

Strategies for Teachers to Foster a Positive Classroom Atmosphere

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Abstract: A positive classroom atmosphere is the key foundation for ensuring teaching quality, stimulating students' learning initiative, and implementing the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. A positive classroom atmosphere effectively reduces students' learning anxiety and improves teacher-student interaction and teaching efficiency. Based on pedagogical and psychological theories, this study conducted a 16-week controlled experiment involving 520 students from 12 classes in six primary and secondary schools. Through questionnaires and classroom observations, this research identified four core dimensions of a positive classroom atmosphere and constructed a four-dimensional strategy system. The results show that after implementing comprehensive strategies, students' classroom participation increased by 51.6%, learning anxiety decreased by 43.1%, and classroom disciplinary issues were significantly reduced. The integrated application of multiple strategies effectively optimizes the classroom ecology and improves students' learning status. The findings provide practical references for frontline teachers to build a positive educational atmosphere and offer empirical and theoretical support for classroom teaching reform in primary and secondary schools.

Keywords: Classroom Atmosphere; Teacher Instruction; Classroom Management; Teacher-student Interaction

1. Introduction

The classroom is the core venue for school education and teaching. As an implicit educational environment, the classroom atmosphere directly affects students' cognition, learning motivation, and mental health, serving as an important implicit indicator of teaching quality. The new curriculum reform in basic education emphasizes a student-centered

approach, advocates a shift away from traditional lecture-based instruction, and promotes the construction of a democratic, equal, positive, and efficient classroom ecology [1]. Accordingly, fostering a positive classroom atmosphere has become a core component of teachers' professional competence.

At present, many primary and secondary school classrooms still suffer from a dull atmosphere, insufficient teacher-student interaction, low student engagement, and prominent classroom anxiety. Some teachers prioritize knowledge delivery over atmosphere building, and classroom control over emotional communication, which limits the full realization of educational value and hinders the development of students' core competencies. Therefore, based on frontline teaching practices, analyzing the characteristics of a positive classroom atmosphere through empirical research and exploring effective strategies for teachers to cultivate such an atmosphere is of great practical significance for optimizing classroom ecology, improving teaching quality, and promoting students' holistic development [2]. Existing domestic studies on classroom atmosphere mainly focus on its educational value and individual construction methods. However, most lack empirical data support, and research on the combined effects of multi-dimensional strategies remains limited. This study relies on empirical data, systematically integrates multiple optimization strategies, and quantitatively analyzes the effects of different strategies. It addresses gaps in current research and provides scientific and practical solutions for classroom atmosphere construction in primary and secondary schools.

2. Theoretical Basis and Core Dimensions of a Positive Classroom Atmosphere

2.1 Core Theoretical Support

This study is grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Social Learning Theory, and

Affective Teaching Theory. SDT posits that learning motivation stems from three core psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. A positive classroom atmosphere meets these needs and stimulates intrinsic learning motivation. In classroom teaching, teachers' respect, encouragement, and inclusiveness foster students' sense of psychological security and autonomy, encouraging active participation [3].

Social Learning Theory emphasizes the importance of observational learning and environmental influence. Students' classroom behaviors and attitudes are subtly shaped by teachers' conduct and the overall classroom atmosphere. Teachers' positive teaching attitudes and constructive guidance serve as role models, fostering a classroom culture of active learning and interaction.

Affective Teaching Theory views teaching as a process integrating cognition and emotion. Positive teacher-student emotional interactions eliminate communication barriers, enhance classroom rapport, and lay an affective foundation for effective teaching. Together, these theories form the theoretical framework for constructing a positive classroom atmosphere.

2.2 Core Dimensions of a Positive Classroom Atmosphere

A positive classroom atmosphere is a comprehensive classroom ecology shaped by multiple interrelated factors, rather than a single emotional state. Based on existing research and classroom investigations, it comprises four closely connected core dimensions: emotional security, interactive participation, orderly autonomy, and supportive environment. Each dimension has its own focus while reinforcing one another.

Emotional security forms the foundation of a positive classroom atmosphere. It centers on building inclusive and trusting teacher-student relationships to reduce students' classroom anxiety. In such an environment, students feel safe to express opinions and take risks without fear of mistakes, maintaining a relaxed mindset that underpins active learning [4].

Interactive participation represents the core vitality of the classroom. It breaks the one-way lecture-based model and promotes two-way communication between teachers and students, as well as among peers. It includes classroom questioning, group inquiry, and peer feedback,

turning students from passive listeners into active thinkers and collaborators, and energizing the classroom with intellectual engagement.

Orderly autonomy is the key to effective classroom functioning. It balances clear, fair classroom rules with appropriate student autonomy. The classroom runs smoothly with established norms, while students enjoy reasonable freedom to learn and express themselves, avoiding excessive control that stifles individuality.

A supportive environment provides essential external backing, covering both physical and psychological aspects. A neat, comfortable, and well-organized physical space boosts students' focus; psychologically, it offers adequate learning resources, individualized guidance, and fair assessment, ensuring tailored support for students at all levels.

These four dimensions complement each other to form a complete positive classroom atmosphere system, directly shaping students' learning experiences and academic outcomes.

3. Strategies for Teachers to Foster a Positive Classroom Atmosphere

3.1 Two-Way Affective Interaction Strategy

Emotion is the core bond shaping teacher-student relationships and classroom atmosphere. This strategy focuses on enhancing emotional security. Teachers should adopt an inclusive communication style, replacing rigid attitudes with warmth and openness. First, teachers should maintain positive emotional expression through encouraging language, gentle demeanor, and consistent eye contact, which reduces students' anxiety and fosters a tolerant classroom culture. Empirical data indicate that classes where teachers consistently display positive emotions experience a 28% reduction in student anxiety and significantly improved psychological security.

Second, teachers should provide personalized emotional care, attending to the learning and emotional needs of students at different levels. Extra encouragement and guidance should be offered to underachieving students, while quiet students should be given more opportunities to participate. Such practices build reciprocal teacher-student relationships and enhance students' sense of belonging and motivation [5].

3.2 Teaching Method Optimization Strategy

Overreliance on lecture-based teaching is a major cause of dull classrooms and low engagement. Optimizing teaching methods is essential for activating classroom dynamics and increasing interaction. Teachers should adopt interactive, situational, and differentiated approaches aligned with subject characteristics and students' cognitive levels. Methods such as group inquiry, problem-based scenarios, and real-life applications reduce classroom passivity and encourage active thinking, participation, and exploration.

Differentiated instruction should be implemented by designing tiered tasks to support advanced students, consolidate learning for average students, and assist struggling learners. This prevents polarization and negative classroom dynamics. Diversified teaching methods mobilize student agency, address traditional limitations of passive learning, and invigorate classroom activities.

3.3 Scientific Classroom Management Strategy

Orderly classroom routines form the foundation of a positive atmosphere. Scientific management emphasizes positive guidance, democratic participation, and flexible discipline, rather than strict control [6]. First, teachers should co-construct classroom rules with students, encouraging their participation in formulation and supervision. This enhances students' recognition and compliance, reducing disciplinary incidents.

Second, positive reinforcement should replace criticism and blame. Praise, encouragement, and modeling reinforce positive behaviors, fostering self-discipline, cooperation, and focus. A flexible conflict resolution approach addresses tensions calmly and prevents adversarial teacher-student relationships, promoting an orderly, harmonious, and autonomous classroom environment.

3.4 Internal and External Classroom Environment Optimization Strategy

The classroom environment includes physical and psychological dimensions, both influencing the overall atmosphere. Physically, teachers may adjust seating arrangements to group configurations that promote interaction, optimize lighting and decoration, and create a clean, comfortable, and academically inspiring space. Psychologically, teachers should build a fair,

inclusive, and open classroom culture, avoiding differential treatment and labeling. Encouraging students to question and innovate reduces anxiety about speaking up. Rich learning resources and digital tools diversify instruction, increase engagement, and support a positive classroom atmosphere.

4. Empirical Research and Data Analysis

4.1 Research Design and Sample Overview

To verify strategy effectiveness, a controlled experiment was conducted with 520 students from 12 classes in six local primary and secondary schools, divided into six experimental classes and six control classes. The experimental group implemented integrated strategies of affective interaction, teaching optimization, classroom management, and environmental improvement. The control group followed conventional instruction. The experiment lasted 16 weeks. Data were collected via classroom observation, student questionnaires, and academic assessments, analyzing effects across classroom atmosphere dimensions, student behaviors, and learning outcomes. All data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0, with results statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

4.2 Data Statistics and Results

After 16 weeks, data were analyzed across three aspects: improvements in classroom atmosphere dimensions, student participation patterns, and changes in learning outcomes.

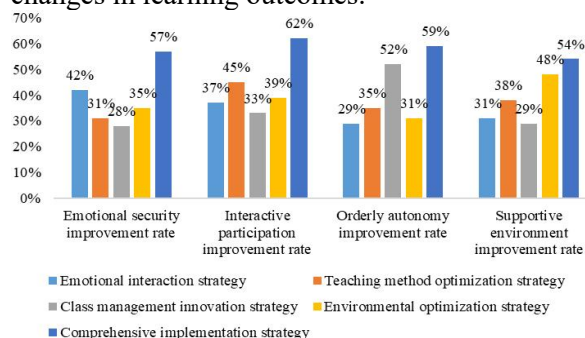


Figure 1. Improvement Rates of Classroom Atmosphere Dimensions under Different Strategies

The effects of different strategies on classroom atmosphere dimensions are shown in Figure 1. Among individual strategies, affective interaction yielded the highest improvement in emotional security (42%); teaching optimization maximized interactive participation (45%); classroom management most improved orderly

autonomy (52%); and environmental optimization enhanced the supportive environment most effectively (48%). The comprehensive strategy achieved improvements of 57%, 62%, 59%, and 54% respectively, all exceeding 54%, clearly outperforming any single strategy.

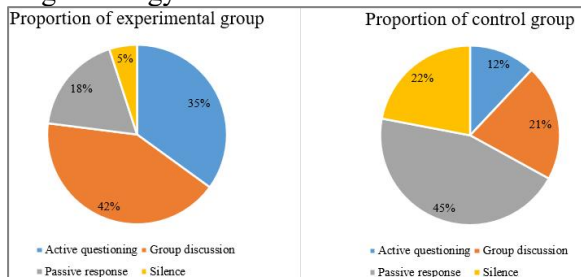


Figure 2. Proportions of Students' Classroom Participation Behaviors in Two Groups

Student participation proportions in the two groups are shown in Figure 2. In the control group, passive responses accounted for 45%, silence 22%, and active questioning only 12%, reflecting low engagement and a dull atmosphere. In the experimental group, active questioning and group discussion reached 77% (35% + 42%), while silence dropped to 5%, demonstrating significantly increased active participation, collaboration, and student agency.

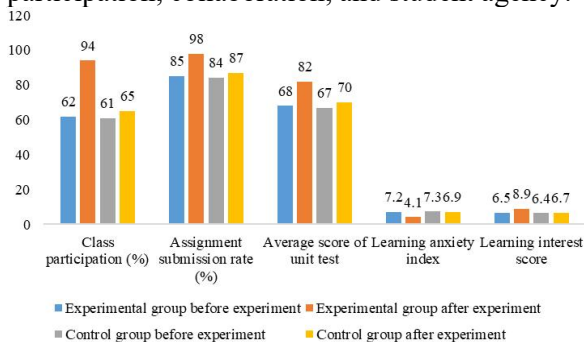


Figure 3. Changes in Students' Learning Status before and after Strategy Implementation

Changes in learning outcomes before and after intervention are shown in Figure 3. Baseline levels were similar across groups. After intervention, the experimental group's classroom participation rose from 62% to 94%, assignment submission from 85% to 98%, average test scores from 68 to 82, learning anxiety index decreased from 7.2 to 4.1, and learning interest scores increased from 6.5 to 8.9. The control group showed only minor fluctuations. The results confirm that a positive classroom atmosphere not only improves interaction but also reduces anxiety, enhances interest, and boosts academic performance.

Collectively, single strategies have limited impact. Only the integrated implementation of affective interaction, teaching optimization, classroom management, and environmental improvement can systematically build a sustainable positive classroom atmosphere and maximize educational effectiveness.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

This study explored strategies for fostering a positive classroom atmosphere based on pedagogical and psychological theories. Through empirical experimentation, four core dimensions were identified, and a four-dimensional strategy system was established. The results confirm that integrated strategies significantly enhance emotional security, participation, and classroom order, reduce anxiety and disciplinary issues, and optimize classroom ecology and educational quality.

The strategies proposed are practical and scalable for frontline teachers and school reform. Limitations include a geographically restricted sample and a relatively short intervention period, limiting long-term effect assessment. Future research may expand samples, extend intervention duration, and explore strategies for digital environments to continuously improve classroom education systems and support high-quality basic education.

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