

Study on Strategies for English Teachers to Improve Their Classroom Language

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the improvement strategies of English teachers' classroom language. English teachers in this article refer to the English teachers for English majors in universities. In English class, the teacher's language is an important input of information, and the correct and effective use of teacher's classroom language plays a crucial role in foreign language teaching. It even decides the success or failure of classroom teaching to a certain extent. This article mainly analyzes the current situation of teachers' discourse in English classroom from the following three aspects – quality, quantity and feedback, then it tries to explore some strategies for improvement. The major methods for this study include documents study and experience summarization. The author thinks that educators should consciously improve their classroom language so as to improve the teaching effect in English class.

Keywords: Classroom language, Strategy, Improvement, English teachers, Autonomous development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers' classroom language plays an important role in foreign language classroom. It is not only an important tool for teachers to organize teaching, but also an important source for students to acquire language. Appropriate application of teachers' classroom language in teaching process can stimulate students' interest in learning and enhance their confidence in learning the target language. Meanwhile, teachers can provide learners with language input in the target language to cultivate learners' good language habits and language application ability. Hakanson (1986) believed that the quantity and quality of teachers' classroom language would affect or even determine the success or failure of classroom teaching. Therefore, it is believed that it is of great practical significance to understand and study teachers' classroom language.

Teachers' classroom language or discourse refers to a language used by teachers in the course of teaching [1]. In order to achieve the purpose of

communicating with students, teachers often simplify the language, so that it has the characteristics of foreign language or other simplified language. Language teachers pass on language knowledge, organize classroom activities and communicate with and students through their discourse. In English class, English is not only the purpose of students' learning, but also the medium of teachers' teaching. Therefore, on the one hand, teacher's discourse has a demonstrative role in the use of target language; on the other hand, it is also an important way for students to input language. At present, the most prominent problem in English class is that students dare not speak, which also requires teachers to play the motivational role of discourse, encourage students to speak and communicate in English, and enhance the practicality of English class.

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2. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF TEACHERS' CLASSROOM LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH CLASS

2.1 The Quality of English Teachers' Classroom Language

The quality of teachers' classroom language is crucial to the effect of classroom teaching. To some extent, it decides whether a teacher can complete the teaching plan or students can successfully acquire the target language. Many teachers attach great importance to the selection and arrangement of teaching content and class activities in teaching process, whereas they neglect the understanding, preparation and planning of teaching language, which is the principal means of conveying teaching content, resulting in blindness and randomness in the application of teachers' classroom language. Therefore, they fail to provide students with high-quality classroom discourse to create an active classroom language environment, reducing the teaching efficiency and affecting the quality of classroom teaching.

At present English teachers' talk is the main form of preaching discourse, didactic discourse, imperative discourse or questioning discourse. By contrast, the students' discourse tends to be weak. They do not have the right to choose their learning materials, which reduces their learning interest. With the situation going on, students are likely to become more and more passive, more and more dependent on the teacher. It inhibits the development of active learning ability, which cannot cultivate qualified foreign language talents to meet the needs of our country.

2.2 The Quantity of English Teachers' Classroom Language

In English class, the amount of teachers' classroom language has been a focus of researchers. In recent years, with the reform of English teaching in full swing, "student-centered teaching mode" has been promoted and adopted in most English class. However, some teachers still follow the traditional teacher-oriented teaching method. Teachers' explanations occupy the main time in class, and there is little interaction between teachers and students as well as between students. Students have few opportunities to participate in classroom activities and express their opinions. Over time, students have become accustomed to listening carefully rather than participating. Linguists and

language teachers have become increasingly aware that the best teachers' discourse in class means less teachers' discourse, especially in communicative language classroom teaching. Too much teacher's discourse will greatly reduce the opportunities for students to speak in class, and students' communicative competence cannot be effectively cultivated.

2.3 Teachers' Feedback Methods

Another important aspect of teachers' discourse is feedback on students' classroom responses. It is commonplace that in English class, some students answer questions correctly, whereas the teacher is eager to correct the students' mistakes in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and sometimes even interrupt the students while they are speaking instead of praising them. As for the form of teachers' feedback, whether it should be corrected and by whom has always been a controversial issue. Krashen(1982) pointed out that correcting mistakes would make learners in a state of self-defense, then make them avoid using complex structures and focus on form rather than meaning, which is not conducive to language acquisition [2]. Therefore, teachers should avoid pointing out students' mistakes directly. Schmidt and Frota believe that if the errors in the students' speech are not corrected in time, both the students and their substitutes would mistakenly believe that the expression is correct and internalize the wrong language.

3. STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS TO IMPROVE THEIR CLASSROOM LANGUAGE

First of all, teachers should change their own inherent concepts and fully realize the importance of teachers' discourse in classroom communication. The importance of teachers' classroom language and its relationship with language acquisition are emphasized in the job training of teachers. The teacher must master the advanced educational concepts, understand the characteristics of language learning and teaching, and transfer teacher-centered teaching mode to student-centered teaching mode. They work as models who impart knowledge, administrators, promoters and mentors, which changes the one-way communication form to a two-way interactive form between students, teachers and other students so as to give students more opportunities to practice [3]. Teaching of English is different from that of other subjects, so it is not enough to teach professional knowledge as the

main purpose, but to cultivate students' ability to apply knowledge.

The teacher's classroom discourse has a certain demonstration. The form and content of teachers' discourse in class will exert a subtle influence on students, and they are the most direct objects for students to imitate. If the teacher can speak English with standard pronunciation and proper intonation like a native speaker, and the feelings are more abundant, the students will follow suit, which enables the students to have a deeper emotional expression. On the contrary, if the teacher's language lacks cadences in tone and emotion, the whole classroom atmosphere will be boring. Students are more likely to feel sleepy, and therefore it is difficult for them to concentrate on learning with full spirit; they are not interested in verbal communication. The demonstrative characteristics of teachers' classroom discourse require teachers to always pay attention to themselves as the objects to be imitated by students, pay more attention to improve their own vocabulary system, and provide students with better content input.

Secondly, teachers should design their own classroom language before class. Teachers should speak accurate, appropriate English with beautiful pronunciation and intonation fluently in class. Teachers should use textbooks creatively, master the content of textbooks skilfully and organize their class with fluency and grace. Teachers' discourse should be flexible and classroom teaching should not be mechanical and inflexible.

The effectiveness of questioning is directly related to teachers' acquisition of information and students' output of language [4]. When they design the questions, teachers should not only review the facts, understand the meaning of sentences, repeat the main points, but also classify the questions. For an example, in terms of method, questions will be divided into leading, analytical, reasoning, inductive, mining and evaluating ones. In content they can be divided into misgivings, thinking, feeling, understanding, common sense, and creative ones, etc. Therefore, throughout the class the students are exposed to leading, enlightening questions which are associated with themselves. When discussing problems, they will actively participate in the discussion consciously or unconsciously instead of passively listening to it without any involvement. Hence, the classroom teaching process will become the interaction

between teacher and students, and students and students.

Generally speaking, teachers should ask demonstrative questions that can carry out language practice, and they should provide equal opportunities for each student to answer the questions. Through the demonstrative questions, students' enthusiasm in learning can be aroused and their confidence in language expression may be cultivated. Interrogative questioning method is also a questioning technique to guide students to think actively and participate in class activities. This kind of questioning method enables students not to give up answering the question. The teacher may ask a series of questions, one after another. Perhaps the first question is the one that students feel difficult, and then the following questions can be easily answered. In this way, students can participate in classroom language activities [5].

Thirdly, teachers should take positive feedback. Feedback can be divided into positive feedback and negative feedback. A large number of studies have shown that positive feedback is more conducive to improving learners' behavior than negative feedback, because it can make students know that they have correctly completed the task, thus enhancing their self-confidence and learning motivation. As a result, they are more willing to participate in classroom activities, and most students want to be recognized for their performance. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to protect students' learning enthusiasm when making evaluation and feedback [6]. They should avoid using completely negative evaluation structure, condemnation and direct criticism and other means, achieving good feedback effect by appropriately converting language forms. The teachers' feedback language should not be general "good", "right", but should be more specific, so that students can understand what needs to be improved. At the same time, it can also play an indirect role in guiding other students.

Many students do not want to be pointed out and corrected on the spot. In this regard, the teacher should adopt some strategies — they should take an indirect way, instead of directly pointing out the students' mistakes on the spot. If there is a mistake in content, the teacher may ask other students to supplement the answer. If there is a mistake in form, the teacher may repeat the student's words with the correct form. In this way, the student's face is saved and the correct answer is given to him. Therefore, on the premise of protecting students'

enthusiasm, teachers should provide informational feedback, so as to consciously guide students to do self-correction. Teachers should create space and time for students to correct their mistakes, and gradually cultivate their ability to correct the mistakes themselves so as to improve their English level.

Due to the difference of students' English foundation and acceptance ability, teachers also need to teach students according to their aptitude. According to the difference of students, they should adopt different ways and contents of asking questions, encourage students who are unwilling to open their mouth, stimulate students' learning enthusiasm, and increase the effectiveness of asking questions. In a word, teachers should give students positive feedback on their performance on the basis of respecting students and understanding their differences, and create a good atmosphere for their communication in class.

4. CONCLUSION

In short, teachers' classroom language is the embodiment of teachers' basic literacy, and the level of which not only restricts the teaching effect, but also affects learners' various abilities. Teachers should take their discourse control ability as a part of their teaching ability, consciously improve it, and gradually form their own style.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

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