A Study on Excellent Talk Show Hosts’ Verbal Language for College English Teachers to Improve Class Atmosphere

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Abstract. Classroom atmosphere plays an important role in second language learning. Although there are many factors that can affect the classroom atmosphere, such as students’ learning motivation, and etc., college English teachers also play an important role, especially teachers’ verbal language (teacher talk) in class, which is still the main way for teachers and students to interact with each other in class. Based on the great success of excellent TV talk shows in the atmosphere and similarities between English class and TV talk shows, in this paper, it is explored by specifying on the good qualities of TV talk show hosts’ words which are worthwhile for college English teachers to learn from. On the basis of this, some suggestions as to refine college English teachers’ words to improve class atmosphere were put forward, thus improving classroom qualities and foreign language acquisition.

Introduction

As the main form of teaching in all levels of colleges and universities in our country; classroom teaching is very crucial to improve teaching. Although college English Teaching has made many progresses in the past few decades, there still exist serious problems, among which a very prominent problem is that the classroom atmosphere is dull. For college English teachers, if they want to improve college English teaching, one important way is to change this situation and get students "move" in class. Students’ participation in class activities can help to break the boring classroom atmosphere.

Because of the similarities between English class and TV talk show and the great success of excellent TV talk shows in the atmosphere, it is worthwhile for college English teachers to learn something from excellent TV talk show hosts to motivate English class atmosphere.

In light of this, by comparing the similarities between college English teachers and talk shows’ hosts and exploring the good qualities of excellent hosts which can be learned by college English teachers, some suggestions as to refine college English teachers’ words to improve class atmosphere are listed, thus improving classroom qualities and foreign language acquisition.

Class Atmosphere. Class atmosphere refers not only to the classroom, the place, but it also refers to a social and psychological condition in which students and teachers interact with each other. The classroom atmosphere is a group state of mind shown through interaction between teachers and students. Classroom teaching is the main channel to improve the quality of teaching. Many experts and scholars have done a lot of researches including Xia Jimei[1,2] and etc. Therefore, classroom teaching has social characteristics. In the context of society, teachers in class should not teach students mechanically on the basis on teaching plans prepared in advance. An English class with soul requires that teachers use flexible words to create vivid class atmosphere, which then facilitate students’ English learning in class.

Teachers talk. Teacher talk (TT), is very important for both classroom teaching organization and students’ language learning in the process of foreign language learning and second language
acquisition. Teacher talk, used by teachers to impart knowledge and organize teaching activities in the class of FLT, is a language variety based on caretaker speech and foreigner talk.(Ellis)[3]. Hakansson [4] pointed in his research that the success of class teaching is determined by the quality and quantity of teacher talk. Mitchell [5] pointed that teachers used different strategies such as substitution, repetition, explanation exemplification and clue-giving to consolidate the learners’ comprehension of unfamiliar items. Since 21st century, researchers paid more attention to the qualities of TT instead of the quantities and try to find which kinds of TT can promote or interfere with learning(Walsh)[6]. In China, Zhao Xiaohong [7] is the earliest researchers beginning to do the empirical researches on TT; Li Xiulian [8] and Huang Xiaoping [9] have done researches on TT. Hu xuewen [10] analyzed the function and characteristic of TT. As the main verbal language for college English teachers in class, this paper aims to find the good qualities of talk show hosts’ words to improve TT.

Why the language of TV talk show can be used for TT. TV talk shows aim to make the guests speak more about themselves, which is also what the audience wants to know. College English teachers can learn from this, getting the students involved in class activities, and so on. At present, teachers such as Shi liqun [11] have started to learn something for Chinese teaching’ reference, whereas, teachers such as Zhou yi [12] have related excellent talk show hosts ’good qualities to English teaching. Theoretically speaking, it is workable for college English teachers to learn something from successful talk show hosts to stimulate class atmosphere.

1. Similarities in structure. College English class and talk show have the similar structures: (1). setting: college English classes’ classroom and talk shows’ studio. Namely, they have their own big places of activities; (2). Main characters: in English classes, there are usually only one teacher and many students while in talk shows there are usually only one or two hosts, guests and many audiences. To a certain extent, Classrooms are similar to a talk show studio: teachers are equivalent to host; students the guests and audience. An excellent host of a talk show is crucial to its success of the whole program and the main means of communication for hosts is verbal language. Therefore, teacher talk, as a main way of communication in class, is very important to the success of a excellent English class. Audiences and guests’ responses are important to talk show; similarly speaking, students’ responses are also crucial to the success of an English class.

2. Similarities between hosts’ roles and that of teachers’. The roles of teachers in English class are similar to those of hosts or hostesses of TV talk shows. Both of them are the key to the whole thing. Firstly, they may give influence on other parties, students in English class and gusts and audience in TV talk show. Secondly, they can affect the success of the program or class.

3. Good atmosphere in talk shows is worth learning from. There are many outstanding talk shows, such as "Interview with Yang Lan", "A Tiger Talk" and so on. They have something in common, that is, they are loved by everyone and have very good atmosphere. Good atmosphere is especially outstanding and important to the whole program, which is also what English classes lack. This means that audiences think that it pays to watch them. In this case, all programs progress very smoothly and the objective are accomplished as scheduled. Therefore, teachers are supposed to learn anything beneficial to themselves and English class.

What to Learn about Talk Show Hosts’ Verbal Language?

"Well begun is half done", as an old saying goes, means a good start (lead-in in English class and "opening" in talk shows is very important).

The term of "opening" is "Lead-in" in English Language teaching. Good TV talk shows’ opening usually go very well and therefore the show can be led to a right track very easily, because in the opening part, the tone for the whole show can be set. Lead-in is the first step of presenting a new lesson. It is a technique used by teachers at the beginning of a presentation to prepare students to learn and establish a communicative link between the learners and the information to be presented.
For the sake of class atmosphere, it is necessary for teachers to set a good tone for the whole class on the basis of language strategies used by the hosts in the opening part of TV shows.

In spite of different styles of hosts and different linguistic force on the audience applied by the hosts, one thing that they have in common is that they can create a good atmosphere and start the topic at the same time. Generally speaking, there are two types of opening the hosts use in the show, which can be learned by college English teachers for the lead-in part to start the English class. Luo Zhiye [13] used the first classical mechanics in Physics for language in the book "the power of language- exploration of language mechanics", generally speaking, before the words, the force of party (the listener) maintain a calm or uniform state of thinking. Once the words take effect on the listeners, they will be forced to change the original state, and the force is called linguistic force.

1. If you want the linguistic force to take effect on the listeners as soon as possible, teachers can start the topic with something familiar to the listeners. Small talk is something closest to daily life which can catch the audience as soon as possible.

2. Most TV talk shows have a warm-up part in the opening, among which a simple and time-saving method is to shout slogans loudly with all the audiences. For example, as soon as the host of very well-known TV talk show "A Tiger Talk" comes on the stage, he will lead all the audiences to shout "A tiger talk, something we talk about" loudly, which enables all the audience to come into the best state and enliven the atmosphere.

College English teachers can learn something from the host of TV talk shows and try their best to adjust themselves and all the students to the best condition at the beginning of the class and "Well begun is half done".

**Questioning.** A good TV show is full of different kinds of questions. A good host can always catch the main idea of the guests and pose questions to the guest timely, which are what all the audiences are interested in. in this way, the audience concentrate on what the host and guest said, which produces good atmosphere.

Based on this, firstly, the questions that teachers posed in class should surround what the students are interested in and impart knowledge at the same time. The teachers should ask what other students want to ask and explore more questions. Secondly, the words the teachers used in questioning should be those the students are familiar with, which can get more students involved and stimulate good class atmosphere. Thirdly, teachers should use fewer display questions in which students said very few words and use more referential questions, encouraging students to explain, explain and explain. A study by Brock [14] indicates that students’ response to display questions will be shorter and less complex than that to referential questions. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to use referential questions in class to relate the basic knowledge learned in class to students’ own situation.

When questioning, teachers avoid "Yes/No "questions. It is clear that the aim of TV show is to let the guests say more, which is what the audiences are interested in instead of the hosts’. Last, teachers ask students questions with different levels of difficulty, improving students’ self-confidence, which can guarantee students can participate in classroom activities and produce good class atmosphere.

**Topic promotion strategy--to explore more information.** Here is a conversation between a host and a guest.

Host (Chen weihong): During the past few weeks, you have always exchanged your opinions with the chairman calmly? Have you ever quarreled?

Terrie: I think that the word "quarrel" can be overused, we did not quarrel…we just express our respective opinions strongly.

Host: We say nothing about "quarrel", we just say whose voice is higher? Yours? Or his?

In this conversation, when the host used the word "quarrel" to ask Terrie, the guest think it differently; however, the host did not give up, and he changed another way to ask the guest "whose voice is higher" instead of using the word "quarrel".

This is what college teachers are supposed to learn. In English class, teachers are supposed to try to make the students speak as much as possible for the sake of class atmosphere. Therefore, based on
the hosts‘ questioning strategies, teachers are supposed to concentrate on what the students say and find new questions to ask the students, which may prompt the topic further and motivate the class atmosphere. "So?" "And then?"

**More Listening and giving proper clues.** Listening is the precondition to ask questions. The reason why "A Date with Lu yu" is loved by many people, to a large extent, is that Lu yu is very good at listening. What Lu yu said in the talk show only accounts for at most 20% of the whole conversation, and only 5% at least. She always has her eyes on the guests unblinkingily, with a hand holding her chin and her body leaning to listening, which makes the guests feel that they are respected and therefore, they feel free to say anything. Occasionally when the guest cannot express themselves clearly, she will always give them the proper clues like "as far as....concerned, you think......" which encourage guests to speak more. This is another aspect that teachers are supposed to learn from the hosts. For the sake of class atmosphere, college English teachers should pay more attention to students‘ learning than their own teaching in class. Words like "for example?" are useful in this aspect.

**Positive feedback and soothing emotions.** Lu yu in "A talk with Lu yu" often says in the interview something like "really? Are you kidding? "oh.". Things like this are called feedback. Another important influence that Teacher Talk gives on the classroom atmosphere is that students make positive feedback to students‘ class performance. Therefore, it is beneficial to learners to create a more positive class atmosphere, in which not only learners‘ self-confidence and courage will be fostered, but also learner‘s motivation will be turned into greater efforts and success in language learning. Teachers are supposed to give students appropriate and positive feedbacks to students‘ performances in English class and try to avoid the negative feedbacks. For example:

- Show genuine pleasure and concern:
- Give positive feedback on each student’s progress;
- Laugh with them and not at them.

**Humor.** Humor is the lubricant, and adhesive to a talk show as it can relax the audience and guest and make the atmosphere relaxing and natural. For example, in the talk show "Interview with Li Jing", Li Jing asked Huang Haibo: "your value in the market has doubled many times, isn’t it?" Huang haibo covered his face and laugh. And then Li Jing continued to say by joking: "take it easy, and I am not borrowing money from you." All the audience laughed. This is also what college English teachers are supposed to learn from to enliven the class atmosphere.

**Conclusion and Suggestions**

In a word, there are a lot of things in good hosts or hostesses for college English teachers to learn to motivate classroom atmosphere. College English teachers are supposed to try their best to learn something from the strategies of good hosts and hostesses. In the process of refining their verbal language in classes, college English teachers are supposed to create good class atmosphere for all learners, which is crucial to the success of English classes.

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**References**


