



Study on the Application of Body Language in College English Teaching

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Abstract

With the continual reform of English language teaching and learning methods, teachers are in great demand to organize the classes in English and create English-learning circumstances. However, with the limitation of students' vocabulary, teachers have to simplify their teaching language with the help of facial expressions and body movements. In this article, the possibility and the effect of using body language in listening, speaking, reading and writing will be further discussed.

Keywords: English teaching in college, Body language, Application

1. Introduction

As everyone knows, the classroom teaching is one of the most important ways that the students learn English. As far as the English teaching in college is concerned, teachers have to arouse the students' interest so that they may learn better. There are many ways to arouse the students' interest and help them to learn better, body language used in English teaching is one of them.

Body language is an important media through which people communicate with each other. It refers to the patterns of facial expressions and gestures that people use to express their feelings in communication. The specialist on body language research, Fen. Lafle. Angles, once said: "Once it was lost, a baby couldn't have grown into a normal person". It's also true to the college students. In college education, body language plays a positive role in cultivating the students' characters. For, teachers are usually respected, and factually, what or how the teachers say and do will be possibly imitated by the students (sometimes subconsciously). In a word, teachers' graceful body language helps to improve the students' artistic-appreciation and moral character. If the students develop a wonderful body language, which will possibly leads them to form optimistic and active feelings, they will surely have a more smooth interpersonal relation. The affection of teachers' body language on the students is reflected not only by establishing a good example, but also shortening the teacher-student estrangement by which a more harmonious studying atmosphere is created. As a matter of fact, teachers' friendly appearance can greatly encourage the students' studying enthusiasm. Furthermore, the characteristics of theoretic and abstraction of knowledge also requires the vivid, dramatic and an accessible gestures to make it specific and figurative. As a result, the students' interest is motivated and the effect of teaching is greatly improved.

2. The necessity and importance of using body language in English teaching

English teaching is a key part of the college education. With the English teaching methods reform, more and more English teachers organize the teaching process in English so that they may realize the Communicated English. The Communicated English means that teachers instruct the students and explain questions basically in English, and the students are also required to use English in class. Contemporarily, however, the students in the college can't speak very well; neither can they understand why they should use different tones in different time or situation; their vocabulary and expressive ability are limited too. These limitations made it difficult to realize the Communicated English in the classes. According to the students' present level and practical situation, body language is required. For example, a teacher gives an instruction: "You two, please come to the blackboard." The students can easily understand it if the teacher looks at (or points to) some two students. Then, the teacher points to the blackboard. The students will carry out the order without obstacle even if they don't hear the key words "blackboard" clearly. Furthermore, teachers usually have to explain some language points, and at this time, they have to differentiate the classroom expressions and the examples. Take it for example, "we ought to use the form 'have done' such as 'Have you finished that job yet?'" To make the students understand clearly, a teacher has lots of ways. To do it by speed, he uses a common speed when reading "we ought to use the form 'have done'", and reads slowly when giving examples; he can also get the effect by repeating the example "Have you finished that job yet"; a more frequent way is to use gestures to lay emphasis on the key points when he said "have done"(emphasizing it in voice at the same time), he reaches out his index finger, pauses in the air, and then gives out the example. This action will usually give the students a deep impression. From the above we can learn, the use of body language in English teaching is necessary and practical. In the English teaching in college, body

language is frequently used to improve the teaching effect and the students' ability.

3. The concrete application of the body language in listening, speaking, reading and writing

3.1 Body language helps to improve listening

The Greek philosopher Epictetus ever wittily said: "Nature has given man one tongue and two ears that he may hear twice as much as he speaks." From the saying we can learn how important the listening is in our daily life. To understand others is a basic purpose in English teaching, and teachers often train the students' listening accordingly. In this process, if the body language is used, the effect will be better. When beginning a new lesson, the teacher narrates the story outline in English. The body language may help. For example, a teacher can stretch his arms slowly when he says "She is in a very big room"; he can open his eyes widely with mouth opened when he says "She is so beautiful a lady". As a result, the students will have such an impression: She is very beautiful indeed; a teacher who imitates the crying or the movement of the animals under the premise of teaching order will surely achieve a better effect.

3.2 Body language helps to improve speaking

The spoken language is one of the important ways to communicate, so we should try to develop the students' ability of speaking. Factually they are helped to reach the aim in a certain degree by their teacher's body language.

The contemporary emphasis is gradually laid on spoken English teaching. The first lesson of every unit in college English begins with dialogue. The teaching programs require the teachers to organize the class to practice English according to the characteristics of dialogue. Generally speaking, the body language can arouse and sustain the students' interest of learning and using English. In the English class, the teachers should not only use body languages themselves, but also ask the students to use them according to the different situation. Take it for example, the first lesson in Unit one, Book one is about the time when the new students first meet, and they don't know each other. So a teacher can introduce himself first, such as: "Hello, everyone, nice to meet you here. Now I'll introduce myself to you. My name is Arthur. I like playing basketball, for, it makes me much stronger; I like playing chess, for, it makes me more clever; and I like reading books, for, 'reading makes one perfect'". During the introduction, the teacher should use the new vocabularies and sentence structures together with a vivid expression and mating gestures as possibly as he can. He smiles when he says hello to the class; he shakes hands with some students saying "Nice to meet you"; he writes name down on the blackboard; he imitates the action of dribbling and shooting at the basketball, playing chess and turning pages to explain his hobby. After his introduction, the teacher can create a circumstance for the students to practice: "Mary and Jack are new classmates. They are walking together in the street, and they meet one of Jack's old friends, Yangpei. Then Yangpei and Mary are introduced to each other by Jack." After the students' practice the dialogue is introduced naturally from it. Usually, the application of body language in different situations will result in an attracting and successful lesson.

3.3 Body language helps to improve reading

The purpose of college English teaching is to train the students' complicated ability of using spoken and written English. In college, we lay emphasis on the reading ability that serves the students' further study. Here we mainly mention the helpfulness for reading aloud. Reading aloud helps the students to get a correct pronunciation and intonation and to develop the combination of vocabularies' pronunciation, spelling and meaning. Furthermore, it also helps the students to find out the article's internal feelings and appreciate the beauty of the language. A linguist ever said: "A poem is not a poem until it is read." Reading aloud is basic in college, and the teachers should make full use of body language to develop the students' ability of reading aloud.

When reading the sentences, attention should be paid to where to speak softly, emphasize, and raise or lower our tone. To make it clear, we can imitate the strong or soft pats that are used in music teaching, which means to use the arcs to represent different tones. Generally speaking, we use falling tones in declarative and special interrogative sentence, first rising tones and then falling tones in the choosing interrogative sentence. The students in college are not often accustomed to and always confuse them, however, with the help of body language, they can solve the problem much more easily. For example, they use gestures. As they read the choosing interrogative sentence, they raise their hands in rising tones and lower in falling tones. After training for some time, as soon as they read the sentences, they will remind themselves of the gestures. As a result, there will be no problems in rightly reading the sentences at all.

In a word, the vivid gesture together with the fluent English can create a good circumstance of learning, which will surely play an active part in improving the students' reading ability.

3.4 Body language helps to improve writing

Writing is one of the four basic skills of learning language, and it is so important a skill that we can even say without it, people can't communicate with others. Not only should the students get some English knowledge and vocabularies, but also the ability to communicate in spoken and written English as what is mentioned in the teaching programs. To some extent, writing is much more important than speaking, for it can spread without the limitation of space and time. Since the students learn English as a media for communication, they should have the ability of writing.

To get rid of the students' feelings of being dull and tiring, an English teacher has to use every possible method. This is the same to the writing. Teachers use different method in order to improve the students' ability of writing, among which, the application of body language can deepen the object impression, such is magnificent in developing the students' writing ability.

The linguist Franklin ever said, "Tell me, I'll forget; teach me, I'll remember; involve me and I'll learn." If we asked the students to write an unfamiliar composition, they would probably be unable to and feel discouraged. However, the students can write excellent articles if they have the experience. In and out of class, we should ask the students to participate in some English-related activities, and then ask them to write it down. Take "The First Snow in Winter" for example, having enjoyed themselves in the beautiful snowing and been given some hints, the students can write much better a composition. For contrast to their complete imagination, the students are deeply impressed by the body movement of the teachers and themselves, which surely leads to a better article.

4. Conclusion

Learning English needs practice. The 45 minutes in class is very precious and should be cherished, during which the students should practice as much as possible. To exert the limited time, teachers are required to adopt some effective methods. The use of body language can not only attract the students' attention, but also deepen their impression and imagination. The use of body language is completely up to the standard of audio-visual teaching principle, so teachers should try to teach in English from the beginning to the end, together with the corresponding body language. In the end, the students' ability of English will be certainly and greatly improved.

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