focus, and enhance reengagement, with the content.
- 9_ Collaborative learning: It is recommended to adopt a learner-centered approach in teaching; so students should be encouraged to interact and collaborate with their peers using the

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- content they have learned through group work, discussion, and interactive activities. Engaging in such collaborative activities can deepen understanding and reinforce lesson comprehension.
- 10_ teachers should try to connect lesson content to students' real life experiences and interests, which can increase relevance and reduce feelings of monotony.
- 11_ Supplementary resources: Teachers may enhance the lecture by providing additional resources, such as textbooks, podcasts, or videos related to the topic.
- 12_ Mini quizzes: Providing a short quiz at the end of the lecture can motivate students to pay closer attention during the lesson. Such assessments reinforce learning, encourage active engagement, and help both teachers and students identify areas that may require further clarification.
- 13_ providing incentives, such as positive feedback, higher marks, or small rewards, can motivate students and encourage active participation.
- 14_ it is important for teachers to be aware of students' individual differences and needs, and to adapt their teaching methods accordingly to ensure that all learners remain engaged.

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