



## **MANAGING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE ELT CLASSROOMS**

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### **Abstract**

This research work focuses on new methods and approaches for involving ELT students in the learning process using new technologies. The Google Classroom platform, as well as the use of interactive whiteboards, have earned their honourable attention and have firmly entered into modern ways of training teachers, significantly helping to progress performance and contribute to greater motivation of students. This was also established during a survey in which 15 secondary school teachers from Almaty took part, where it was revealed that teachers find the use of these technologies convenient and productive.

*Keywords:* student engagement, online learning, ELT teachers, interactive whiteboards, Google Classroom.

### *Introduction*

Classroom management is said to be one of the major concerns for most of the teachers who want their students to be engaged in the educational process. Evertson & Weinstein (2006) indicate that this has caused a lot of debates and has issues due to the fact that both students and beginning teachers face challenges managing classroom engagement. Taking into account that one complex component, like foreign language, may be added, this engagement becomes harder to realise. Cazden (1986) also indicates that establishing communication in the context of ELT classrooms is perceived as a complicated phenomenon.

Besides, having set that classroom management, especially in terms of ELT, implying a complex process, teachers' preparation that involves classroom management field study, is often neglected (Johnson, 2005). At the same time, in the absence of proper training and additional training, teachers are often criticised for using excessive conversation time, and many have been told to significantly reduce it. Thus, this led to the fact that the emphasis was not on the quality, but on the number of teacher's speeches, and this is contrary to the opposite desired effect that the ELT program seeks to achieve (Walsh, 2002).

Also, at the moment, the role of the use of high-tech equipment and systems in the learning and teaching process is increasing, which allows classes to be conducted using an unconventional method using presentation slides, a visualizer, audio and video materials. An important application of technology is to study a large number of subjects, which also include language subjects (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Mishra and Koehler (2006) also argue that the use of digital technologies in the



context of ELT has proven its effectiveness, having become widespread. Shyamlee & Phil (2012) notes that EFL education has become more diverse and productive thanks to the introduction of new technologies. The very recent situation caused by the coronavirus also opened up new opportunities in distance learning, which was conducted through online platforms in real time. These technological processes have proven to be effective in teaching the material and retaining attention among students (Sukmawati & Nensia, 2019). The actual fact is that it is extremely difficult to keep the attention of each of the students, especially when studying complex material in a foreign language, when the curriculum is monotonous and is not subject to innovations and any changes. In this paper, we want to focus the attention on conducting a study that will seek to answer the following questions:

- 1) What methods can be used to diversify the learning process in the ELT classroom in order to focus the attention of students?
- 2) How effective were these methods in the context of secondary schools in Almaty city?

#### Experimental part

This research will be done using mixed method research, both quantitative and qualitative methods that will cover the theoretical basis to answer the first research question and conducting a survey consisting of 15 ELT teachers of secondary schools in Almaty city.

Quite recently, the use of interactive whiteboards in the process of teaching in ELT classes has become widespread. Smart boards have a number of advantages that contribute to rapid and productive language learning in the classroom. According to Elaziz (2008), thanks to the introduction of smart boards, the teaching atmosphere is more conducive to learning, making it creative and interesting. The experience of using the interactive whiteboard varies depending on the countries (see Table 1):

The UK	The USA	Australia
Both physical and visual effects are useful for students (Beeland, 2002).	Satisfy multisensory needs in the learning process; Promotes genuine interaction and discussion in the classroom; Lessons are completer and	Improving motivation; Greater potential for interactive interaction; Improving the ELT lesson plan (Jelyani, Janfaza & Soori, 2014).



	<p>more filled; Awakening of creative abilities; Increased motivation (Gerard &amp; Widener, 1999).</p>	
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Table 1. Using smart boards in language classrooms (the UK, the USA, Australia).

The interactive whiteboard promotes progressiveness in teaching a foreign language through: support for interaction between students and conversations; presents cultural and linguistic elements; develops oral skills. An interactive whiteboard is not just a material that can be obtained from a computer screen. The user has the ability to move from the blackboard, and the teacher saves time during the learning process, which helps to keep the student's attention and continue the interaction continuously. When using an interactive conversation, the process of focusing on a specific topic at the same time is simplified, which can be difficult to implement in the traditional format of lessons (Alsaleem, 2021).

Not only smart boards can be used to enhance students' engagement, but such platforms as Google Classroom and Moodle are widespread among ELT teachers. The research of Sukmawati & Nensia shows that students who studied using this platform were more involved and satisfied with their learning process. Moreover, each of the students can have access to this platform via a mobile phone, computer or laptop. This platform allows you to upload tasks for students with full familiarisation and instructions for it, setting a certain time for which the student needs to meet the deadline. According to the results of the study, these time limits supported students' interest, since these tasks can be attached with accompanying audio and video materials, and also help to keep the student motivated and not start the learning process. In addition, this platform allows you to maintain communication between a student and a teacher on a specific topic directly without someone else's interference. A big advantage is that students have access to the uploaded materials, which allows them to return to them at any time and repeat the material. Most students note that this helps them save time and quickly return to the material they have studied in order to remember it and improve their progress (Sukmawati & Nensia, 2019).

Thanks to these methods, the learning process at ELT is not only diverse, but also effective, as it helps to focus students' attention on certain information with the help of visual and audio and video materials that help students to be more involved in the process than listening to a lecture

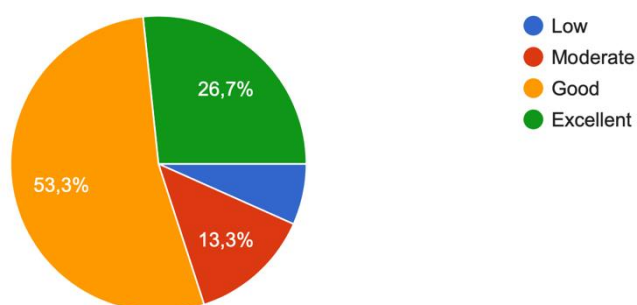


without accompanying information.

15 ELT teachers from secondary schools in the city of Almaty participated in this survey. The main purpose of this survey is to establish how effectively students in the classroom were involved in using Google Classroom and an interactive whiteboard.

Evaluate your students' language skills

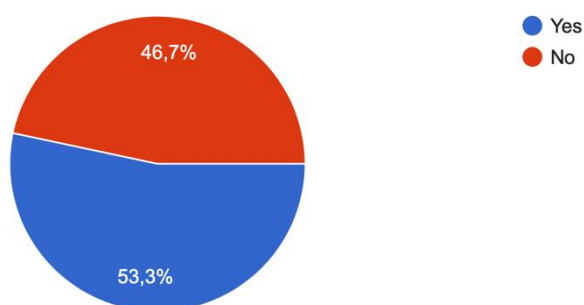
15 ответов



Picture 1. Language skills of EFL students.

Are the students concentrated on your speech without using platforms?

15 ответов

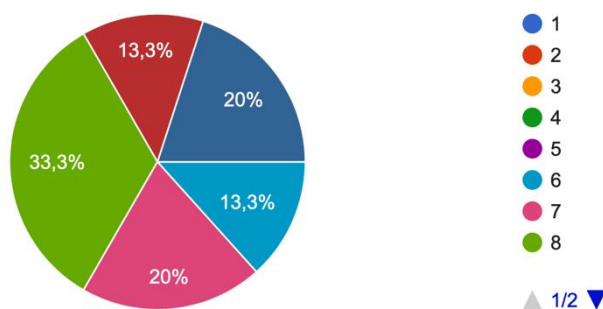


Picture 2. Concentration on a traditional format of classes.



Evaluate the ease of use of these technologies from 1 - 10

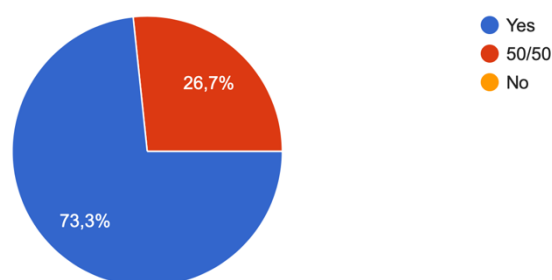
15 ответов



Picture 3. Engagement of students into the process with the usage of technologies.

Are the students more engaged into the process with the usage of these technologies?

15 ответов



Picture 4. Evaluation of technologies' usability.

The results state that 6 teachers teach classes of more than 30 people, 5 teachers from 20 to 25, and 4 teachers from 15 to 20 children in the class. The majority of students have good language skills – 53.3%, 26.7% - excellent, 13.3% - moderate and only 6.7% - low. Most of the teachers, which are 9 people, use Google Classroom and an interactive whiteboard in the process of teaching 3-4 times a week. 8 teachers also answered that students without the use of technology are concentrated on the teacher's speech, and 7 teachers answered that students are not concentrated. Basically, it was influenced by the number of people in the class, which makes it difficult for the teacher to hold the attention of each of them. This is also confirmed by the fact that 11 teachers noted that students are more involved in the learning process when using these technologies, and only 4 people answered vaguely – 50/50. Based on the assessments that were offered to teachers in order to essentially assess the usability of these technologies, the ranking



starts from 6 (13.3% of the answers) and ends with 10 (13.3%), showing that overall teachers' perceptions of using technologies in the classrooms is positive.

### *Conclusion*

Based on the results of the study, it becomes obvious that one of the most common and effective methods of involving ELT students in the learning process is the use of an interactive whiteboard and platforms like Google Classroom, analogues of which are being created in many schools and universities. This helps to keep students motivated and result-oriented, significantly reducing the teacher's workload, since there is an access to more materials than without the use of these technologies. In addition, the use of additional visual and audio and video material implies that the training proceeds more efficiently.

The conducted research states that the majority of teachers noted these technologies as convenient to use and most of them use them more often than 1-2 times a week. Also, during the survey, it became known that with a larger number of students, it is much easier to conduct lessons in such an updated format, helping the teacher to hold the attention of students and conduct lessons productively, fulfilling the curriculum.

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