

# Stop, Stretch and Think: Incorporating Brain Breaks in EFL Classrooms

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**Abstract**—This paper investigates the impact of brain breaks in the language classroom at the tertiary level. A 'brain break' is an activity that takes people away from deep mental work and allows one's brain and body to rest or take a break to reset. In today's rapidly changing education system, students worldwide must take courses/ classes for long hours. This is inevitable in a language class, especially at the tertiary level, which causes loss of attention, fatigue, and loss of interest in the lesson. Long hours of class with lengthy and monotonous tasks require breaks to re-energise the students. Hence, this study investigates the effects of brain breaks in a language classroom from the perspectives of both students and teachers. The researchers chose (N=22) EFL teachers and (N=60) students, both males and females at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia to participate in this study. Two separate questionnaires were administered to them. To analyse the data, SPSS version 26.0 was used. The results showed that teachers and students preferred incorporating brain breaks in the language class to improve the overall performance of the students. Based on the study results, the paper concludes with recommendations about how teachers can retain students' attention through effective brain break strategies.

**Index Terms**—brain breaks, effective, language classroom, perceptions, strategies

## I. INTRODUCTION

Brain breaks are mental breaks designed to help students focus and retain attention. In other words, they are quick, structured breaks using physical movement, mindful exercise, or sensory activities. In today's fast-changing education system, where students have to focus on multiple tasks simultaneously for a certain period, brain breaks have become invincible to retain student focus and attention. Teachers want their learners to concentrate in class. Studies show that higher learning outcomes depend on the students' concentration level. The role of attention is undeniable in students' learning process. In a study conducted by Al'Omairi and Al Balushi (2015), it is stated that attention is a significant component of one's learning. Moreover, Hariyanto (2021) states that if the learner pays attention, then the learner will focus on the instructions given by teachers and carry out the tasks well. When it comes to language classes, which may last for one and a half hours to two hours or even more depending on the institution's curriculum and teaching hours, teachers require students to listen and focus on multiple as well as specific tasks according to the requirements of the textbooks.

In a language class, students may have to focus on the four major skills, reading, writing, listening, and speaking, along with the subskills -vocabulary and grammar. Hence, a language class at the tertiary level, which lasts for two hours or more, requires them to give their full attention to complete the tasks on time. Not to mention the extensive hours of screen time due to the availability of e-books, which are used through tabs, mobiles or laptops. As a result, students lose focus and motivation and are subject to feelings of fatigue or tiredness.

Brain breaks (BB) are essential to motivate students and retain their focus. According to several studies, a sedentary lifestyle, lack of time, a curriculum with heavy content, a lack of interest and skills, long hours of screen time, long hours of class, and class hours during the part of the day itself leads to monotony and fatigue (Kuan et al., 2019; Hajar et al., 2019). It is observed that among the other factors that affect student performance, concentration in the classroom is one of the dominant factors that affect a student's performance. Students at the university level begin to lose attention for various reasons. Since students begin to lose concentration, it becomes challenging for many teachers to maintain their enthusiasm when teaching students at this level. Also, those students find it challenging to achieve the best outcome. Therefore, teachers try to find and implement innovative methods to support their students and bring out positive academic performance.

Teachers might apply new approaches to student success by providing various activities or movements. These movement breaks, also called 'brain breaks,' have gained popularity among teachers to help their students improve their performance during their lessons (Baker et al., 2017). There are several reasons for the loss of attention. For example,

feeling tired, not being proficient in grasping the information, lack of interest in the course and finally being overloaded with lectures during the whole day. Based on these, experts have opined on the following types of breaks during the entire day such as:

- Movement break
- Talking break
- Recess break
- Testing break

Each of the breaks mentioned above spread throughout the day, helps the students re-energize and improve their focus on the lesson.

#### A. Theoretical Background

Research has shown that being sedentary for extended classroom periods leads to eye strains, spinal pressure, and decreased deep breathing, which can cause loss of attention and concentration (Morton, 2016). Juonala et al. (2013), Haapala et al. (2014) opine that increased sedentary levels in academic settings lead to various health issues. Additionally, these extended learning periods may inhibit academic growth because students often cannot focus throughout the entire period (Bunce et al., 2010). Studies show that brains can focus on any lesson from five minutes to a maximum of ten to fifteen minutes before they lose focus and need time for consolidation and reflection (Burns, 1985; Jensen, 2004). Another study stated that students' attention depends on the time of the day (Muhammad et al., 2020). Shoupp (2021) states that the instruction time during the day greatly impacts class achievement. Their study also claims that the more relaxed students are, the better they learn.

Studies show that BB can have a tremendous effect on students as it gives them a chance to take a break from what they are doing, so that they can return and be ready to learn (Morin, n.d.). It is further stated that different brains need different kinds of breaks. Students who struggle with focus, attention, and hyperactivity may need more energetic breaks, whereas other students may need to calm their minds. A brain thrives on challenges, so switching tasks helps to maintain focus and keeps cognitive resources active. This can prevent the brain from becoming inactive due to monotony.

#### B. Significance of the Study

Research has shown that students cannot focus throughout a full lesson (Bunce et al., 2010; Sousa, 2006). Moreover, time-of-day preferences affect alertness and attentiveness. Therefore, brain breaks were introduced to provide teachers with a method for increasing activity and brain functionality without extending the academic day (Egger et al., 2019). Moreover, educational brain breaks are the perfect way to help students redirect their energy and focus when they start to fade (Sanders, 2024). Due to the long duration of EFL classes and the heavy content of the curriculum, students need to focus on various tasks during the lessons. A language class at the tertiary level usually lasts for 90 minutes to 120 minutes. A class lasting for such time requires active attention to understand the material and practice new skills. Hence, the researchers' interest was triggered in conducting a study on how to incorporate brain break strategies into a language classroom at the tertiary level. The objectives of the current study are to:

1. Explore the necessity of brain breaks in a language classroom at the tertiary level.
2. Explore the effectiveness of brain breaks during long lecture hours.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A study by Aliouche (2022) shows that studies have been conducted on the effects of language acquisition on the brains. This is true because of the effects of bilingualism. People learn a second language for various reasons starting from educational purpose to finding job opportunities to traveling abroad or to gain social status. However, there is a lack of studies conducted on the necessity of brain breaks in ELF classrooms at the tertiary level. Morton (2016) has stated that brain breaks are short periods of movement. They can be movements like standing, stretching, or exercise; these activities increase engagement without spending too much valuable class time. Research has shown that taking breaks shifts attention from what the brain previously focused on (Jensen, 2008). Previous studies have given importance to using brain breaks for school-going children. Research findings have revealed that engaging in physical activity (P.A.) enhances cognition and brain functioning, potentially improving students' academic performance (Donnelly et al., 2016). Schools usually follow heavy curriculum content, and students cannot take breaks due to the long hours of classes (Gernes, 2021). The study was conducted in a third-grade classroom in a math class, and the results showed that most participants felt that the brain breaks strongly helped them stay engaged and focused during the lessons. Mullender-Wijnsma et al. (2015) conducted a year-long program evaluation, finding that physical activity breaks in the classroom improved academic performance among school children. While this study focused on general education, its findings are relevant to language learning contexts, suggesting that brain breaks can help students process and retain new language information more effectively. Other studies proved that students in a language class learned vocabulary twenty percent faster after breaks and learning a foreign vocabulary while performing a physical activity can enhance the learning process (Morin, n.d.; Liu et al., 2017).

Sitting for long periods can cause students to have difficulty focusing and become inattentive. Another study reports that long hours of concentration on lengthy tasks can cause monotony for children. Short breaks can drive away monotony

and frustrations (Morin, n.d.). A similar opinion is expressed in the study of Zhou et al. (2021), who state that classroom-based and technology-supported brain breaks positively impact and promote holistic health among children, which helps them enjoy and strive to enhance better performance. Brain break interventions improve attitude, increase self-awareness, and promote the overall well-being of school children. In addition, a study by Bobe (2014) supports the idea that elementary school children can easily participate in relaxation and stretching movements.

Studies by Vander Waal (2020), Janssen et al. (2014) suggest that brain breaks should be present throughout the class. According to Morin (n.d.), different brains need different kinds of breaks. Students may need energizing tasks to calm their minds. Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that brain breaks help students prepare for lessons and prevent burnout (Mason et al., 2022). Studies have shown improved academic performance on assessments after brain breaks (Neall, 2019). Studies have also shown the positive effects of brain breaks on academic performance and mental and emotional health, but to have the greatest impact, teachers must understand the multiple types of brain breaks to identify which methodologies would be the most beneficial for their class.

There are several studies on the necessity of brain breaks, but most have focused on children attending elementary or secondary schools. Minimal research is done on students in higher education, especially in a language classroom. A language classroom requires learners to focus on various activities throughout the whole class. During this time, learners must focus on various tasks based on different skills. Despite several years of studying English, there are many cases when learners at the university level struggle with grasping the English language perfectly. They lack the confidence to use English confidently in their daily lives, failing to demonstrate effective performance. Parra and Vega (2023), who conducted a study on the effects of brain breaks on students' writing performance at the tertiary level, encouraged including refocusing activities as brain breaks which may enhance students' confidence and accuracy in productive skills outcomes. They also support it by stating that applying brain breaks bridges these relations and academic achievement and improves learning outcomes. Their study showed that since university students spend long hours in the classroom, effective brain breaks enhanced cognitive operations associated with EFL receptive and productive skills performance (Parra & Vega, 2023).

Studies have consistently demonstrated that calming the mind stimulates the nervous system, leading to a decrease in heart rate and blood pressure (Dijksterhuis et al., 2006; Donner, 2013; Popeska et al., 2018; Stevens-Smith, 2016; Stone, 2015; Godwin et al., 2016). Students can improve their performance after a short break. Studies show that rest is not laziness. Rests are refreshing (Dimarcangelo, 2022; Rice, 2017). It is a source of energy and an investment for well-being. Breaks are not a distraction. They are a great tool to refocus attention. Studies have also revealed that offering students a short social and fun break during class improves teacher-student interaction quality. A classroom is considered to have a dynamic environment where students and teachers can interact effectively. This can in turn have a powerful impact on students' well-being (Khan, 2015). A study by Barker (2021) concluded that students learned to focus more after transitioning with a brain break. The results revealed significant improvement in student behavior after brain break activities. His study suggested that not every brain breaks are same. It is better to engage the students in moderate activities. Studies have shown how breaks can positively impact students' performance. In a study examining brain breaks in language learning, Pérez and Luquin (2016) found that incorporating physical activity into language lessons enhanced students' acquisition of language skills.

All the studies mentioned above have focused on BB necessary for children and the positive effects of BB in long hours of class duration. Only one study has investigated the effect of including BB in the Writing classroom. However, these studies have not discussed the importance and effect of BB on university students in a language classroom with long class durations. There have been few studies done on the necessity and effective use of brain breaks in EFL classrooms. Therefore, this study aims to fill in the gap in the research by answering the following questions.

#### A. *Research Questions*

1. Why are brain breaks necessary in a language classroom?
2. How do EFL students at the tertiary level perceive the incorporation of brain breaks in the language classroom?
3. How do EFL teachers at the tertiary level perceive the incorporation of brain breaks in the language classroom?
4. How can EFL teachers incorporate effective brain break strategies for university students?

#### B. *Context and Value*

This study is valuable to current and future educators who can arrange for effective brain breaks in the language classroom at the tertiary level. Similarly, language learners can also make use of constructive breaks to refocus their attention and focus on learning their lessons.

### III. METHODOLOGY

A Qualitative study has been conducted using the pattern of a Quantitative study to avoid subjective judgement and researcher bias. The findings can be generalized to a larger population. The responses have been analysed in two different phases.

#### A. *Participants*

There were two groups of participants. The first group was undergraduate students. Their L1 was Arabic. They had been learning English for 6-8 years.

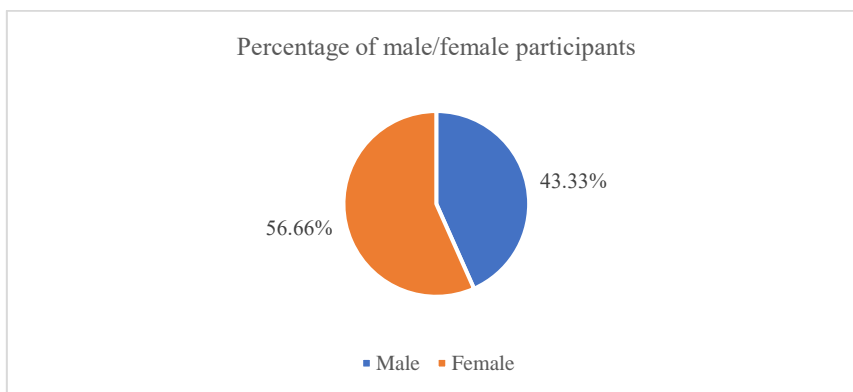


Figure 1

The students shown in Figure 1 were males and females learning English language courses at the tertiary level. Their class hours ranged from 50 minutes to 130/ 145 minutes.

The second group was (N=22) EFL teachers who were teaching at the tertiary level. They had been teaching English for 5 years and above.

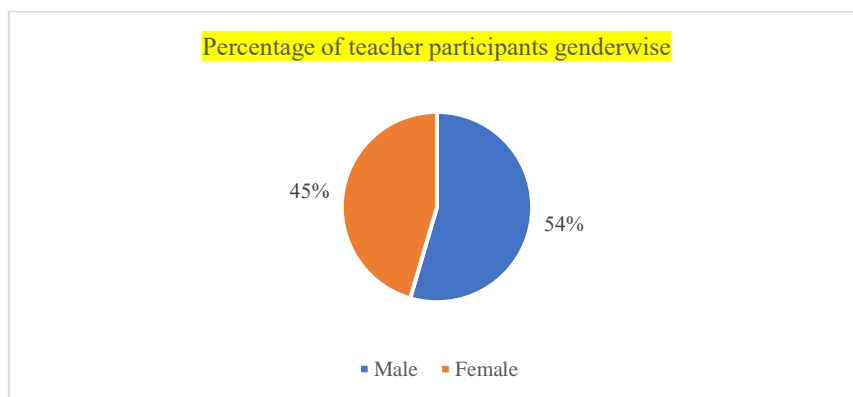


Figure 2

The professionals shown in Figure 2 were both males and females. They had been teaching English language courses at the tertiary level. Their class hours ranged from 50 minutes to 130/ 145 minutes.

#### B. Instruments and Data Collection Procedure

A questionnaire consisting of 21 closed items was prepared and distributed among (N=60) students at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. All ordinal variables in the questionnaire were prepared on a 5-point Likert Scale, starting from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The researchers compiled the questionnaire with the help of the pre-existing literature. They were valid, as five experts in the Saudi context judged them. Proper modifications were made based on their comments and to suit the context.

The questionnaire was constructed online using Google Forms. Within two weeks, the data was collected by forwarding the link to the participants through emails and messages on mobiles. The study was conducted in April-May 2024.

Similarly, a questionnaire consisting of 25 closed items was prepared and distributed among (N=22) EFL teachers at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. All ordinal variables in the questionnaire were prepared on a 5-point Likert Scale, starting from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire was based on the observations and experiences of EFL teachers teaching at the tertiary level. The researchers compiled the questionnaire with the help of the pre-existing literature. They were valid, as five experts in the Saudi context judged them. Proper modifications were made based on their comments and to suit the context.

The questionnaire was constructed online using Google Forms. Within two weeks, the data was collected by forwarding the link to the participants through emails and messages on mobiles. The study was conducted in April-May 2024.

The research validated the necessity of incorporating effective brain break strategies during EFL classes at the tertiary level. Based on the teachers' and students' observations, attitudes, and experiences, the researchers hypothesized that brain breaks are essential to ensure students' effective engagement during the teaching and learning of English.

#### C. Ethical Consideration

Before administering the questionnaires to the research participants, they were informed about their expected involvement in this research. The names of the participants in the study were kept anonymous and there was no pressure to fill in the questionnaire.

#### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The data results of the study have been analysed in two different phases. In the students' perspectives, first, after gathering the data, it was analyzed statistically using SPSS version 26.0. A tabulation of descriptive statistics, minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation was used to determine the students' views regarding incorporating brain breaks in the language classroom. In the second phase the findings were coded under 3 categories such as focus, shift of attention and re-energizing.

Similarly, from the data of teachers' perspectives, after gathering the data, it was analyzed statistically using SPSS version 26.0. A tabulation of descriptive statistics, minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation was used to determine the teachers' views regarding incorporating brain breaks in the language classroom. In the second phase, based on the findings of teachers' perspectives, the responses were coded under 3 categories such as attention, fun and positive attitude, boosting creativity, enthusiasm and attention.

TABLE 1  
STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON BRAIN BREAKS IN THE CLASSROOM

	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I enjoy classes that last for only 50 minutes.	4.34	1.108
2. I enjoy classes that last for 1 hour and 30/45 minutes.	2.55	1.371
3. I learn more in a class of 50 minutes.	4.00	1.235
4. I can concentrate for long when the class is 50 minutes.	4.12	1.151
5. I need a break after the first 45 minutes of a 1 hour and 30-minute class.	4.00	1.339
6. Getting a break in the middle of a class helps me to concentrate more on the lesson.	4.12	1.180
7. I am more motivated to learn the rest of the lesson after a short break.	3.80	1.215
8. In a 1 hour and 30/45 minutes class, the break should last for 5 minutes.	3.53	1.308
9. I lose concentration after the first 15 minutes of the class.	2.88	1.354
10. I prefer to talk to my classmates/friends (s) when I get a short break during the lesson.	3.25	1.359
11. I prefer to watch an interesting short video when I get a break during the lesson.	3.46	1.277
12. I prefer to go outside the class for a few minutes to get fresh air during the break	4.10	1.145
13. Short breaks during the lesson make me feel better, happier, and more relaxed.	4.12	1.068
14. Breaks help me to refresh my memory regarding the ongoing lesson.	3.98	1.228
15. Breaks help me rethink my progress/ performance in the ongoing lesson.	4.09	1.031
16. Breaks during a lesson help me to calm my mind.	4.12	1.010
17. Getting a chance to get up from my seat and move around for 2-3 minutes during a long lesson/ lecture refreshes me.	4.09	.931
18. Short breaks are needed when I concentrate on my Listening and Speaking classes.	3.87	1.186
19. Short breaks are needed when I learn many rules and structures in Grammar classes and come across different vocab and their usage	4.20	1.038
20. Breaks are needed when I listen to a lecture and try to write something in my Writing classes.	4.05	1.057
21. Having a short break in my Reading class helps me concentrate more deeply on the task(s).	3.95	1.096

Out of the 21 variables, 18 supported that class with shorter periods, like 50 minutes, are more helpful and short breaks are essential in a class with a period of 130/ 45 minutes. They support the view that they enjoy classes that are 50 minutes long, learn more, and can concentrate for a long. Therefore, the highest mean score was seen in variables 1 and 19, which state that *I enjoy classes that last for only 50 minutes* and *Short breaks are needed when I learn many rules and structures in Grammar classes*, respectively. This shows that the participants strongly favor 50-minute classes, and if the classes are 1 hour 30/ 45 minutes, they prefer to have short breaks during the lesson.

On the other hand, the lowest mean score was seen in variables 2 and 9 which state that *I enjoy classes that last for 1 hour and 30/45 minutes* and *I begin to lose concentration after the first 15 minutes of the class*. This shows that the participants prefer classes that are of less than 1 hour and 30/45 minutes. However, they also opined that they do not lose concentration after the first 15 minutes of the lesson. Moreover, variables 4, 6, 13, and 16 have the same mean score, which is 4.12. They state *I can concentrate for long when the class is 50 minutes*; *Getting a break in the middle of a class helps me to concentrate more on the lesson*; *Short breaks during the lesson make me feel better, happier, and more relaxed*, and *Breaks help me calm my mind*.

Moreover, when it came to opinions of having breaks, specifically in the classes of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking along with Grammar and Vocabulary, the mean score for variable no. 18 stating *Short breaks are needed when I concentrate on my Listening & Speaking classes*, was 3.87. In variable no. 19. *Short breaks are needed when I learn many rules and structures in Grammar classes and come across different vocab*, the mean value was 4.20 and in variable no.20, *Breaks are needed when I listen to a lecture and try to write something in my writing classes*, the mean score was 4.05. In variable no. 21. *Having a short break in my Reading class helps me concentrate more deeply on the task(s)*, the mean score was 3.95.

All these variables show that the participants strongly supported short breaks during a lesson, as they made them feel happier and relaxed, increased their concentration, and helped them to calm their minds.

Out of the 21 variables, only variables 2 and 9 scored less than 3.5 on a 5-point Likert Scale. Hence, this shows that the majority of the participants are in favour of a 50-minute language class. They strongly support the idea that they want to have short breaks during their skills classes, which usually last for more than an hour. It helps them to be motivated, re-energized, and refocus their attention. They can also reflect on their performance regarding the ongoing tasks.

#### A. Data Coding and Analysis

The following themes have been the most dominant in the questionnaire. Therefore, the researchers have categorized them in the following way: See Table 2.

TABLE 2  
DOMINANT THEMES BASED ON STUDENTS' RESPONSES

Themes	Student participants' responses
Concentration/ Focus	Participants have responded highly when it came to refocusing their attention after a short break.
Shift of attention	Participants have also agreed that a shift of attention from the monotony of the tasks helps them to concentrate on the lesson being more motivated.
Re-energizing	Participants have also stated that they preferred to have breaks as they help them feel, re-energized, refreshed, happier and more relaxed.

The data coding and analysis show that the student participants prefer getting breaks during the long lessons to help them to concentrate more on the lesson feeling re-energized.

TABLE 3  
TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON BRAIN BREAKS IN THE CLASSROOM

	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I incorporate brain breaks in my classroom routine.	3.18	1.079
2. I notice some benefits of using brain breaks in my classroom.	3.18	.982
3. Brain breaks are effective and do not disrupt the flow of my lesson.	3.27	1.009
4. Students sometimes need to be more open to participating in brain break activities.	3.82	1.401
5. There should be training programs for developing brain break activities.	4.18	1.328
6. Teachers and professionals should collaborate to develop or improve brain break strategies.	4.09	1.221
7. Activities that involve physical movement can help students release pent-up energy and refocus their attention.	3.55	1.128
8. Guided mindfulness exercises, deep breathing techniques, or short meditation sessions can help students calm their minds, reduce stress, and improve focus.	3.82	1.168
9. Fun and engaging games or challenges can break up the monotony of lessons and re-energize students. For e.g., quick trivia, quizzes, word puzzles, or brain teasers.	4.00	1.183
10. Giving students a short break to focus on visually stimulating activities such as drawing, doodling, or watching a brief video clip can refresh their minds and enhance creativity.	4.00	1.183
11. Simple breathing exercises can help students regulate emotions, reduce anxiety, and improve concentration.	3.73	1.104
12. Cooperative games or activities that promote teamwork and collaboration can create a sense of community in the classroom while giving students a mental break from academic tasks.	3.55	1.036
13. Taking students outside for a short nature walk, outdoor play, or observing natural elements like clouds or plants can rejuvenate their minds and enhance their connection to the environment.	3.55	1.036
14. Teaching students simple breath control techniques, such as "balloon breath" or "straw breathing," can help them relax and recenter their focus.	3.45	1.036
15. Teachers can tell stories themselves or encourage students to share short anecdotes or experiences.	4.18	1.250
16. Incorporating humor through jokes, funny videos, or light exercises can lighten the mood and create a positive classroom atmosphere.	4.27	1.191
17. Taking a moment for students to reflect on their emotions and share their feelings can help build emotional intelligence and create a supportive classroom environment.	4.00	1.265
18. Brain breaks can be done through brief discussions, journaling, or mood check-in activities.	4.09	1.300
19. Educational apps, online games, or interactive whiteboard activities can provide engaging and interactive brain breaks that align with learning objectives while incorporating technology in the classroom.	3.90	1.197
20. Setting up quick, timed challenges where students can complete a task or activity within a minute can add an element of excitement and competition to brain breaks.	3.91	1.136
21. Incorporating themed brain breaks based on seasons, holidays, or classroom topics can make them more fun and relevant to students.	4.09	1.221
22. Allowing students to express themselves creatively through activities like drawing, writing, or storytelling can provide a refreshing break from structured learning and tap into their artistic abilities.	3.91	1.136
23. Providing time for students to reflect on their learning, set goals, or think about their strengths and areas for improvement can promote meta-cognition and self-awareness while giving them a mental break from academic tasks.	4.00	1.265
24. Incorporating movement into academic content by using techniques like "stand and deliver" presentations and kinaesthetic learning activities.	3.73	1.104
25. Incorporating physical gestures into learning tasks can keep students active and engaged throughout the lesson.	4.09	1.221

Similarly, the teachers' opinions also show a favorable attitude toward incorporating brain breaks in the language classroom. Out of the 25 variables, only 4 variables scored less than 3.5, which shows that teachers also support including brain breaks in the language classroom. According to Table 3, variable no. 16 scored the highest with a mean value of 4.27, stating that *Incorporating humor through jokes, funny videos, or light exercises can lighten the mood and create a positive classroom atmosphere*. On the other hand, variable 1, stating *I incorporate brain breaks in my classroom routine*, has the lowest score with a mean value of 3.18, which shows that teachers must be familiar with incorporating brain breaks in their classes.

Moreover, some variables have the same mean score of 4.09. Those variables are no. 6 *Teachers and professionals should collaborate to develop or improve brain break activities*; no. 18 *Brain breaks can be done through brief discussions, journalling, or mood check-in activities*; no. 21, *Incorporating themed brain breaks based on seasons, holidays, or classroom topics can make them more fun and relevant to students* and no. 25 stating *Incorporating physical gestures into learning tasks can keep students active and engaged throughout the lesson*. In addition, variable no. 4, which has a mean value of 3.82, states that *Students need to be more open to participating in more open activities*. This can be interpreted as aligning with variable no.5, which states that *There should be training programs for developing brain break activities*. This shows that since teachers are not so much familiar with brain break strategies, students also sometimes lack the motivation to participate in such activities. However, the teacher participants have supported that cooperative games or activities that promote teamwork and collaboration are also effective along with the simple tasks of taking students outside for a short nature walk or observing natural outdoor elements, scoring a mean value of 3.55 in variable nos. 12 and 13.

The study's findings show that though both teachers and students support including brain break activities in the language classroom, due to lack of training and proper guidance, the strategies have not been explored to a wide extent in the language classrooms at the tertiary level. At the university level, students have to concentrate for 1 hour 30/ 45 minutes, which becomes long and tiresome due to back-to-back activities concerning the lessons. In such cases, brain break activities can be a relief from the long, monotonous lessons. This answers Research Question no. 1 as it addresses the necessity of including brain break activities. The student participants strongly support BB activities in class which lasts for more than one hour where they have to concentrate on multiple activities. This answers Research Question no. 2 that students have positive views regarding breaks during their lessons.

Furthermore, teachers need sufficient training to understand the suitable activities for the classes. When we say tertiary level, the brain break activities should also be suitable for the level of students. Sometimes, children's activities may not be suitable for teenagers or adults. Though the teachers are in favour of giving students breaks, they need sufficient training to get familiar with interesting and suitable activities to relieve their students. This answers Research Question no. 3 that they have a positive attitude toward including BB activities in the language classroom. Therefore, teachers should explore the type of brain break activities and, through trial and error, incorporate them in the language classroom. This addresses Research Question no. 4, regarding how brain break activities can be included in everyday lessons.

### B. Data Coding and Analysis

The following themes have been the most dominant in the questionnaire. Therefore, the researchers have categorized them in the following way: See Table 4.

TABLE 4  
DOMINANT THEMES BASED ON TEACHERS' RESPONSES

Themes	Teacher participants' responses
Reflecting on performance and emotions	Teacher participants have opined that a mental or a physical break help the learners to reflect on their ongoing performance and emotions which can create a supportive classroom environment
Fun and Positivity	Participants have also emphasized that breaks give the opportunities to engage in fun activities shifting from the monotony of the lessons and creates positive attitude among the learners
Boosting creativity, enthusiasm and attention	Teacher participants have stated that breaks enhance critical thinking ability, creativity which in turn makes the learners re center their attention in the class

The data coding and analysis show that the teacher participants strongly support incorporating breaks during the lessons as they have observed that there is a change in the mood and performance among the learners after a break. They are able to refocus their attention on the lessons with positive attitude and longer attention span.

## V. DISCUSSION

Implementing brain breaks in language education has garnered significant attention as educators strive to enhance student engagement, improve cognitive function, and facilitate better learning outcomes. Brain breaks are short, physical, or mental activities designed to re-energize students, providing them with a brief respite from structured learning. This discussion explores the benefits and challenges of brain breaks in language learning, supported by theoretical frameworks and empirical studies, and considers the perspectives of both teachers and students.

The study's results stress the value of various instructional strategies to sustain student engagement and enhance cognitive performance, which provides the foundation for brain breaks. This is similar to the results of Jensen (2005), who affirmed that regular breaks are good for the brain because they improve memory retention and help the body maintain focus.

The results reveal that brain breaks are essential in a language classroom at the tertiary level. As the concept of breaks is strongly related to the class duration, students have opined that they prefer classes that last for 50 minutes. They can concentrate and focus more on classes that are of shorter duration. This is similar to the results of the study by Morin (n. d.), who claims that long hours of sitting in class can cause loss of attention and boredom. Since language learners have to focus on various skills like listening, speaking, reading, and writing, along with the sub-skills like grammar and vocabulary, their minds and attention shift from one task to the other. They have opined that they need breaks when they concentrate on their Listening and Speaking, Writing, Reading, Grammar, and Vocabulary classes since they have to concentrate much. Based on this, Parra and Vega (2023) state that refocusing activities as brain breaks may enhance students' confidence and accuracy in productive skills outcomes. Their study results showed that since university students have to spend long hours in the classroom, effective brain breaks enhanced cognitive operations associated with EFL receptive and productive skills performance (Parra & Vega, 2023). Also Morin (n. d.) states that students learn vocabulary twenty- percent faster after breaks which is similar to the study of Liu et al. (2017) who state that when it comes to learning vocabulary, physical activity leads to better learning than sitting in the same position for long hours. In addition to this, brain breaks can help students process and retain new language information more effectively. This is supported by Mullender-Wijnsma et al. (2015). Also, physical activity in language classes improves students' language acquisition, according to Pérez and Luquin (2016).

Moreover, students have opined that short breaks during the lesson help them be happier, motivated, energized, and calm. This is similar to the study of Jensen (2008), who opines that brain breaks are an effective cognitive strategy to strengthen learning, leading to improving memory. Studies have consistently demonstrated that calming the mind stimulates the nervous system, decreasing heart rate and blood pressure (Dijksterhuis et al., 2006; Donner, 2013; Popeska et al., 2018; Stevens-Smith, 2016; Stone, 2015) and handle everyday challenges (Godwin et al., 2016) which help students boost their skills and provide them with opportunities to develop creativity. Studies have also shown that taking breaks shifts attention and helps the brain to take rest from what it was previously focusing on (Jensen, 2008). Studies have also revealed that offering students a short social and fun break during long lessons improves teacher-student relationships and improves students' overall well-being (Khan, 2015).

Similarly, the teacher participants also favor using brain breaks in the language classroom. They prefer incorporating short, funny videos and jokes, breathing exercises, and some light physical movements. This is similar to the study of Dimarcangelo (2022), who states that it is a source of energy and investment for well-being. Rest is not laziness. They are refreshing in many ways.

However, based on the findings of the teacher participants' responses, it is clear that teachers have to be familiar with incorporating brain breaks in the language classroom. They preferred to have more training and the cooperation of students in incorporating brain breaks. Different classes may need different types of breaks. This is supported by the study of Morin (n.d.), who states that different brains need different kinds of breaks. Students may either need more energizing tasks or less energizing tasks to calm their minds.

Therefore, breaks should be selected according to the students' age. Students at the tertiary level may not enjoy or participate in activities suitable for children or high school students. Teachers should be selective about the kind of breaks they prefer in their lessons.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The current study focused on the necessity of incorporating brain break activities in a language classroom and concludes that brain breaks are necessary in every class to retain student motivation, interest and attention. As a multi-functional instrument in the field of education, brain breaks are rising in popularity. For many students, switching up what they are doing can help break the patterns of long, monotonous hours sitting in class. In the EFL classes at the tertiary level, students have to focus on tasks that require much focus or concentration. In a class of 1-hour 30/45 minutes, students have to switch from one skill to another, so breaks can help them become multitaskers.

However, while including breaks, teachers must be selective in choosing brain break activities that suit the students' level and age. Platforms like Go Noodle offer resources and activities designed for classroom use, making it easier for teachers to find and implement effective brain breaks. However, the variability in student responses to different brain breaks means that teachers must be flexible and responsive to their students' needs and preferences.

### A. Recommendations

Therefore, based on the above study findings, these are the recommendations to include effective and refreshing brain break activities in EFL classrooms at the university level.

1. Stretch out
2. Focus on music
3. Try a quick mindful activity

4. Do nothing for two minutes
5. Watch a short, fun video
6. Say Cheese
7. Share fun facts
8. Talk about something interesting that has happened to anyone recently
9. Write it out (journaling)
10. Practice a new skill
11. Cool down
12. Deep breathing

#### B. Limitations of the Study

The study has some limitations. The study was conducted only on the EFL teachers and students teaching and learning English at King Khalid University. The results might have differed if the study had been conducted on EFL students and teachers at other universities.

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