



## PRAGMATICS OF TEACHER'S SPEECH IN THE CLASSROOM.

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**Annotation:** *This article discusses the role of pragmatics in teacher speech within classroom settings, examining how teachers use language not just for instruction, but for managing classroom dynamics, encouraging participation, and fostering positive learning environments. Five core areas are identified and analyzed: speech acts, politeness strategies, discourse management, pragmatic failures, and the importance of pragmatic competence in teacher training.*

**Keywords:** *pragmatics, teacher talk, classroom interaction, speech acts, language use, communication strategies.*

### *Pragmatics of Teacher's Speech in the Classroom*

Language is the cornerstone of classroom communication. While grammar and vocabulary are important, understanding how language functions in context—its pragmatic use—is essential for effective teaching. Teachers constantly make real-time decisions about how to frame instructions, give feedback, and interact with students. This article outlines five core pragmatic aspects of teacher speech and illustrates their significance in educational settings.

#### 1. Speech Acts in the Classroom



Teachers regularly use speech acts to perform specific functions. These utterances are goal-oriented and often context-dependent. Five common types in classroom speech include:

1. Directives – Used to instruct or guide students (e.g., Write this down, Don't forget your homework.)
2. Interrogatives – Questions that encourage thinking or check understanding (e.g., Why do you think that happened?)
3. Feedback acts – Responses to student input (e.g., That's correct, Good effort, but think again.)
4. Commissives – Statements showing commitment (e.g., We'll review this tomorrow.)
5. Expressives – Expressions of approval, encouragement, or empathy (e.g., I'm proud of your progress.)

These speech acts structure interaction and directly affect student motivation and classroom atmosphere.

## 2. Politeness Strategies and Face Management

Teachers must balance authority with approachability. Pragmatic competence helps maintain this balance through politeness strategies, which preserve students' self-esteem (face). Examples include:

1. Hedging – Soften commands (e.g., Maybe we could try another example.)
2. Indirectness – Avoid imposing directly (e.g., Would you mind closing the window?)
3. Positive politeness – Encourage inclusion and friendliness (e.g., Great job, let's see who else has ideas.)



4. Negative politeness – Respect autonomy (e.g., If you're ready, we'll move on.)

5. Compliments and praise – Boost confidence (e.g., That's a creative answer!)

Using politeness strategies contributes to a respectful, student-centered classroom environment.

### 3. Managing Classroom Discourse

Teachers orchestrate classroom discourse, guiding turn-taking and interaction through subtle pragmatic cues. Key elements include:

1. Discourse markers – Help structure talk (e.g., Now, let's move on, As I was saying...)

2. Clarification requests – Ensure understanding (e.g., Can you repeat that? What do you mean by...?)

3. Repetition and reformulation – Make input comprehensible (e.g. repeating key vocabulary or paraphrasing)

4. Wait-time management – Allowing thinking time before responses

5. Encouraging interaction – Promoting peer dialogue and group tasks

Pragmatic awareness helps teachers adjust these strategies to the level and needs of learners.

### 4. Common Pragmatic Failures in Teacher Speech

Not all teacher talk is pragmatically effective. Sometimes, breakdowns in communication occur due to lack of awareness. Examples of pragmatic failures include:



1. Overuse of directives – May be perceived as too authoritarian
  2. Ignoring student cues – Missing signals of confusion or disengagement
  3. Insufficient praise or feedback – Failing to motivate or guide students
  4. Misuse of humor or sarcasm – Can lead to misunderstanding or embarrassment
  5. Cultural insensitivity – Using phrases or examples students don't relate to
- Avoiding these pitfalls requires cultural sensitivity and active listening.

#### 5. Developing Pragmatic Competence in Teacher Training

For effective teaching, educators must be trained not only in content but in communication strategies. Developing pragmatic competence involves:

1. Awareness training – Reflecting on one's speech and its effects
2. Classroom observation – Analyzing real teacher talk in context
3. Role-plays and simulations – Practicing classroom communication scenarios
4. Feedback from mentors – Constructive critiques on speech use
5. Language development – Especially for non-native teachers, mastering tone, intonation, and register

When teachers understand the pragmatics of their speech, they become more adaptable, empathetic, and impactful communicators.

### Conclusion

Pragmatics offers a powerful lens for understanding the true function of teacher talk. From giving instructions to building rapport, effective teacher speech



is both an art and a science. Pragmatic awareness enhances a teacher's ability to create a respectful, interactive, and motivating classroom environment. Thus, integrating pragmatics into teacher education is not optional—it is essential for modern, learner-centered teaching.

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