

THE ENGAGE-STUDY-ACTIVATE METHOD: A NEW ANGLE AT ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN EFL CLASS

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Abstract

Do you remember your EFL classes at school? Were you engaged or distracted in your class? It did depend on how your class was managed by your English language teacher. So how should the EFL class be organized so that students were engaged and not distracted? The authors of this paper have tried to give the answer to this crucial and relevant question related to the current challenges in constantly changing educational settings. Today there are a lot of teaching techniques based on the use of modern technologies that can increase students' motivation and engagement in EFL class. One of them is the ESA method – a method of sequential activities – which was first proposed by Jeremy Harmer in his book "How to teach English" [1]. The purpose of this study is to substantiate the importance of working out a general strategy for conducting EFL class with the use of the ESA method. For this, there has been designed a teaching model based on the ESA principles that are presented below. The teaching model consists of three phases: E (engage) – warming-up (teaching materials and methods used: games, humoresques, visual aids, mimicking technique); S (study) – learning new things (teaching materials, methods and approaches used: supplementary materials, the PPP method, independent work of students in and out of the classroom); A (activate) – practicing English (methods used: dramatization, role-play, creation of advertisements, essays and poems composing, discussions, debates, etc.).

The researchers have come up with the following ESA principles to be guided in EFL class:

1. The duration ratio of each phase should be: Engage – 10 min, Study – 15, Activate – 20.
2. The flow chart of the lesson, teaching materials and tasks must be consistent with the ESA method.
3. Arousing students' interest and influencing their emotions by addressing to their experience should be provided.
4. The teacher's ability to spontaneously shift students' attention to various speech activities should be utilized.
5. Resorting to a variety of associations that allows retaining the target language is recommended.

The offered teaching model includes training and test exercises aimed at facilitating teaching and learning processes for the formation of students' language proficiency by using the ESA method.

The leading research methods used by the authors in the study are a theoretical analysis of scientific literature, a content analysis of pedagogical and psychological literature, and a pedagogical experiment.

The practical output of the research consists in the compilation of a number of copyright tasks for each phase of the teaching model. This paper discusses issues and practices of the studied model and offers general recommendations for the teaching staff.

Keywords: EFL class, ESA method, ESA principles, ESA teaching techniques, teaching model.

1. INTRODUCTION

Class management issues have always been under the focus of foreign and Russian educators. Why? The answer is evident: if a teacher manages a class in the proper way (on the basis of linguodidactic principles), students will be 100 % engaged in all the class activities planned by the teacher. But it is easy to say, and not so simple to fulfill. The dilemma has existed and will exist as long as the teaching itself takes place. A short glimpse into the history of Methodology is a good proof to it. However, new technologies can favour teachers.

In this study, we trying to meet the above challenge examined the ESA method – a method of sequential activities – as a tool of increasing students' motivation in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) class. A starting point for this investigation became Jeremy Harmer's statement from his book "How to teach English" [1]: "The How to... series is written by teachers and teacher trainers, people who know the reality of the classroom and the support teachers need to get the most out of their students. Our aim is to build teachers' confidence, knowledge, and classroom abilities – and inspire them to try out new ideas." Inspired by Harmer's words and drawing on literature of teaching and learning EFL, multicultural studies, as well as personal national and international teaching experience, we began our pedagogical experiment on working out a general strategy for conducting EFL classes with the use of the ESA method.

At the present time, there are a lot of teaching methods based on modern technologies that can increase students' motivation and engagement in EFL class. Why did we choose the ESA method? This method

combines a series of approaches and techniques that let the English language teacher structure classes logically and efficiently due to the given algorithm:

- ✓ E (engage) – warming-up;
- ✓ S (study) – learning new things;
- ✓ A (activate) – practicing language.

In this research, we describe the findings of the pedagogical experiment that was conducted, where 33 college students were involved.

We made an attempt to design a teaching model based on the ESA principles:

1. The duration ratio of each phase in class *Engage – Study – Activate* should be timed.
2. All the class elements should be consistent with the ESA method.
3. Appealing to students' experience should be provided.
4. Various speech activities with the aim to spontaneously switch students' attention should be applied.
5. Resorting to a variety of associations students might construct to receive and/ or convey the message in the foreign (English) language is recommended.

We also managed to devise training and test exercises for forming students' language proficiency. These copy-right exercises (in-class activities) were developed in accordance with the ESA principles mentioned above that are considered to be strategic ESA principles [2].

This paper can be regarded as a general guideline for faculty and student body of the university.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review allowed us to treat the ESA method from different angles so that we could find answers to the questions that interest us:

- (i) Does the ESA method provide for developing vocabulary skills?
- (ii) Does it contribute to the formation of speaking skills?
- (iii) Does it affect speech fluency?
- (iv) Does the ESA method improve students' accuracy in writing?
- (v) Does the ESA method work for teaching comprehensive reading?
- (vi) Does it increase students' motivation?

Agus [3] argues that students learning the English language cannot express their ideas because of lack of vocabulary; thus the author states the ESA method considerably improves students' vocabulary skills [3, p. 93].

The above finding can be supported by one more research conducted by the Indonesian educator from Central Lombok, Vikasari [4]. The researcher held a quasi-experimental study at a public junior high school to find a way to improve students' vocabulary. The ESA method was chosen as a tool for the experiment. The collected data allowed Vikasari to draw a conclusion that the ESA method may increase students' English vocabulary mastery.

Earlier in 2016, their colleagues from Lembang Pinrang Regency elementary school Tekeng and Daharia [5] investigated the problem whether the ESA method can increase second grade students' vocabulary mastery and came up with the conclusion: the ESA method can be successfully utilized for forming and developing lexical skills in EFL class.

Koshshima and Shokri [6] examine the effects of the ESA method on developing speaking skills of intermediate EFL learners. The experiment the authors conducted let them compare two approaches to teaching in the English language classroom: they experimented with the audio-lingual method of teaching they applied in the control group, and the ESA method elements that were utilized by the authors in the experimental group. The researchers claim the obtained data revealed that "the subjects in the experimental group outperformed on mastering their speaking skills post-test as compared with those in the control group" [6, p. 1094].

It is interesting to note these researchers' point of view on the teachers' perception of using the ESA method in mastering speaking skills of EFL learners in Iranian educational establishments [7]. Koshshima and Shokri invited 10 EFL experienced teachers to fill in a 5-Point Likert scale questionnaire which was to reveal teachers' perception of teaching-learning techniques through the utilization of the engage, study and activate elements. The results of the teachers' questionnaire showed that "most of the teachers hold a positive perception of implementing ESA elements in their classroom settings as an instructional approach in boosting speaking skills of EFL learners" [7, p. 577].

Writing texts in a foreign language is challenging for students. Writing descriptive texts in a foreign language is twice challenging for them due to a few factors: low interest to this kind of activity on the part of students, difficulty students experience in using correct grammar and proper vocabulary for writing, amongst others. On having conducted an experiment, the Indonesian scholars Darmawangsa, Arifani, and Setiadi from Indonesia University of Education [8]. come to the conclusion that the use of the ESA method can improve students' writing skills as a whole, and their ability to write descriptive texts in

particular [8, p. 208]. This finding was also confirmed by the questionnaire analysis: e.g., “most of the students think that the implementation of the ESA method can help in improving the ability to write descriptive texts” [ibidem].

One more study aimed at the approbation of the ESA method for teaching writing skills in the English language classroom was undertaken by a Junior High School Swadhipa Natar teacher in South Lampung (Indonesia). In her research, Yuniarti sets and solves a few tasks; one of them – to test how the ESA method can contribute to improving students’ ability to write short functional texts (advertisements and posters). Based on the data of the action research the author concludes that the ESA sequence can improve the students’ ability and interest on writing advertisements and posters [9].

Tang considers the ESA method to be flexible, and therefore, in the author’s opinion, it can be combined with some other interactive methods in teaching reading comprehension in EFL class. Due to such flexibility, the author asserts, the Engage-Study-Activate method “enables students to be the center of class, activates their interest, and enhances students’ overall ability in using language” [10, p. 24]. This research found that the ESA method can efficiently work in large groups of students.

The research by Rahmi and Beniario was aimed at describing the effectiveness of the ESA element in reading report texts [11].

Shokri underlining the increasing role of reading abilities in the English language in modern society due to the fact that English has become the language of technology, science, and communication, insists on equipping learners with a wider range of reading abilities, which can be ensured, in the author’s viewpoint, by the implementation of the ESA method in the process of teaching reading comprehension [12].

According to Hidayah and Harjali, the ESA method can be applied in EFL class to teach any speech skills. The most effective class mode where the teacher uses the ESA method is the patchwork sequence (EAASASEA etc) because it provides a good balance between the Study and Activate phases [13].

Even the brief review of scientific literature demonstrates a deep interest of school and university teachers in the ESA method; however, not all the benefits and, perhaps, limitations of this teaching method have been thoroughly and scrupulously studied.

3. RESEARCH GOAL AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Research goal

The research goal for this study is to work out a general strategy for conducting EFL class with the use of the ESA method.

To achieve the above goal there have been outlined sub-goals:

- 1) to design a teaching model based on the ESA principles;
- 2) to devise training and test exercises based on the ESA method.

Research question

In this study, the following research question is set:

Does the ESA method promote the increase of students’ motivation?

4. METHODOLOGY

Research Site

The research site selected for this study was Kazan Medical College. English classes were conducted with the students of Nursing major.

In this paper, there are presented the results of the experiment held with 33 students (17 students in group ‘608’, 16 students in group ‘609’) of Kazan Medical College who took part in the experiment (‘608’ – a control group, ‘609’ – an experimental group).

Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval were not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements.

Study instrument

The pedagogical experiment was chosen as a study instrument in this research. The experiment consisted of three stages:

1. Ascertain experiment.
2. Formative experiment.
3. Control experiment.

Study materials

Study materials comprise a teaching model and supplementary teaching materials.

To answer the research question “Does the ESA method promote the increase of students’ motivation?” the authors made an attempt to design a teaching model based on the ESA method. The suggested teaching model consists of 3 components:

✓ *Aim*

The aim of the teaching model is to increase students’ motivation in learning English by implementing the ESA method.

✓ *Content*

This component is released through 6 stages:

1. Assessing students’ English proficiency level;
2. Content analysis of the English language textbook *Spotlight* (authors: V. Evans, D. Duli, O.V. Afanasyev, I.V. Mikheeva) by which students are taught;
3. Designing supplementary exercises for Engage and Activate stages;
4. Approbating supplementary exercises for Engage and Activate stages in EFL class;
5. Conducting a questionnaire with the aim to evaluate the level of students’ motivation;
6. Evaluating and comparing students’ motivation level on the basis of the obtained data of the input-test and output-test.

✓ *Assessment*

The evaluation of the level of students’ motivation to teaching and learning processes is carried out according to the following scale:

- low level of motivation;
- normal (average) level of motivation;
- high level of motivation.

This teaching model was tested in the experiment which is described in the next section.

5. RESULTS

The ESA method principles, which were presented in literature review, determined the prerequisites for the successful implementation of the ESA method in the English language classroom:

1. The teacher should observe time regulations within each phase (*Engage – Study – Activate*).
2. The students’ level of English proficiency should be taken into consideration and the tasks should correspond to the level of student language proficiency.
3. All the class elements should match the ESA method principles.
4. The teacher should know students’ needs.
5. The teacher should meet students’ needs.

To evaluate the level of students’ motivation at the ascertaining stage of the pedagogical experiment, we used the classification of motivational indicators developed by the Russian scholar T.D. Dubovitskaya [14]. On the basis of this classified parameters we were able to identify the level of students’ motivation in EFL class.

Procedure

Students of both groups (experimental and control) were asked to answer 20 multiple-choice questions with 4 options: true, most likely true, false, most likely false. Each question was worth one point.

The obtained data of the questionnaire showed the following results:

- 0-5 points – low level of motivation;
- 6-14 points – normal (average) level of motivation;
- 15-20 points – high level of motivation.

The results of the questionnaire in the experimental group are presented in Figure 1.

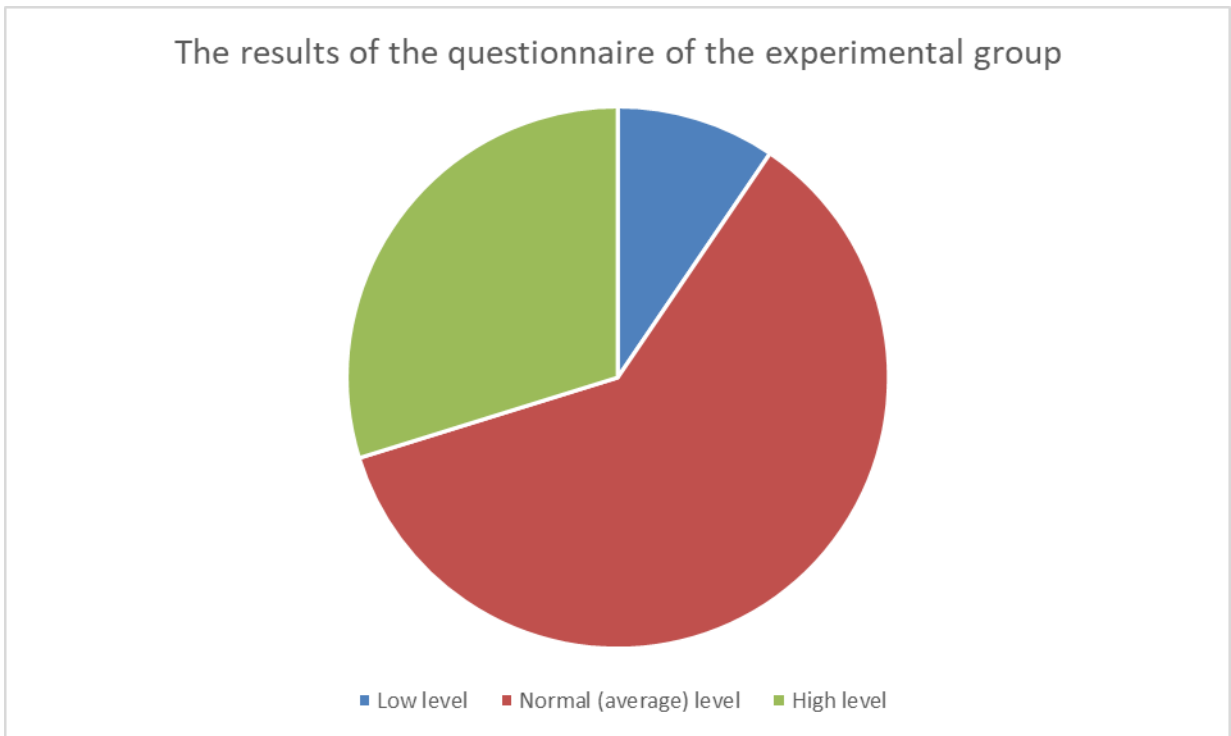


Fig.1. The results of the questionnaire in the experimental group

According to the results, 4 students have a high level of motivation (29.8%), 9 students have an average level of motivation (60.7%) and 3 students have low level of motivation (9.5%). Overall, students of the experimental group have a normal (average) level of motivation.

The results of the questionnaire in the control group are shown in Figure 2.

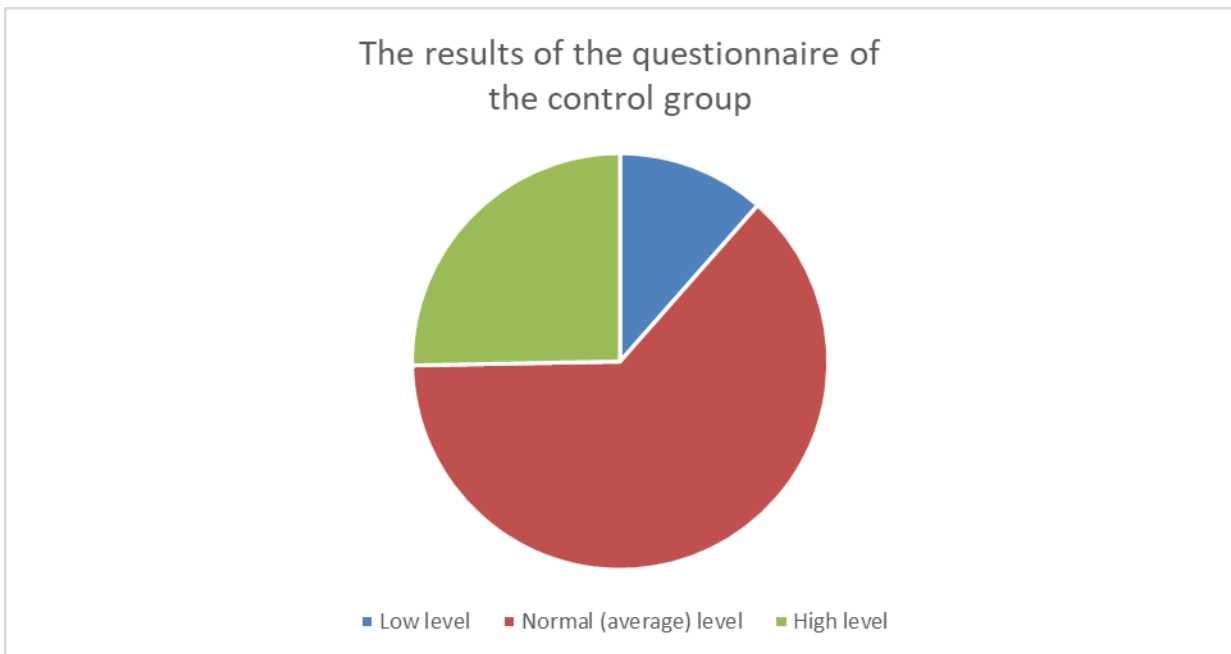


Fig. 2. The results of the questionnaire in the control group

According to the gathered data, students of the control group also demonstrate a normal (average) level of motivation.

In the course of the formative experiment, we offered students of the experimental group a series of supplementary exercises. Supplementary exercises were created for the Engage and Activate stages, and were aimed at assimilating teaching materials. The in-class activities included watching videos, working in pairs, role-playing, completing tables, creating mind-maps, filling in clusters, etc., that is, training exercises that satisfied the ESA method principles. Here is an example of some supplementary exercises:

Engage stage

1. Watch a short video and guess what topic of the lesson is.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ld8vJPqxmfg>

2. Listen to the song "The greatest things in life are free" and answer the questions:

<https://muzebra.net/song/the+greatest+things+in+life+are+free>

- What is this song about?

- Which lines do you like most?

- What can't we do with money?

- How do you think your life would change if you suddenly became very rich?

Activate stage

1. The game "Word battle".

The class is divided into two teams. The first team starts the game by saying any word from lesson under study in Russian. The second team gives its English equivalent. Then teams change the roles. It's very important to say and translate the words very quickly. One point is given for each right answer. The team that gets more points wins.

2. The game "Pairs".

All students get one or two cards with the names of shops and products. The task is to match shops with products. The students can walk around the class looking for the necessary card. The last two students get a funny task from the class.

3. It's probably time for learning how to make a budget and save money. All of your budgeting can be done using a pen, a piece of paper, and a calculator. It will be your project work.

You can create a detailed budget with charts. It can be done in this way:

INCOME	EXPENSES
Wages	Food
Gifts	Bills
Bonuses	Clothes
Dividends	Bus fares
Allowance	Entertainments
INCOME TOTAL	EXPENSES TOTAL

At the control stage of the experiment students' motivation was tested. To evaluate students' motivation, we used the same test developed by T.D. Dubovitskaya [14]. The results of the output test on the evaluation of students' motivation level in both groups are presented in Figure 3.

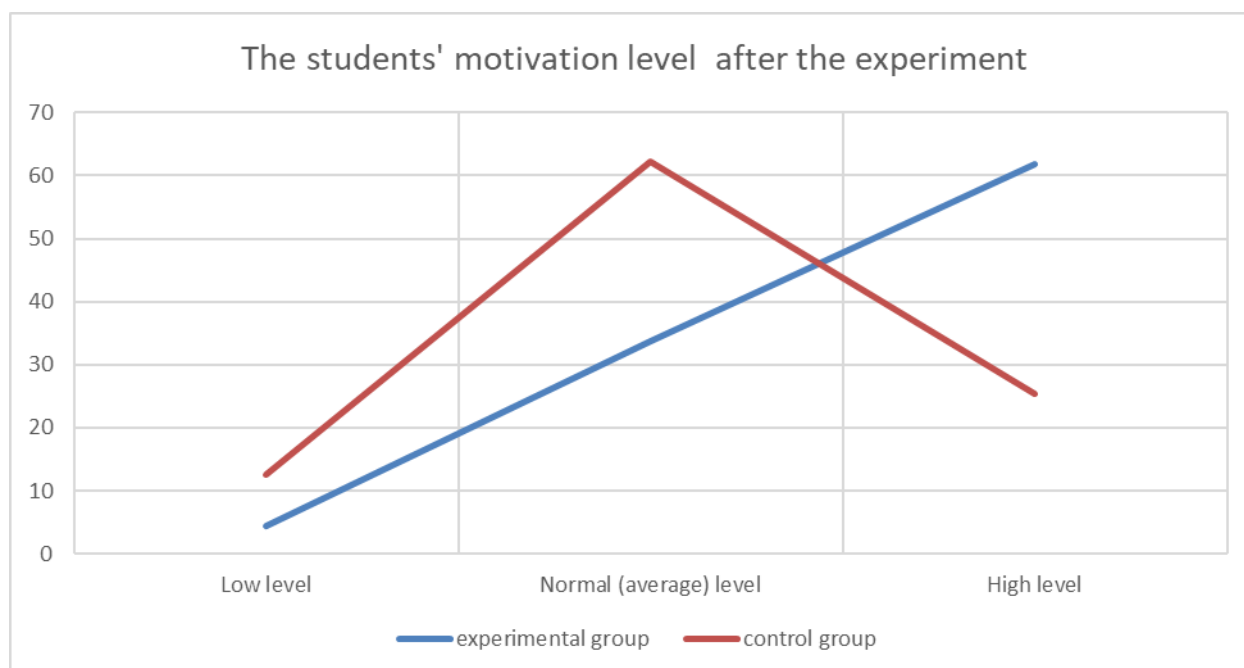


Fig. 3. The results of the output test on the evaluation of students' motivation level in the experimental and control groups

Below there are the results of the evaluating of students' motivation level in the experimental group before and after the experiment (Figure 4).

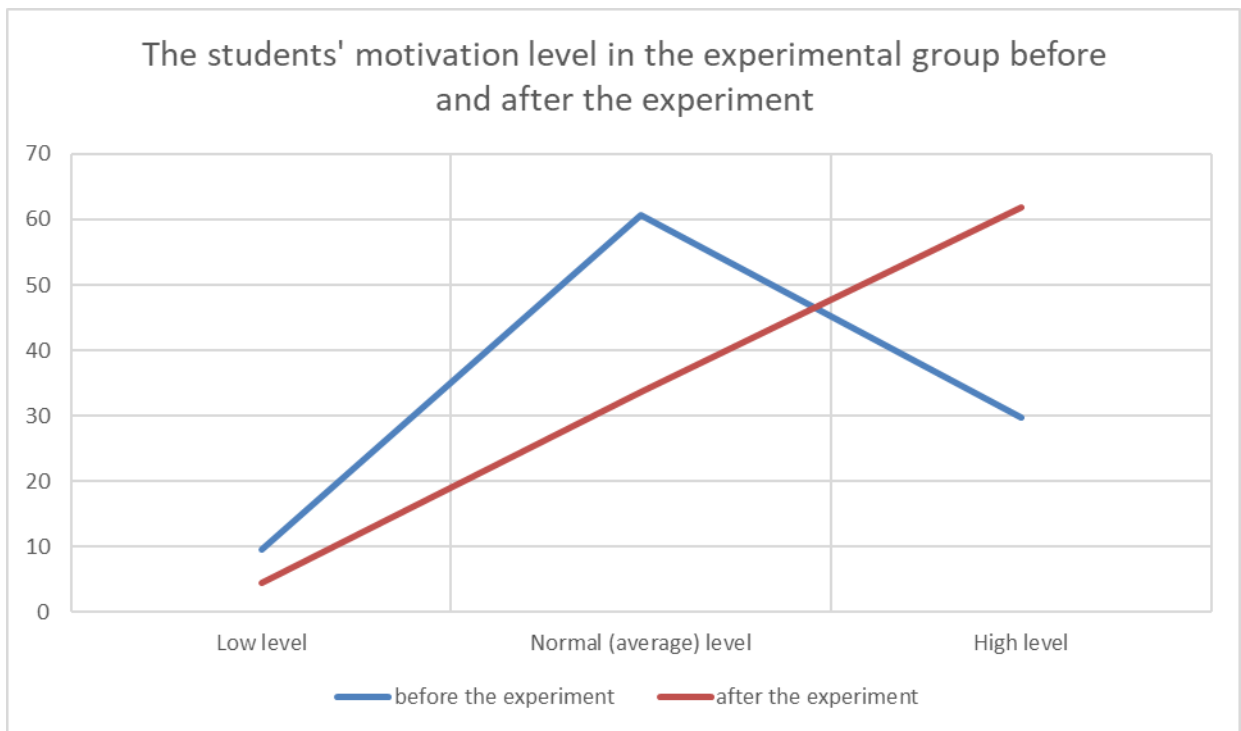


Fig. 4. The students' motivation level in the experimental group before and after the experiment

The obtained data display that the motivation level of the control group students slightly changed; while in the experimental group there was revealed an increase of students' motivation level. The number of students with high level of motivation comprised 61.8%, the number of students with normal (average) level – 33.7%, and the number of students with low level of motivation decreased to 4.5%.

6. DISCUSSION

"The ESA model is a macro default setting, almost a teaching program. All three elements need to be present when it is in use. But what makes it useful as a macro default is that the order of these elements is not fixed. Trainers need clear models, just as computer users rely initially on a default setting. We have suggested a macro default ESA as a general proposal, which provides three micro default settings: Straight Arrow sequences, Boomerang sequence, and Patchwork sequences" [1].

There is a great deal of research available concerning English language learning. However, very little research focuses specifically on the successful language learning in a classroom that depends on a judicious blend of subconscious language acquisition (through listening and reading) and the class activities described in this paper.

According to the Kazan Medical College curriculum, in the subject of the English language, college students should acquire certain knowledge and skills. This study helped to consolidate some of them via the ESA method that enabled the learners to fully understand the target language and increased their motivation. We have much evidence to suggest that college students benefited from the ESA activities aimed at improving their English language proficiency. The experiment allowed us to come to the conclusion that the ESA method contributes to the increase of students' motivation and knowledge consolidation and helps to overcome the language barrier to reach a new level of communication.

7. LIMITATIONS

The current study is inevitably a subject to some limitations. First, it presents insufficient data: the results of 33 college students were analyzed and interpreted. Second, only a few prerequisites for the successful implementation of the ESA method in the English language classroom were analyzed. We believe that these issues can be taken into consideration in future researches in this area.

8. CONCLUSION

We can conclude that the experimental research completely confirmed the set goal that the ESA method contributes to the increase of students' motivation and allows students, in a rather short time, to amass a large amount of information and gain a solid foundation in the content area. Moreover, it leads to deep understanding of the subject area and sustains high motivation in learning the English language.

The ESA method offered a perfect tool to involve both the learner's intellectual and emotional spheres, and was aimed to create a meaningful, pleasant and low-stress atmosphere that could encourage students to comprehend the material deeper and consolidate the important information.

The approbation of the teaching model the researchers implemented in the experiment, proved itself positively.

The findings of the study can serve as guidelines for English teachers and English language learners.

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