

Teachers' English Proficiency and classroom language use

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Efforts to raise the quality of instructed English language learning across the globe have placed greater demands on teachers' target language proficiency, which has been recognized as an important aspect of teacher expertise, an essential factor effecting student learning. However, it is not clear what minimal level of language proficiency teachers need to acquire in order to teach effectively. Neither is there sufficient empirical evidence of the relationship between teachers' proficiency in the target language and the quality of their classroom teaching in terms of student learning.

Teacher language—what we say to students and how we say it—is one of the most powerful teaching tools. Through careful use of language, we can support students as they develop self-control, build their sense of community, and gain academic skills and knowledge. The Responsive Classroom approach offers specific language strategies for various areas of teaching. These strategies range from asking open-ended questions that stretch children's thinking to using respectful reminding and redirecting language when children's behavior goes off track.

Underlying all of these strategies are five general guidelines.

1. Be direct and authentic

When we say what we mean and use a kind and straightforward tone, children learn that they can trust us. They feel respected and safe, which helps them develop self-discipline and take the risks that are necessary for learning.

2. Convey faith in children's abilities and intentions

Our language shapes how children see themselves and their world. When the words and tone convey faith in children's desire and ability to do well, the children are more likely to live up to our expectations of them. "You can look at the chart to

remind yourself of our ideas for good story writing.” “Show me how you will follow the rules in the hall.” These words, said calmly, in an even voice, communicate a belief that children want to and know how to listen, cooperate, and do good work. The students then come to see themselves as respectful listeners, cooperative people, and competent workers, and are more likely to behave accordingly.

3. Focus on action

Because children tend to be concrete thinkers, it can be effective to name specific actions rather than abstract terms. For example, rather than telling children to “be respectful,” it’s usually more helpful to tell them exactly what to do: “When someone is speaking during a discussion, it’s time to listen. That means eyes on the speaker and hands in laps.”

Sometimes it’s effective to prompt students to name the concrete behaviors themselves. “What will help you think of good ideas for your story and concentrate on writing them down?” The student might then respond, “I can find a quiet place to write, away from my friends.”

It’s more helpful in such situations to issue a positive challenge that names the behavior we want: “Today let’s see if you can concentrate on your project for ten minutes. The focus is now on what the student can do.

4. Keep it brief

It’s difficult for children to follow long strings of words. “When you go out to recess today, be sure to remember what we said about including everyone in games, because yesterday some kids had an issue with not being included in kickball and four square, and we’ve talked about this . . .”

Children understand more when the teachers speak less. “Who can tell us one way to include everyone at recess?” The children now have an opportunity to remind themselves of the positive behaviors. If the expectations for recess have been adequately taught and practiced, children will be able to make good use of such a reminder.

5. Know when to be silent

The skillful use of silence can be just as powerful as the skillful use of words. Silence allows children to think, rehearse what to say, and sometimes to gather the courage to speak at all.

We can see the benefit of silence if, after asking a question, we pause for three to five seconds before taking responses from students. Three to five seconds can feel uncomfortably long at first. But if we stick to it—and model thoughtful pausing by waiting a few seconds ourselves to respond to students' comments—we'll set a pace for the entire classroom that will soon feel natural.

Being silent also allows us to listen to students. Listening means resisting the impulse to jump in and correct students' words or to finish students' thoughts. When we listen to students like this, we model respectful interaction in a community of learners. When we allow students to speak at their own pace, we help them learn because speaking is an important means of consolidating knowledge.

List of used literature:

1. Hadfield, Jill & Hadfield, Charless. 2001. Simple Speaking Activities. England: Oxford University Press.
2. Lindsay, C. and Knight, D. (2006) Learning and Teaching English: A Course for Teachers. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Pujiastuti, R. T. 2013. Classroom Interaction: an Analysis of teacher Talk and Student Talk in English for young Learners (EYL).