

## **A Study on the Influence of College English Teachers' Qualities on Class Atmosphere**

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**Abstract.** In foreign language teaching, classroom atmosphere plays an important role in students' learning effect. Although there are many factors that can affect the classroom atmosphere, such as traditional Chinese culture "silence is golden", "emphasize harmony and collective" etc., the role of teachers cannot be ignored. In order to specify its effect on class atmosphere, in this paper a survey was conducted among 883 students from 5 different types of colleges and universities in Hebei province. The results show that some specific qualities of college English teachers have effect on class atmosphere. Based on the findings, some suggestions as to how to improve college English teachers' qualities to promote class atmosphere was put forward, thus improve classroom qualities and foreign language acquisition.

### **Introduction**

Currently, classroom teaching is still the main form of teaching in all levels of colleges and universities in our country; therefore, classroom teaching is the main way to improve the quality of teaching. In the past few decades, College English Teaching in China has made remarkable achievements, but at present there still exist serious problems in college English classroom teaching, of which a very prominent problem is that the classroom atmosphere is not very good: you can always see a part of the students taking notes mechanically, and another part of the students daydream and sleep in college English class, they don't want to do anything in class, including such activities as speaking, reading and etc. thus classroom atmosphere is very dull.

Since 1960s, the teaching methods have increasingly emphasized that classroom activities should be students-centered. The communicative teaching approach In the 1970s advocated emphasis of communication in teaching, students as the master in class. The more classroom activities students participate in, the more likely it is to break the boring classroom atmosphere. In the process, it requires teachers to play a new role. Because communication in the class is unpredictable, it demands more for the teacher themselves; to a certain extent, the teachers' qualities have an important influence on classroom atmosphere. In light of this, a survey on the influence of College English teachers' qualities on class atmosphere was conducted to specify its effect.

**Class Atmosphere.** The researches by the Psychology and Modern Teaching Theory suggest that: the effect of classroom teaching not only depends on how teachers teach students how to learn, but also depends on certain teaching environment, which includes teaching material environment and spiritual environment that refers to the classroom atmosphere [1]. 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[2,3] and etc. English classroom atmosphere plays an important part in improving students' interest of learning English, putting students' English learning from passive acceptance into active learning, stimulating their learning motivation and confidence and reducing tension, anxiety and other negative emotional factors. Therefore, it means a lot to improve class atmosphere.

**Language Teachers' Qualities.** In recent years, many experts and scholars began to concentrate on Language teachers' qualities, including some foreign language scholars such as Freeman, D.[4], Richards, J.[5,6], especially the relationship between the teachers' qualities and that of College English teaching such as Xia Jimei, Liu Runqing, Wu Yian, etc. Xia Jimei [7] proposed that the English teachers' quality is one of the important factors which affect the effect of College English teaching. Liu Runqing[8,9] discusses "the qualities of foreign language teachers includes fluent, idiomatic, accurate and smooth English, broad knowledge, mastering General linguistics and Applied linguistics, having their own unique teaching methods and abilities to solve the problems". Wu Yian [10], through questionnaire survey method, discusses "College English teachers qualities include the solid basic skills, especially fluent, accurate spoken English, good pronunciation; good teaching liked by all the students, strong ability of scientific research especially in foreign language teaching and the ability to put theory into practice, etc."

### Empirical Study

**Research Questions:** This paper intends to explore the effect of College English Teachers' Qualities on Class Atmosphere, the study attempts to address the following questions:

(1) Does the improvement of college English teachers' qualities can effectively improve college English classroom atmosphere?

(2) What qualities of college English teachers have effect on classroom atmosphere?

**Subject:** The subjects in the study are 883 students from 5 different types of colleges and universities in Hebei province. There are altogether 118 colleges and universities in Hebei Province, including 40 ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities, 57 higher vocational colleges, 17 independent institutes and 4 branch schools. The survey was conducted by stratified sampling, choosing 4-6 colleges and universities from each kind of schools, which includes normal, science and technology, financial, the military ones as much as possible. For example, from the 40 ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities, comprehensive one HeBei University, normal school Tangshan Normal University, science and technology school Yanshan University, Financial one Shijiazhuang University of Economics and military one The Central Institute For Correctional Police are respectively chosen. The chosen 25 schools cover most part of Hebei province, all levels and all kinds of schools involved.

**Instruments:** The instruments include two questionnaires: *Students' attitudes to their own English teachers* and *Students' attitudes towards college English teachers' qualities that are important to classroom atmosphere*, aiming to find out college English teachers' good qualities that are important to English class atmosphere.

### Results and Discussion

The data of two questionnaires are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Students' attitudes towards college English teachers' qualities that are important to classroom atmosphere.

No.	English Teachers' Qualities	Percentage
1	English teachers' professional knowledge and skills	88.5%
2	Flexible teaching methods, stimulating students' interest in learning	50.4%
3	The classroom environment is relaxing, natural, open	49.2%
4	The communication between teachers and	42.1%

	students is smooth, and the relationship is harmonious.	
5	The teacher's personality, emotional and psychological factors	36.7%
6	Dedicated and has a strong sense of responsibility	29.9%
7	Students' Overall feeling about the teacher, and English teacher's personal charm	25.7%

Table 2. Students' attitudes to their own English teacher and English class atmosphere.

	No.1	No.2	No.3	No.4	No.5	No.6	No.7
	Active class atmosphere, relaxing, natural, open	English teacher's professional knowledge and skills	Flexible teaching methods, stimulating students' interest in learning,	Students are always attracted in English class, not absent-minded	Smooth communication & harmonious relationship between teachers and students	The teacher's personality, emotional and psychological factors	English teacher is dedicated and has a strong sense of responsibility
good	13.2%	42.6%	16.3%	15.2%	17.1%	52.2%	76.1%
average	45.1%	25.3%	58.1%	49.1%	51.1%	34.1%	11.2%
poor	41.7%	32.1%	25.6%	35.7%	31.8%	13.3%	12.7%

**Teachers' Professional Knowledge and Skills.** In the survey it is found that 88.5% (No.1, Table 1) of the students think that among all the teachers' good qualities, the professional knowledge and professional skills have an influence on English class atmosphere, but actually only 42.6% (No.2, Table 2) of the students think that their own English teachers have excellent or good professional knowledge and skills while 32.1% of students think their own English teachers' professional knowledge and skills are poor. In English classes, College English teachers play a role of imparting English language knowledge to the students, which means college English teachers must have rich English language and western cultural knowledge. Moreover, College English teachers play a role of setting an example in the classroom, and the usage of Standard English will greatly promote students' enthusiasm for learning English, then promoting the class atmosphere.

**Suggestions:** It requires that college English teachers spend more time and energy improving their English language and western cultural knowledge, especially standard pronunciation and fluent and accurate oral English. In class, it is suggested that teachers often do comparison between Chinese and Western cultures. In the teaching of language knowledge, it is important for college English teachers to impart western and Chinese cultures to the students. If students feel they can get what they want in the English class, they are more likely to get involved in class; the more likely they are to get involved in class activities, the more active the classroom atmosphere will become. The improvement of class atmosphere will, in return, promote second language acquisition.

**Flexible Teaching Methods and the Ability to Stimulate Students' Interest in Learning.** In the survey, 50.4% (No.2, Table 1) of the students think that among all the college English teachers' qualities, flexible teaching methods and the ability to stimulate students' interest in learning have an effect on class atmosphere, ranking the second. But actually, only 16.3% (No.3, Table 2) of

the students think the teacher's teaching methods are satisfying; 58.1% of the students think the teaching methods are not very good. They think many college English teachers still use very obsolete teaching methods in class, for example, the majority of students say most of the time in their English class elapsed with teacher's explanation and their English class is often organized by teachers through "preview-answering questions-teachers' explanation-students' reciting" pattern. There is only a small part of teachers who have used such teaching methods as situational teaching or communicative teaching method, etc. Outdated teaching methods make students' enthusiasm to participate in class activities lower and lower, students easy to absent-minded in class (as is shown in No.4, Table 2), which leads to dull class atmosphere (as is shown in No.1, Table2) and then eventually has a bad effect on students' second language acquisition.

Suggestions: It is suggested that flexible teaching methods be used in college English class. For example, teachers can try to organize such class activities as fierce competition or heated discussion in class. Moreover, teachers should pay more attention to their class language, especially classroom questioning and giving examples in class which many experienced teachers have taken as an art of teaching. By doing these things, teachers can activate students' cerebral cortex of excitement, stimulate the students' learning motivation and inspire students to participate in class activities, eventually promoting class atmosphere.

**Smooth Communication between Teachers and Students and Teachers' Personality, Emotional and Psychological Factors.** In the survey, 49.2% (NO.4, Table 1) of the students think that smooth communication between teachers and students is very important to class atmosphere, ranking the third. And 36.7% (No.5, Table 1) of students think the teacher's personality, emotional and psychological factors also count. But actually, only 17.1% (No.5, Table 2) of the students think the communication between them and their teachers is satisfying; the majority of the students think their communication with their teachers is not very good.

Suggestions: It is suggested for the teachers that they pay more attention to the emotional factors of students in the classroom, establish a good relationship with the students and create a harmonious class atmosphere. Communication is the key to solve all problems; the second language acquisition is closely related to the emotional factors. Many educators think emotions, as an important part of non-intelligence factors, are a strong driving force which plays a vital role in improving the qualities of English class. Therefore, it is better to minimize the impact of negative factors in learning. Teachers should be good at communicating with the students, trying to motivate the students' enthusiasm to communicate. It is advisable for teachers to use eye contact to attract the students' attention. It is said that it is the teachers' "praise" that makes the good student; therefore, the teachers should try to find the merit of their students' performance in class and give proper complement to them. Moreover, after class, teachers try to exchange ideas about students' learning and personal life, give the students suggestions they need and care for them. In the process of doing this, it is suggestive for teachers to improve their own characteristics and personalities, including learning to control their own emotions, which can also be helpful to a class atmosphere.

**Other Qualities.** In the survey, 29.9% (No.6, Table 1) of the students think English teachers' dedication and strong sense of responsibility play an important role for class atmosphere. 76.1% (No.7, Table 2) of students think their English teachers are satisfying in this aspect. Students' overall feelings about the teachers (No.7, Table 1), including some characteristics shown by teachers' personality, appearance and speech and deportment, do count to students' learning motivation and interests, and then the class atmosphere. Therefore, teachers should pay more attention to these aspects in the class.

## Conclusion and Suggestions

In a word, there are a lot of factors that can affect classroom atmosphere such as students' own characteristics and so on, but a majority of factors come from the qualities of teachers themselves. In

the survey, most of the students agree that the teachers' being familiar with linguistics, fluent and accurate oral English, the improvement of teaching methods and good communication between teachers and students will play an important role in the classroom atmosphere. It is very necessary for English teachers to improve their soft abilities such as refining their personalities, controlling their emotions and, as well as their professional skills, such as accurate and fluent oral English and improving teaching methods constantly.

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