

# A Study on College English Teachers' Emotion and Classroom Teaching Efficiency

Yunfei Zhang

College English Department  
Zaozhuang University  
Zaozhuang, China

**Abstract**—With the continuous improvement of language teaching reform, the teaching focus is increasingly emphasized on the function of cognition during the process of second language acquisition. However, the classroom teaching is an interaction between teachers and students, teachers' emotion will directly influence students' learning effect and the whole classroom atmosphere. Therefore, based on the theory of emotion and the current college English teaching situation, the paper will probe how college English teachers adopt strategies to regulate emotion to increase the teaching efficiency and arouse students' enthusiasm to study English.

**Keywords**—*emotion; college English teacher; classroom teaching; efficiency*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Emotion is an attitude experience to the external things associated with the generation of cognition and consciousness; is the brain's reaction to the relationship between external objective things and subjects' needs; and is a kind of psychological activity which takes individual demand as its medium. The definition of emotion indicates that it plays an important role during the cognitive process. Positive emotion can promote the cognition of subject and object. Conversely, negative emotion can inhibit the cognitive process. In the present teaching research, most scholars prefer to study the cognitive process of language but ignore the regulatory effect of emotion in the cognitive process of language. Kramsch thinks that second language learning cannot be isolated from context. The cognitive perspective overemphasizes the inner thinking process and the development of grammar, which doesn't realize that language meaning is the product of communication featuring sociality and interactivity. Therefore, the focus of English teaching practice in our country should not be just on the input of language knowledge, the reform of teaching mode and diversified teaching means, the development of teachers and students' emotion should be attached more importance as well.

With the continuous advancement of teaching reform, students become the main body of the classroom teaching while teachers turn into the guide. In addition, many college students focus more on specialized courses and the improvement of social practice skills, college English course now is in an awkward situation. Especially in recent years,

the college enrolment in China has boomed, so some students have poor basic skills and negative learning attitude, therefore, college English course gradually becomes marginalized. In order to improve the classroom teaching efficiency, college English teachers can't just put vision on students. Even though students themselves are the center of learning in the teaching activities, if teachers don't follow teaching rules or with negative attitude, the teaching efficiency will still be poor. College English teachers should pay more attention to the improvement of their own abilities, especially the management of emotion in the classroom, so as to improve the teaching efficiency.

## II. THEORY OF TEACHER'S EMOTION

### A. Emotion

Psychologically defined, emotion is a momentary and strong reaction which is caused by individual's demand to itself and objective things. It is a kind of subjective feeling, physiological reaction and cognitive interaction, and will be manifested by specific behavior. In other words, we will also regard emotion as a kind of emotional response, such as happiness, sadness, joy, bitterness, love, hatred and so on. Emotion can be carried out at three levels: subjective experience at the cognitive level; physiological arousal at physiological level; external behavior at the expression level. When emotion arises, these three levels' shared activity will constitute a complete emotional experience process. When experiencing emotion, according to the intensity of external stimulation, emotion can be divided into three states: mood, passion and stress. Mood is a gentle and lasting emotional state; passion is strong and short emotional experience; stress refers to adaptive response that occurs when accidents happen. Since emotion can be expressed in different forms, different emotions have different effects on people's daily life. First of all, emotion can motivate and guide behavior. Secondly, emotion can be considered as indicators of motivation, that is, if you want to analyze motivation, you can achieve it by identifying emotion. Finally, emotion can manage cognitive process which means that positive emotion can promote cognitive competence whereas negative emotion disrupts it.

Goleman (1995) has put forward that emotional intelligence includes the abilities of self-control, enthusiasm,

persistence and self-motivation. People's attention needs to shift from intelligence to emotional intelligence. He argues that people need to be aware of the importance of emotional intelligence first, changing the conventional wisdom that high IQ equals high achievement in the past. After scientific research, Goleman has also demonstrated that emotional intelligence is the most important survival ability of human beings. Studies show that at most 20 percent of a person's achievements are attributed to his IQ, while 80 percent of those to his EQ. Based on the previous studies, Mayer & Salovey (1990) propose the theory of emotional intelligence, and define it as the ability to perceive and express emotion, to take advantage of emotion to promote the ability to think, to understand and harness emotion, and to regulate the emotion of oneself and others. The theory clearly put the concept of emotional competence into the intellectual category, which is an extension of the traditional intellectual category.

### *B. Emotion Regulation Teaching Mode*

Traditional English teaching mode is a relatively stable operation framework based on the successful experience of certain English teaching theory (Wang Yongxiang, 2006), which includes teaching design, teaching materials, teaching materials processing and so on. But with the development of the humanistic view of learning and psychology of emotion, people no longer only discuss classroom teaching from the perspective of cognition, but clearly recognize the regulatory role of emotional factors in teaching. The humanistic view of learning believes that emotion, attitude, belief and other factors can have an impact on learning. The representative, Rogers, believes that learning is a meaningful psychological process which is the realization of learners' inner potential. The relationship between the teacher and the student is not simply the giver and receiver of knowledge transfer. Only when teachers and students' communication is pleasant can teachers be the promoters of students' learning. Since the 1970s, psychologists have begun to explore the role of emotion in cognitive process. When studying memory, Bower (1981) finds that emotion can affect memory. When people happily study, they remember much more than they study under the sadness, and the relationship between pleasure and cognition is an inverted U. So, as Stern (1981) puts it, without the psychological theory of language learners and language learning, it's hard to imagine how we can teach language. Emotion regulation teaching model can be defined as "under the guidance of teaching goals, teachers guide and mobilize students' positive emotion in the classroom and then students' best emotional state for learning is provided, so as to arouse the enthusiasm of students' learning (Guo Dejun, 2000)".

### III. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' EMOTION IN THE CLASSROOM AND TEACHING EFFICIENCY

The complete classroom teaching consists of three parts: teachers, students and teaching contents. Teachers and students are the subjects of teaching activities, and teachers play the role of dominance and guidance. Teachers' personal belief, knowledge structure, teaching methods, teaching

attitude and actual performance will be showed in explicit or implicit ways in the teaching process and affect students' absorption of teaching content. To achieve the efficiency of classroom teaching, teachers should play an active leading role from the aspects of classroom atmosphere, setting and monitoring of teaching objectives, arrangement and evaluation of teaching activities and so on. Hence, when teachers control their behavior in the classroom, they should do it positively, then the harmonious atmosphere with students will be created, and the teaching objectives will be realized. Ancient sayings in China go that "to learn and at due times to repeat what one has learnt, is that not after all a pleasure?", "people who know it are no better than those who love it; those who love it are no better than the ones who love to know it", which both reflect that only students are willing to learn can the teaching objectives be achieved. And the most important factor that let students be willing to learn is teachers' active guidance. Suppose a teacher is exceptional in teaching skills and methods, but with a bad mood, which will inevitably lead to teachers not being able to give full play to his teaching ability and the students will then be drowsy and anxious and unwilling to learn.

Emotion can be divided into positive emotion and negative emotion. Only when both teachers and students have positive emotion can the good interaction be achieved and meet the expected teaching effect. Teachers should consider the classroom as the separate environment, and overcome the negative emotion caused by outside world like anxiety, depression, sorrow, anger, restlessness and apathy. Even though teachers' their own physical condition, teaching attitude, interpersonal relations and objective factors including family conflict, life difficulty, teaching environment and students level, these controllable or uncontrollable factors, will influence teachers emotion, what teachers should do is to be psychologically well prepared before the classroom teaching, and try not to bring these negative factors into the class. Only when teachers be tireless in teaching others can students be never contented with their study. Studies have shown that teachers who can effectively control their emotion in the classroom can also make students have positive emotion, and let students be willing to accept teachers and schools' education and form a harmonious relationship with teachers. Besides, these teachers who can effectively manage emotion, not only can do self-emotional control and constraint, they also have the ability to identify students' emotion and understand how to make use of emotion to guide students. For instance, if students basic knowledge is poor, then in the class, they are prone to generate negative emotion caused by the lack of knowledge, which can lead them be reluctant to learn, lose the motivation, or even lose interest in this subject. Under this circumstance, if teachers let the situation go without understanding and care, even if teachers themselves can maintain high spirit in class, the efficiency of classroom teaching will be minimal.

#### IV. THE REGULATION OF TEACHERS' EMOTION IN THE CLASSROOM

The "Pygmalion effect" in psychology refers to people's feelings and perceptions which can be affected in various degrees by other people's subconscious. People unconsciously accept the influence and implications of people they like, admire and trust. Therefore, in the college English teaching, teachers, as the dominator in the class, should develop and regulate students' positive emotion in the class to inspire students' thirst for English knowledge and the love for the college English course.

##### A. *The Current Situation of College English Teaching*

In recent years, the national English teaching reform has been in full swing. Under the guidance of new educational ideas, teaching mode, textbook compilation and teaching methods are becoming increasingly scientific, standardized and diversified. The focus of teaching has shifted from teacher to students. But under the background of expansion of university enrollment, many college students' basic English knowledge is poor, the interest in English study is low and with no motivation, which lead the classroom teaching evolve back to the traditional classroom teaching, that is, most of the time, classroom teaching is spent on the interpretation of words and grammar. College students who just free themselves from "duck-stuffing" type of teaching experiencing in junior and senior middle schools, are being put in a conflict of poor basic English knowledge, low interest and the need for practical English. But English learning is the accumulation of knowledge, without the knowledge in basic words and grammar, how to talk about the practical use? In addition, because of the estrangement from teachers, most students are afraid to take the initiative to answer questions, dare not communicate with teachers, and bury themselves into books throughout the whole class. Therefore, under the premise of no interest and motivation, words and grammar are constantly sold to students' heads in the boring classroom. Phenomena of mute and deaf English are becoming more and more serious.

Due to the influence of traditional ideas, most of the teachers have the absolute authority in teaching, and they communicate less with students. The classroom becomes the classroom of teachers, which leads to the alienation of students and teachers. The transmission of knowledge becomes the only link between teachers and students. Compared with junior and senior middle school, the university put more emphasis on scientific research, so most college teachers will focus more on it instead of teaching. As a result, they care less for students, and just pass information without concerning whether students have the ability to accept and absorb it. These teachers adopt a coping style and have indifferent teaching attitude. As this kind of situation goes, class attendance gradually reduces, the interaction between teachers and students becomes less and less and then changes into no communication. Classroom teaching becomes the teacher's monologue.

##### B. *Strategies to Regulate College English Teachers' Emotion in the Classroom*

American psychologist Gitott has ever said that teachers are the decisive factor in determining whether education is a success or a failure. The methods and emotion employed by teachers are the main causes of learning atmosphere and situation. Although the teaching environment and teaching level are varied, the crucial factor that determines whether education is successful is the teacher. Some teachers focus on the novelty and diversity of teaching methods, but they ignore the regulation effect of emotion on students' learning efficiency. Therefore, in view of the problems existing in college English teaching, the following will discuss how teachers promote the college English teaching and improve college students' classroom learning efficiency by means of self-regulation of classroom emotion.

*1) Improve College Teachers' Personal Qualities:* Nowadays, college English teachers face the dual task of scientific research and teaching. More and more universities value scientific research and despise the teaching, which has led many teachers to devote a lot of time to scientific research, ignoring the improvement of teaching level and concern for students. Especially among the college English teachers, female teachers account for a larger proportion. They are under double pressure of both career and family, so their time and energy are limited. Besides, due to the sensitive nature of female, they are apt to let the negative emotion outside affect the classroom teaching, then affect the teaching efficiency.

Teachers should be aware of improving their own quality, adjust their emotion in time, and not bring the negative emotion outside into the classroom. In spare time, teachers can take some psychological courses to learn how to control emotion, because psychology can teach you some methods to be happy, relaxed and humorous, or know how to bridle the temper. In the teaching process, teachers should not only be able to adjust emotion timely, they should also be good at observing the change of students' emotion. Subsequently, they adapt to the changing circumstances by way of adjusting the teaching methods to improve the learning atmosphere. In class, some unexpected events are easy to come by. At this time, teachers should manage to control their emotion and student's emotion by means of pausing for a while, making impromptu comic gestures and remarks or other methods to alleviate the classroom atmosphere. Negative emotion is not allowed to run through the whole class. After class, teachers should reflect on the emotion and behavior showed during class in a timely manner. They can write teaching journals, talk with peers, communicate with students, and think positive about how to improve. Negative emotion caused by the classroom teaching must be overcome, because this will make teachers' teaching mood and enthusiasm increasingly low, and then reduce the teaching quality.

*2) Optimize Teaching Situation and Create Harmonious Atmosphere:* The teaching situation can be discussed from two aspects: scene setting and social psychological

environment. Scene setting includes space and time, facilities, and natural environment. Social psychological environment includes interpersonal, emotional, and organizational factors. Positive teaching situation can cultivate good teacher-student relationship, establish a harmonious classroom teaching atmosphere, and improve the efficiency of classroom teaching. As the saying goes, "only if the students love their teacher, can they believe in what their teacher says". It means only when students and teachers get on well with each other, teachers can play the role to the greatest extent. The college English course is a high practical course, which not just needs the transmission of theoretical knowledge, but requires to develop students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills as well. So teachers and students should be more interactive and communicative. College English teachers should take advantage of various physical and social psychological methods to create a relaxed and pleasant teaching environment to improve the students' efficiency and interest in learning English.

From the aspect of scene setting, although the number of students in college English class is large, teachers cannot only pay attention to the few students with good grades or active. Teachers can divide students into groups according to their individual's performance to let them help each other and make progress together. In teaching equipment, the traditional chalk blackboard teaching mode can no longer meet the modern teaching. Teachers can make full use of various kinds of modern teaching equipment, such as multimedia, the language lab, the recording pen, video and mobile phone applications to enrich teaching content and improve students' interest in learning. From the aspect of social psychological environment, in the classroom, the teacher should not be easily angry, use positive and encouraging words more, maintain students' self-esteem, and try not to spoil students' initiative. Because most of the students' psychological frustration tolerance is fragile, if teachers often use negative words in the classroom, students may gradually lose confidence in learning English or even give up this course.

3) *Identify Students' Learning Motivation and Needs:* Dornyei (1998) thinks that motivation plays a central role in the second language/foreign language learning, which not only provides the primary motivation for the beginning of the second language learning, but is the driving force of the long monotonous process. During the college English study, many college students' motivation is very simple, which is to pass the final exam or get the CET4 certificate or pass the postgraduate entrance examination. And in different semesters, even in different periods of a semester, the motivation for students to learn is different, which brings difficulties to the teaching of college English teachers. When teachers won't be able to definitely judge students' learning motivation at some period, the knowledge taught may not meet students' need, then communication failure occurs. The efficiency of classroom teaching cannot be

achieved. And if the communication failure continues, students' learning motivation will decrease, because some studies have shown that teachers are the main reason for students' learning demotivation.

The purpose of college English teaching cannot only be limited to pass exams, but to cultivate students' comprehensive application ability according to the requirements of college English teaching reform. Students should know the knowledge of the foreign culture, and can make effective communication in English in the future study, work and life. The most important thing is to strengthen students' autonomous learning skill. Before the college students clearly realize their motivation for learning, college English teachers should stimulate students' learning interest and motivation with their enthusiasm, the change of teaching methods and the novelty of teaching materials. Besides, teachers should adjust classroom teaching mode based on students' performance. They should be truly student-centered, not teach purely for teaching.

## V. CONCLUSION

To sum up, in college English teaching, teachers should recognize that emotion regulation plays an essential role in improving the efficiency of classroom teaching. Teachers' emotion will directly have an effect on students' learning enthusiasm and efficiency. Only when teachers and students have positive emotional resonance can students' learning motivation, attitude and enthusiasm be aroused. Therefore, based on the current teaching situation of college English, college English teachers should regulate their emotion in a timely manner in the classroom and cultivate students' positive emotion as well in the classroom; they should optimize the teaching situation and create a harmonious teaching atmosphere; they can identify students' learning motivation and needs in time and adjust the teaching content and strategies to improve the efficiency of classroom teaching.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Bower, G.. "Mood and memory." *American Psychologist* 36 (1981).
- [2] Dornyei, Z.. "Motivation in second and foreign language learning." *Language Teaching* 31 (1998).
- [3] Ginott, Haim. *Teacher and Child: A book for Parents and Teachers*. New York: Macmillan, 1975.
- [4] Goleman, D.. *Emotional Intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books, 1995.
- [5] Guo, Dejun. "The theoretical construction of emotion regulation teaching." *Journal of Beijing Normal University* 5 (2000): 115-122.
- [6] Kramsch, Claire. *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 1999.
- [7] Mayer, J.D., & Salovey, P.. "Emotional intelligence". *Imagination, Cognition and Personality* 9 (1990).
- [8] Stern, H.H.. *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*. London: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- [9] Wang, Yongxiang. "The present situation and trend of English teaching mode in middle school in China." MA thesis. Hunan Normal University, 2005.