

# Analysis of the Causes and Countermeasures of Classroom Silence Phenomenon among Students in Contemporary Chinese Colleges and Universities

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**Abstract:** The college classroom is an important field for talent cultivation and student development in colleges and universities. However, in actual teaching, only a relatively small number of Chinese college students are able to actively participate in classroom activities and speak positively. Most students often choose to remain silent in response to teachers' questions. Classroom silence is generally categorized into negative silence and positive silence. Negative silence has become a major obstacle to improving the efficiency of classroom teaching, which to some extent affects the effectiveness and function of classroom teaching. By analyzing classroom silence, a common phenomenon in Chinese university classrooms, and analyzing the phenomenon of classroom silence and its causes from the perspectives of teachers' teaching and students' learning, we can better understand the characteristics of college students' classroom participation, reveal the deficiencies of teachers' classroom teaching, further propose strategies to improve classroom teaching and reduce the phenomenon of negative silence in college classrooms, and improve the effectiveness of college classroom teaching.

**Keywords:** Classroom Silence; Classroom Teaching; Chinese College Students.

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## 1. Introduction

Classroom teaching is an important organizational form of curriculum teaching and a key area of teaching reform in higher education. In China, due to the urgent need for economic and social development in the early years of the founding of the country, institutions of higher education often adopted a knowledge transfer-oriented, teacher-centered lecture method, whose efficiency eased the urgent need for economic construction. Since the 21st century, with the expansion of China's higher education, the issue of education quality has become a hot issue of concern to the government and the public, and improving the quality of classroom teaching has become a broad consensus to create a first-class undergraduate education [1]. Reforms emphasize that students should dare to ask questions and question when facing the authority of teachers in the classroom; education authorities also propose to reform the traditional teaching and learning forms, and promote the silent one-way classroom into an interactive place for colliding ideas and enlightening wisdom [2]. However, it seems that the effect of teaching reform has not been substantially improved, the most intuitive manifestation is that the classroom is still dull, the teacher's unidirectional lectures and silent students constitute the norm of the university classroom, the teaching effect is still unsatisfactory.

The phenomenon of silence belongs to the category of communicative linguistics, the main participants in the classroom are teachers and students, and the interaction between teachers and students constitutes teaching activities. Classroom silence can be divided into two categories: broad and narrow. Classroom silence in a broad sense refers to all silences in the classroom, while in a narrower sense it refers to the state of mind or behavior of individual students who show no intention of practicing or engaging with the requirements and content of the instruction [3]. Classroom silence has become a norm in daily teaching and learning, and

in terms of teaching effectiveness, which is mainly categorized into positive and negative silence [4]. Positive silence is a high-quality performance of students' real integration into the classroom, which contributes to the dissemination of teaching content and is a picture that teachers are happy to see in classroom teaching. However, negative silence is a passive state in which students respond to classroom teaching with silent expressions, which can hinder the enhancement of classroom teaching effects, and is a more difficult problem encountered by teachers in classroom teaching, which needs to take measures to actively solve. For the phenomenon of classroom silence, most researchers now hold a negative attitude that classroom silence hinders the development of students' abilities and affects the effectiveness and quality of teachers' teaching. However, if we can correctly recognize and effectively use classroom silence can play a positive role in teaching and learning.

## 2. Factors Leading to Classroom Silence

### 2.1. Teachers' Classroom Instructional Design Directly Affects Classroom Interaction

The classroom is constructed by both teachers and students, and previous studies have mainly focused on the students' side in explaining the causes of classroom silence; however, teachers' classroom teaching behaviors greatly influence students' classroom learning behaviors and are an important factor in constituting classroom silence. Teaching is a cooperative and interactive process, and teaching methods are the most important pedagogical tools to guide and regulate the teaching process [5]. Teachers generally agree that teaching methods are crucial to students' classroom learning outcomes and will consciously improve the design of classroom interactions and explore classroom teaching methods that enable students to actively participate in classroom

interactions and express themselves positively.

Traditional teaching methods promote negative classroom silence. The status quo of traditional university classroom teaching is mostly teachers lecturing, the textbook and the teacher constitute the main body of classroom teaching, and students have only little time to discuss or ask questions. At present, some college teachers in the daily teaching or habitually use the traditional indoctrination teaching methods, although the university provides teachers with modern teaching media and platforms, but some teachers failed to give full play to its role, only in the form of the combination of advanced teaching tools, but in fact the content of the textbook is still the same as the original screen, the teaching method is still copied from the previous way. The indoctrination type of teaching leads to a decrease in students' participation in the classroom and a significant decrease in their motivation to learn. At the same time, students who are detached from the classroom choose to pursue real-time stimulation of entertainment and give up listening to the lecture, thus creating silence in the classroom. Although some teachers also realize that group discussion creates a relaxed learning atmosphere, reduces the pressure on students to speak in front of their peers, and provides more opportunities for students to speak. However, teachers seldom adopt this teaching method because they are concerned about its learning effectiveness.

Teachers' lack of misconceptions about silence in the classroom contributes to the wrong cultural climate, where a quiet classroom is considered to be the best environment for learning and students are told that they need to be quiet and learn to listen in a traditional cultural context. In practice, different teachers demand different things from their classrooms, and long-term oppression leads to a situation where students only listen passively and the classroom discourse is always in the hands of the teacher. When faced with silence in the classroom, teachers often choose to wait for students' answers, and if they fail to get timely feedback, most teachers choose to give direct lectures or skip to the next chapter. Teachers do not reflect fully on this phenomenon, and students tend to become dependent on others for answers.

Teachers' choice of teaching content that does not meet the developmental level and needs of the students, the difficulty of the questions, the choice of topics that do not match the interests of the students, and the teaching materials that do not meet the actual needs of the students are all triggers of silence in the classroom. From the current university classroom exists a series of teaching methods and evaluation methods designed to enhance students' participation in the classroom, stimulate students' enthusiasm to speak in the classroom, although there is no lack of innovation in the form, but more on the surface of the novelty, under the rich and varied forms of low-quality classroom interaction still exists, the students can not really benefit from the design of such teaching.

## **2.2. The Way the Course is Evaluated Affects the Students' Motivation to Participate in the Classroom.**

Classroom teaching evaluation carries out quality monitoring and value recognition of classroom teaching through the functions of assessment, feedback, introspection, and criticism, which is the key link to enhance and deepen the reform of classroom teaching, and is an important part of the educational evaluation system and one of the focuses of the research [6]. The current evaluation system for talents in

colleges and universities is more perfect than that of twenty years ago, and the Ministry of Education requires the evaluation of students' classroom learning behavior and learning effects, which promotes teachers to improve their teaching methods and helps students to improve their learning methods and learning ability. However, in the actual classroom teaching, which is tantamount to increasing the teaching burden of teachers, some college teachers for the pursuit of classroom evaluation of intuitive and efficient, often selected to the students' classroom speech to record and score, which forced some students have to choose to participate in the oral speech to improve their scores. This practice directly aggravates the burden of students, even if the short-term increase in student participation in the classroom, students continue to increase the pressure of classroom learning will ultimately cause their aversion to class, fear and other negative emotions, and even lose interest in learning.

At the same time, in most universities in China, the phenomenon of large class size is still common, which means that it is difficult for teachers to pay attention to the learning status of each student, and it is difficult for them to cover the full range of students' judgments and evaluations. In a classroom with large class size, it is more difficult for teachers to manage, and it is easy to ignore the individual differences of students, coupled with the fact that some teachers mainly use the lecture method, the classroom atmosphere is poor, and it is difficult to carry out the interaction between teachers and students effectively. If students don't actively speak to get the teacher's attention, the teacher can't make an effective evaluation of the students after the course.

Students' learning methods and styles are diversified, and the persistent urging of students to participate in the classroom will disrupt the learning rhythm of some learners, who are constrained by the only standard, failing to set up classroom interactions and evaluation methods based on the learning characteristics of each student, and ignoring the needs of students' personalized development.

## **3. Measures to Eliminate Silence in the Classroom**

### **3.1. Renewal of Teaching Methods and Educational Evaluation**

In the university classroom, the teacher firmly occupies the dominant position in the classroom, is the main initiator of teacher-student interaction, and is also an important factor in triggering the negative silent behavior of the student classroom group. The current education reform and the talent market require teachers not only to truly change their educational cognition, update their educational philosophy, recognize the central position of students in the classroom, consciously review their teaching behavior, and actively improve their educational and teaching abilities. This is manifested in the following: the choice of classroom questioning methods should be very careful to minimize the negative pressure and psychological burden that may be brought to the students. It should be combined with the characteristics of the students to take the initiative to carry out the innovation of teaching methods, to provide students with more diversified channels of expression. For example, creating a virtual classroom to realize the anonymity of speech, reducing the moral pressure of students' classroom speech. Teachers must carefully examine and rationally analyze the silent behaviors of individual and groups of

students in the university classroom, and pay attention to the boundaries of teacher management without interfering with them [7]. Teachers should strengthen their own professionalism, consciously optimize educational and teaching behaviors, pay full attention to students' creativity, and promote students' active participation in classroom teaching activities with an equal stance in students' interactive communication. A positive and harmonious atmosphere can improve students' participation.

Classroom atmosphere is an important evaluation index of the impact of teacher teaching on students, and an important dimension for identifying students' satisfaction with the course, which is importantly reflected in the interaction between teachers and students [8]. Strengthening the communication between teachers and students after class reduces the authority of teachers and brings them closer to students, thus establishing a harmonious and supportive teacher-student relationship with students, so that students' tension and anxiety about participating in classroom activities will be significantly reduced. In classroom interaction, teachers should give students more positive feedback, which is very important for the realization of effective teaching. Students should be guided to fully realize that mistakes are an unavoidable part of the learning process, and that they will naturally become aware of their mistakes as they continue to develop their abilities, and should therefore be given more tolerance for mistakes and lower expectations to a certain extent.

In terms of classroom assessment, transparency and participation in the development of assessment criteria should be enhanced. The purpose of assessment is to promote students' development rather than to differentiate, so students need to know the criteria for assessment in order to measure and modify their own learning behaviors. Teachers should encourage students to participate in the process of formulating assessment standards in order to enhance students' recognition of the standard setting and improve their learning autonomy.

Colleges and universities should take the initiative to eliminate or reform the unfavorable factors that affect students' classroom participation. For example, they should implement the credit system reform, promote the construction of diversified curricula, support students to take courses of interest, and strictly control the class size. In response to students' indifference to classroom performance, colleges and universities should take corresponding initiatives, such as incorporating students' classroom performance into academic assessment or increasing its weight, and finding reasonable ways to quantitatively assess students' classroom performance, focusing on process evaluation, and prompting students to pay attention to classroom participation.

### **3.2. Remodeling Educational Concepts to Capitalize on Classroom Silence**

Teachers need to understand that silence has multiple meanings in teaching and learning, and to recognize that there are multiple ways for students to participate in the classroom, and that even if a student chooses to be silent it does not mean that the student is not cooperating with the teacher's instruction and actively thinking. It has been argued that learning from known concepts to new concepts is the zone of nearest cognitive development for students and is a challenging task for students to tackle in the classroom. Silence in the classroom gives students the time to engage in

a collision of ideas that leads to a deeper understanding of new concepts [9]. Classroom silence, as a common phenomenon, has a variety of roles to play in the teaching and learning process. It can create relaxation time at the beginning of a new learning phase, allowing students to settle down for meditation and helping them to adapt more easily to a new learning environment or a higher level of learning content. Or at the end of a learning period, it enables students to maximize their depth of thought and reflect in an internal space where their minds are free from the influence of teachers and classmates, giving them the opportunity to create their own new, deeper perspectives. It also contributes to discipline and control, and teachers can skillfully use silence to control classroom discipline, focus students' attention, as well as adjust teaching progress for better teaching results. All in all, giving full play to the positive functions of classroom silence to meet students' individualized and diversified curriculum needs will further release the vitality of classroom teaching.

### **3.3. Attention to the Psychological State of Groups and Individuals of Students**

Among the factors influencing negative group silent behavior in college classroom, students' inappropriate self-perception, psychological state and their special psychological reaction in the group are often neglected by researchers. These factors are important reasons for students' negative silent behavior in college classrooms. Excessive self-concern and strong self-image management tendency are common in student groups. Some college students are accustomed to magnify their mistakes infinitely and cannot accept frustration. Some are overly concerned about group views, and when they have a different point of view or a desire to speak, they choose to be silent in order to maintain a high degree of consistency with others and cater to group ideas. At the same time, it is undeniable that some students are unable to communicate effectively with teachers in the classroom, indeed, there is a correlation with their relatively poor self-control [10]. College workers should pay attention to the psychological situation of students in time, help students to adjust the bad cognition, and promote the development of reasonable self-identity and emotional self-regulation ability. In the students' learning attitude, learning habits, learning methods and learning psychology to regulate and help, pay attention to the organization of students to carry out learning-related activities, in practice to adjust the cognitive and enhance self-confidence. At the same time, we use appropriate positive evaluation to motivate students and increase their self-confidence and initiative, thereby minimizing frustration and enhancing their self-efficacy.

## **4. Conclusion**

In the university classroom, silence is a common phenomenon plaguing teachers, negative classroom silence hinders effective communication between teachers and students, which greatly affects the quality of teaching and learning in the course. In this regard, the backward teaching methods of teachers and the monolithic management and evaluation system of universities have led to the reduction of teacher-student interaction. In response to this phenomenon, educators need to look at the phenomenon dialectically and make full use of the positive silence. The negative aspects can be eliminated through the joint efforts of educators, university administrators and students, thus promoting the improvement

of classroom quality.

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