

# Chapter 2

## Role of Teachers in Oral English Teaching

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**Abstract** In oral English teaching, students are the implementers, while teachers play different roles during this process. Teachers are conductors, guiding students to start activities. They are directors, designing scenarios for the activities and assigning roles to students. They are also critics, evaluating students' oral expression appropriately. The appropriateness of roles that teachers play can change the traditional oral English teaching which is teacher-centered. In this way, teachers can develop students' initiatives to a large extent and improve their abilities of oral expression in English.

**Keywords** Oral teaching • Role positioning • Initiatives

### 2.1 Introduction

Language is a subject. It is also a kind of tools and means [1, 2]. Human beings communicate with each other by way of languages, jointly contributing to the formation of the global village [3, 4]. Spoken language is an important form and means to realizing the value of languages. Correspondingly, oral English teaching is one of the most important contents in English teaching [5, 6]. In many colleges in China, classes in oral English are opened or added for students to develop English application talents, which indicates the important status of oral English in English teaching. Teachers are the organizers and implementers in oral English classes. They have great influence on the effects and quality of the classes [7, 8].

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Therefore, it is essential to strengthen the research on the role positioning of teachers in oral English teaching so that the quality of oral English teaching can be improved. It is also very important to improve the forms of oral teaching.

## 2.2 Mistakes in Oral Teaching

In order to make students study and use English better, many colleges in China have opened oral English classes in English teaching so that students have more chances to speak English. Compared with the dumb English classes before, oral English classes improve students' enthusiasm and interest in learning English. They can also improve students' impression of oral English. However, it is still great far away from the tasks established. Generally speaking, the following mistakes exist in modern oral English teaching. First, the English classes are organized in a dumb way. Because some of the English teachers are relatively old or they have been teaching English in a dumb way for a long time, their oral teaching still focuses on explaining grammars, idioms, memorizing, and reciting. Some of the teachers adopt the methods of reading and writing, spending more time on input. Some even play a monodrama so that students have less time to exercise. Although some teachers have realized that oral teaching should be student-centered, their teaching effects are still not ideal due to the reason that they have not found their right role. Therefore, the oral English of students has not improved obviously. Second, some teachers allow students to take activities freely, making themselves bystanders so that the classes are in the state of complete freedom and the activities lack specific purposes, let alone teaching effects. Third, oral teaching contents are not consistent with students' reality. The purpose of study is to guide students' life and work, so the study contents should be close to the life and work as much as possible. Because there are problems in the material of oral teaching, students' awareness of participation is hard to be aroused and the classes turn out to be deserted. Fourth, the lack of interaction is still the obstacle in oral English teaching. In some oral English classes, students practice individually and communicate unidirectionally. Although some communication seems to be two-way, there is still no inherent connection in their communication, which does not belong to significant interaction due to it not based on listening. For example, teachers raise questions and the students answer them, during which process one says a sentence, while another says another one. Without interaction and cooperation, oral communication loses its essence, let alone to be significantly used. Besides, oral classes have problem that there are some students who participate actively while the majority act as bystanders. Some teachers do not perform their duties properly, ignoring their roles as organizers and guides. In this way, the classes cannot be extended deeply. Some chaos will occur to reduce the efficiency of classroom teaching.

The existence of the above errors influences the effectiveness and quality of teaching of oral English. Therefore, the roles that teachers play are very important.

Only by finding their right position and acting their roles well can they teach vividly an oral English class.

## **2.3 Correct Positioning**

So, how do the teachers position themselves in oral teaching? First, teachers should bear in mind that the protagonists of classroom teaching are students, and not teachers. Therefore, teachers should avoid too much input during the course of teaching, which will affect students' output. At the same time, teachers should be aware that they are also the organizer and implementer in classroom teaching besides being a participant. They can provide advice to students and teach them knowledge and ways of learning, but they should remember that students are the main subject of study. Students' input and output positively are the reflection of excellent teaching results, as John and Morrow 1981 said "The teacher can help, advise and teach, but only the learner can learn." Besides, teachers should play the following roles well—demonstrators, conductors, directors, and commentators.

### **2.3.1 Demonstrators**

In the eyes of students, teachers are their models and tasks to be imitated. Therefore, teachers should be aware of their status in the eyes of students, undertaking responsibilities actively and demonstrating themselves positively. Oral teaching consists of listening and speaking in simple terms. Besides, it also involves body language, rapid response capabilities, and language organization abilities. In oral teaching, teachers should require themselves strictly to correct their pronunciation to make sure they do not pronounce mistakenly. Students mainly listen to the teachers. So teachers are the demonstrators in oral teaching. They should play this role well by developing their oral English levels, pronouncing like native speakers, and training their language. In this way, they can create a better atmosphere for students. By listening, teachers should summarize some effective ways in teaching. They should try their best to speak English in classes by adopting the method of from easy to difficult and from simple to complex. By being taught in English, students can learn more actively. They should also ask students to answer questions in English. In this way, students can learn gradually without notice. They will listen naturally, just like staying in English-speaking countries. Body language is essential during interaction between teachers and students. Sometimes, students may not understand some sentences, but if teachers give some guidance and encourage them to listen carefully, they will tend to understand gradually. As a result, the sense of language will be developed. The gradual transition from listening to speaking will be beneficial for the improvement of students' listening and speaking skills.

### **2.3.2 Conductors**

Conductors in bands play roles of expressing their understanding of music. A good conductor is like a doctor who can point out the band's shortcomings and come up with some improvement. They make the whole band reach the ideal state by adjusting the band. Likewise, for students, teachers are the conductors in classes, while the class is a symphony. Before conducting, teachers should bear in mind the teaching purpose, teaching method and any steps, key points, and difficult points of teaching. For some topics, the key function of conductors is to provide guidance to students on the activities carried out—dialogues between two or group discussion, scenario performance or debate, when to carry out the activities, what activities should be carried out, how to carry them out, and so on. In this way, teachers can activate students' initiatives to expand the variety of teaching activities. The ideal teaching effectiveness can be achieved. At the same time, as a conductor in classes, the teacher should fully understand students' English levels, knowing their interest and focus. They should also be clear about who does well or poorly in study to activate the atmosphere of the whole class. As a result, students will find their own value and be confident about their further study.

### **2.3.3 Directors**

Conductors grasp the general situation of classroom teaching, while the roles of directors are shown in different activities of teaching. Oral classroom teaching is different from writing and reading. It requires students to take part in various activities to achieve different purposes. So how to design activities and how to carry them out have been the questions for teachers to act into the role of directors, arranging roles according to different teaching activities. For example, in Spoken English Course Volume III Unit 3 Part-time Job, teachers can design an activity of finding a job and doing interviews, with two students being the interviewers and some being the interviewees. Students should be divided into groups. Finally, the best group should be selected. In this activity, teachers act as directors, assigning roles, designing situations, and solving problems occurring during the activity. In this way, students' ability to express themselves orally in English can be improved. As directors, teachers should also discover and develop roles besides organizing and coordinating. They should discover the advantages and shortcomings of students so that they encourage students to develop advantages and overcome shortcomings, which can help students to develop themselves comprehensively.

### **2.3.4 Commentators**

The task of conductors is to coordinate students in a macro way, while the job of directors is to grasp the situation in a micro way. It is the task of commentators to evaluate all the teaching activities in a summative way. They should evaluate the advantages and shortcomings comprehensively during students' oral expression to make students more confident. They should let students understand their shortcomings and provide guidance for them so that the same mistakes can be avoided. In order to be more objective and reasonable, commentators should take part in different activities to discover problems and solve them in time. To be a good commentator, teachers should follow one principle. That is, they should not point out the errors during the process of students' expression, which will interrupt their thinking and discourage their confidence. For some simple slip of the tongue, teachers should pay less attention, while for some big mistakes especially those in thinking and being made easily by the majority of students, teachers should point them out in front of all students. In this way, students will pay more attention to the problem. Besides summarizing the past experience, commentators should also predict the future and provide guidance for students. Teachers should know the employment situation in the industry and the trend of future development of oral English talents as well as how to win in the future employment competition. They should guide and develop their students according to the situations above.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Languages are being developed everyday, while the future is constantly changing. Therefore, in oral teaching, teachers should not play their role passively by teaching according to the textbooks that have been unchanged. On the contrary, they should learn to research and explore unceasingly. Suhomlinski once said that if you want teachers' efforts to bring fun to themselves and to avoid everyday classes from becoming a tedious obligation, you should lead every teacher to the happy road of coordination teaching. Due to its freedom, oral classes are popular among students, which is very significant in improving students' ability to use English in practice. Although oral classes are student-centered, teachers are very important during this process. It is very hard to achieve the ideal performance without the participation of teachers. Both teachers and students can benefit from oral teaching if teachers can play the roles of demonstrators, conductors, directors, and commentators well.

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