



Teacher Presence: what is it and how can we achieve it?

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ABSTRACT

The article gives data about what teacher presence is and how can we – as we are pre-service teachers – acquire it so that we can deliver our speech with our confidence by strongly claiming our presence in a classroom. Moreover, it goes into in-depth details about the mistakes non-professional teachers make and presents tips so as to avoid them.

Keywords:

Teacher presence, good presence, bad presence, body language, posture, eye contact, voice, indifference, favouritism, parrot teaching (echo-teaching), going too quick, dress code,

When you enter a room, you - as a teacher - speak volumes to your students before you even open your mouth to start a lesson. For students or kids, it might clearly be a scary thought. However, from this thought they can soundly draw a conclusion about you - as a teacher, your standards, your seriousness, and how much you care about them. So, this is called as a *teacher presence*.

Your task is, whether you intend to or not, to communicate with your students through your *body language, posture, eye contact, and your voice*. Teachers who have skills at demonstrating good presence in a classroom are technically capable of setting the fair enough conditions for learning environment so that the students may learn something useful without wasting their time.

When it comes to the meaning of 'good presence', I want to highlight that it does mean projecting at the same time the authority and warmth through a classroom so that you are able to simultaneously be a demanding and kind teacher. This will allow you to give orders

and inspire students to meet high learning standards.

In fact, a good teacher presence is not something which is a must-have in you right now. Because it is not a talent or quality, it is a skill which is acquired after putting in a lot of hard work, unlike talent - it is not inborn - but learnt. The good news is that this skill can be improved no matter what time is. However, it isn't obviously easy, it takes you to work your fingers to the bone and practise a lot so that you learn, observe and receive feedback by being in that environment. In particular, taking feedback on apparently miniscule things like your posture or facial expression can improve you and give you more experience in projecting your presence through the class.

A good example of good presence: You have straight but relaxed posture focusing on the students. You make steady eye contact, and your expression is positive or neutral. Your voice is decisive and strong enough to fill the room. And you show significantly controlled

pauses as you speak. Your diction is formal and concise.

Keeping only one facial expression or posture is monotonous and boring for students. To meet their needs, you can project warmth, confidence, seriousness during the lesson. You can change the quality of your voice, posture or facial expression so as to create a particular effect on students by breaking the ice between you and them and helping them learn. Moreover, by moving around the classroom, you can modulate your voice and change your body language so that you can easily keep the students focused and limit the disruptions taking place in the classroom.

Those abovementioned tips may sound very simple, but modulating one's presence is actually a subtle skill which is acquired by only practicing surprisingly a lot and self-awareness. The easiest way of learning and getting started is to have performances in front of a mirror. Furthermore, you need to observe an instructional teacher's class so that he/she can model teacher presence for you, and give feedback for your performances. Being a teacher in a classroom is not always communicating with student, but also making sure that what kind of messages or information your students receive. When you develop and project good teacher presence in a classroom and know when and how to modulate it, you will have a powerful tool so as to make your students learn and progress in your classroom.

As for the term 'bad teacher presence', it is the exact opposite of good teacher presence. Actually, a teacher who doesn't work on pedagogical skills and is without training and practice may project a bad teacher presence. For example:

- Indifference – a teacher mustn't treat students with indifference. In some cases, while entering a classroom, teachers don't pay heed to the students by answering a phone or playing it, and doing the things concerning only themselves. On top of that, without introducing a new topic, they just instruct students to read a book and concern about the liabilities or problems happening in their life.

- Favouritism – a teacher mustn't speak to only one student, he/she needs to keep a balance among them. It is fundamentally unfair on pedagogical terms that treating only one person better than others or liking them more affects students by contributing inequalities or inequities in the classroom. This will obviously lead to develop a kind of environment where the students, who are not favoured or unliked, may likely start to have negative attitudes towards the teacher, and eventually towards that school.
- Parrot teaching (echo-teaching) – a teacher mustn't repeat what his/her students said. It is a mistake of teachers to repeat the same information which has already been said by students. With only constant repetition, a teacher is incapable of creating a learning atmosphere. There won't be any progress.
- Going too quick – a teacher must give time for students so that they are able to understand what he/she is talking about. A teacher is not having lessons for themselves, they are teaching and sharing their knowledge with others. So that they must give time for students or kids to realise and understand what a teacher is talking about or what kind of questions she is asking..
- Dress code – a teacher must follow a strict dress code. Actually, accessories or some dresses are the things which require and grab attention of others. So that, a teacher must wear neutral coloured dresses so as not to distract the students.

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