

## Models of Teacher's Language

Hou Xiaoyu, Meng Xuemei

School of Foreign Language Harbin Institute of Technology (China)

[hou59@126.com](mailto:hou59@126.com)

### Abstract

*Nowadays, in China the research on the teachers' language are mostly concerned with the content and properties of the teachers' language. From the perspective of the teachers' role, Second Language Acquisition, the psychological factors in English learning, and turn taking, a practical research was made of the effect of the English teachers' language on the EFL classroom in this paper, including the classroom observation of ten English teachers from HIT; the survey of the interaction between the teacher and students and the investigation of 102 students' perspective about teachers' language.*

*The research findings show that the teachers' language has a great influence on the psychological factors such as interests and motivation. Teachers' language is the decisive factors to keep the classroom interaction smoothly.*

*Some strategies of improving teachers' language models are summarized. This paper is expected to help arouse other teachers' awareness of the importance of the teachers' language and solve some problems occurring in teacher-student interaction in the classroom.*

Teachers' language plays an important role in English teaching in the interaction between teachers and students, especially in the English classroom.

*Teachers' language refers to the use of the language, the target language of learners, adopted by the teacher. Teachers' language is not only a carrier of teaching forms and methods, but also a most important part of the language situation for learners*

**Key words:** teachers' language, models, strategies

### 1. Literature review

#### 1.1 Teachers' Language and Second Language Input

It is agreed that input plays a critical role in language acquisition. As EFL teachers' language is the important part of the learners' input, it is necessary to discuss the language input.

"The input given to the learners has to be comprehensible for acquisition to happen, which he defined it slight beyond the learner's current knowledge level" (Krashen, 1981). Comprehensible input means "language directed to the learner that contains some new elements in it but this is nevertheless understood by the learner because of linguistic, paralinguistic, or situational cues, or world knowledge backup" (Swain, 1985). People who have dealt with language learners have recognized that all input does not have the same impact on the learner. Some input can be taken in immediately and directly into output, such as EFL teachers' interactive language in the class, which exerts great influence on the English study.

#### 1.2 Interactive Teaching Approach

For a language teacher, interaction plays an important role in the English teaching, especially in the teachers' language; however it is the teachers' language that keeps the interaction going towards the goal of teaching and learning.

Interaction is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas, between two or more people resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other. Theories of communicative competence emphasize the importance of interaction as human beings. From the very beginning of language study, classroom should be interactive. Brown puts it this way:

"Through interaction, students can increase their language store as they listen to or read authentic linguistic material, or even the output of their fellow students in discussions, students can use all they possess of the language – all they have learned or casually absorbed in real-life exchange. Even at an elementary stage, they learn in this way to exploit the elasticity of language" (Brown, 2001: 159).



### 1.3 Psychological Factors and ETL

English teachers' language could positively affect students' motivation, extrinsic or intrinsic. Appropriate teachers' language can inspire the learners' expectancy, interests and motivation; on the other hand, some learners can also be affected by the negatively by teachers' language.

The concept of any Second Language Learning courses needs to have the "strength" to carry its own 'weight' by means of the rewards that it provides for success (Johnson, 2003). Teachers' language is the most important factors, which can inspire the learners' motivation efficiently. The interaction of teachers' language should be made worthwhile for learners, by what they eventually achieve a result of having learned successfully.

Today, in China the main motivation for learning the majority of foreign languages is clearly instrumental. Learners hope to benefit personally, in terms of their later career in China from their knowledge of the foreign language. The motivation for having some language, especially American English, may also have an integrative aspect for some Chinese learners who identify very strongly with an idealized picture of the second language culture.

Psychological factors play a significant role in language learning. Positive emotions can facilitate the language learning process and improve learners' language performance, while negative emotions will bring barriers to language learning and reduce learners' learning capacity. The influences of negative emotional factors include anxiety, low self-esteem, insecure classroom atmosphere, lack rapport between teachers and students, etc.

Only when teachers help students overcome such affective barriers as anxiety, low self-esteem, insecure classroom atmosphere, etc. in English learning, can situations be halt, before becoming disasters and students may experience what it means to succeed in language classroom.

EFL classroom is very complicated, which involved many factors such as pedagogy, linguistics, psychology, as well as pragmatics.

## 2. Practical research

In this chapter, a small-scale action research project is carried out in class of college English, attempting to explore the problems occurring in teachers' language and to seek some effective strategies and techniques to create successful teacher-students interaction in real communication. The research aim is to investigate the features of the teachers' language adjusting to the teaching in the classroom.

According to Krashen's theory, I made an action as follows:

- Step1: Problem identification (the problems found in the teachers' language in classroom)
- Step2: Methodology: Classroom observation, students' perception and questionnaire
- Step3: Data analysis
- Step4: Reflection

### 2.1 Classroom Observation of ETL

Ten English teachers from Harbin Institute Technology are observed during their English class of the freshmen. All of them are chosen randomly. Based on the investigation, the problems can be summarized as follows:

- 1 Many teachers are found to occupy 90% of the time in classroom, by introducing, explaining, telling, giving --- a real kind of monologue. There are only one or two questions in one period. As a result, less time is given to the students to interact with teachers and their classmates.
- 2 Their language in the classroom lacks meaningful interaction between teachers' language and learner output.
- 3 Most teachers have been accustomed to the traditional way of teaching foreign languages, in which teachers are regarded as authorities who dominate the whole of the class and indulge themselves in being the center of attention, try to put everything into students heads and pay scant notice of the feelings and the recreations of the students. The teachers' languages can summaries in this way:  
 I'll first introduce the background of...  
 I'll tell you something about...  
 I'll give you the central idea of ...  
 I'll ... ..  
 Students are just "ignorant audience" in such a class language situation.
- 4 No attention is paid to the influence of teachers' language on learners' output.  
 Most language teachers overlook students' need. They put much stress on the research of the teaching methodology and the content of teaching, especially the quality of the language itself, the

language style, the proper choice of words they are using, the proper speed of the language they are using, the time of the teacher talk in classroom, and its relation to learner's output, etc.

5 The problems in teachers' language are the lack of good mastering of the target language of the teachers, by which learners will enjoy themselves in the target language.

6 Teachers ask more closed questions, which are confined to questions and definite answers. In most cases, teachers are usually impatient to give answers to the questions themselves instead of the students, which turn out to be a coercive output. In this case, the teachers can perhaps keep the classroom teaching continual and smooth, but they could possibly deprive the learners of their opportunities to catch the main point of the questions, to find out blocks in understanding.

The classroom communication is rather limited, without negotiation of meaning. (Medgyes, 1994)

Expert Harmer (1991) says that the teacher plays multiple roles in communicative activities — as controller, as assessor, as organizer, as participant and resource. EFL classroom should be regarded as a speech community in which teachers' language plays a very important role in developing learners' communicative ability. Effective teachers' language contributes to effective learner output.

### **3. The Model of the teacher's Language**

#### **3.1 Teachers' Oral English Proficiency**

Teachers' oral English ability and language skills are crucial to the success or failure of classroom activities. In the survey, an English teacher, who has formal language training and good spoken English, can properly divided classroom time and is good at catching delicate feedback from the students and choosing a student-centered approach. On the contrary, unqualified teachers' lecture is boring and not welcomed by the students. A teacher's oral English ability also affects other aspects of his teaching.

#### **3.2 Teacher's language is the solution to Psychological Barriers**

Boost students' self-esteem: In order to improve the self-esteem of those students to whom language anxiety has already become a long-term trait, teachers should provide as many opportunities as possible for classroom success in the language.

Encourage moderate risk-taking and tolerance of ambiguity: A degree of ambiguity-tolerance is essential for language learners, and it is necessary and useful for language learners to take some risks in language learning. So teachers should encourage the moderate risk-taking and tolerance of ambiguity in comfortable, non-threatening environment.

Avoid tension-causing strategies: Strategies such as surprise quizzes, overly competitive activities, putting students in front of their peers with no warning or chance for preparation, should be avoid. The classroom interaction often occurs in the emotional communication between the teacher and students.

#### **3.3 English Teachers' Language Related to Teaching Methodology**

If communicative approach and oral English class are chosen, an English teacher will pay more attention to communication between the teacher and the students and try to improve students' speech. However, when the teacher encourages the students to speak fluently, sometimes he/she may ignore accuracy.

Teachers' language is relevant to linguistics, education and psychology etc. Different concepts on teaching and learning way have different ways of using teachers' language and produce different form and content of teachers' language.

#### **3.4 Teachers' Questions**

Today learner-centered approach favors in EFL teaching. One important thing for teachers is how to ask students questions: display questions and referential questions

An important dimension of a teacher's questioning skills is wait – time, that is the length of time the teacher waits after asking the question before calling on a student to answer it, rephrasing the question, directing the question to another student, or giving the answer.

### **4. Conclusion**

Effective teachers' language is also necessary and valuable part of work in EFL classroom, and it has a strong influence on learner output. This paper explores the problems related to teachers' language and learner output in practical FLT classroom, and puts much weight on the functions of the teachers' language and presents some strategies for solving problems.



In general, English teachers should first improve their English and teaching methodology. In addition, English teacher should cultivate their linguistic awareness and cultural awareness; maybe even learn psychology to move the classroom communication forward skillfully.

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