

LANGUAGE USED IN THE CLASSROOM

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Annotation: This article examines the critical role of language in the classroom setting, highlighting how teachers and students use both verbal and non-verbal communication to construct meaning, establish relationships, and enhance learning. Language functions not only as a tool for delivering instruction but also as a means of social interaction and identity formation¹. The article also discusses various types of classroom language (instructional, interactive, supportive, and inclusive), the role of multilingualism, and how language contributes to classroom management and learner engagement. The language used in the classroom plays a vital role in shaping students' learning experiences, social interactions, and overall academic achievement. It includes verbal and non-verbal communication strategies used by both teachers and students. This article explores the significance of classroom language, its impact on teaching and learning, and the best practices that promote a supportive and inclusive educational environment.

Key words: Classroom communication, instructional language, interactive language, multilingualism, inclusive language, non-verbal communication, classroom management, language and identity, teacher talk, student talk.

Language is the foundation of communication in the classroom. It is through language that teachers deliver content, ask questions, check understanding, provide feedback, and engage students. For students, language is the medium through which they express their ideas, ask questions, and participate in learning activities.

Language helps shape not only what students learn but also how they feel about themselves and their place in the classroom. It influences classroom culture, relationships, and even student confidence.

- Instructional Language:

1. ¹ Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*. Multilingual Matters.
2. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.

- This refers to the formal and structured language used to deliver lessons, give directions, and explain academic content.
- Examples: “Take out your notebooks,” “Let’s review yesterday’s topic,” or “Solve the equation on the board.”
- Teachers must use clear, age-appropriate, and grammatically correct language to ensure all students understand.
- **Interactive Language:**
- Used to encourage discussion, collaboration, and questioning between teachers and students or among peers.
- Promotes critical thinking and deeper understanding².
- Example strategies: Open-ended questions, group work, think-pair-share.
- Example phrases: “What do you think about this?” “Can you explain your answer?”
- **Supportive Language:**
- This includes praise, motivation, and constructive feedback.
- Builds a positive classroom climate and encourages risk-taking in learning.
- Examples: “That’s a great idea,” “Good effort, now let’s try this another way.”
- **Inclusive Language:**
- Language that respects and acknowledges student diversity (e.g., gender, culture, ability).
- Avoids stereotypes, bias, or exclusion.
- Example: Using “they” as a singular pronoun instead of assuming gender; acknowledging various cultural references in lessons.
- **Non-verbal Language:**
- Includes body language, gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, eye contact, and physical proximity.
- Reinforces verbal messages or conveys attitudes and emotions.
- A teacher’s smile, calm tone, or enthusiastic gestures can influence student mood and motivation.

In classrooms with students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, the use of multiple languages or code-switching (alternating between languages) can support

3. ² Gibbons, P. (2002). *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning: Teaching Second Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom*. Heinemann.

4. Hall, J. K. (2007). *Interactional Competence and the Development of Language Learning*. Multilingual Matters.

5. Mercer, N. (1995). *The Guided Construction of Knowledge: Talk Amongst Teachers and Learners*. Multilingual Matters.

comprehension and learning. Teachers may occasionally use students' first language (L1) to explain difficult concepts, build rapport, or manage behavior effectively.

This approach respects students' linguistic identities and supports bilingual or multilingual development, especially in ESL/EFL (English as a Second/Foreign Language) environments.

Language is also a key tool for maintaining discipline and managing classroom behavior³. Positive and respectful language fosters a calm and orderly learning environment.

- Instead of saying, "Stop talking!" a teacher might say, "Let's focus our attention on the board."
- Using polite requests, clear expectations, and consistent cues helps reduce conflict and promote respect.

Research shows that excessive teacher talk can limit student engagement. Effective classrooms strike a balance between teacher explanation and student talk, where learners are encouraged to articulate their thinking, ask questions, and explain answers.

Strategies to increase student talk include:

Language is not just a medium of instruction; it is the very fabric of classroom life. From delivering content to building relationships and managing behavior, language shapes every aspect of the learning environment. Teachers who are aware of how they use language—both verbal and non-verbal—are better able to support student learning, engagement, and inclusion.

Moreover, recognizing linguistic diversity and promoting interactive, inclusive communication can help create a classroom culture where all students feel valued and capable of success. As education systems become more global and multilingual, the thoughtful use of classroom language becomes increasingly essential.

In conclusion, language is more than just a teaching tool—it is a powerful force that shapes the entire classroom experience. From instructional clarity to inclusive communication and non-verbal cues, the way teachers and students use language directly affects learning outcomes, emotional safety, and student participation. By intentionally using supportive, interactive, and culturally sensitive language, educators can foster classrooms where all learners feel respected, engaged, and empowered. In

6. ³ UNESCO (2003). *Education in a Multilingual World*. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000129728>

today's diverse and multilingual educational settings, thoughtful language use is not optional—it is essential for building inclusive and effective learning communities.

References.

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