

**The practices of Tripoli University TEFL teachers
regarding Teacher Talking Time and Student Talking
Time as perceived by them.**

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Abstract

This paper examined the relationship between much teacher talk time and the weak level of students speaking and fluency. Language in classrooms must be communicative more than grammatical, especially in the advanced levels, where the study was conducted. Results of the study show a very strong relationship, this relation becomes very obvious from the responses of 10 instructors at the English Language Department who answered the questionnaire, and the two records of the students show it as well.

Introduction

Throughout my years of learning and teaching, many teachers have problems in giving their students an opportunity to interact with them or with each other, this happens for many reasons: like fear of silence, forgetting to give students time to think, giving too long or complicated instructions and explanations, lack of confidence, repeating instructions, and lack of experience with communication skills. So they talk to students not communicate with them. So: what

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is the relationship between much teacher talking time and the weak level of students fluency?

If the teacher talks to the students, it doesn't mean that the students are actually learning anything. In fact, they may not be doing much at all and may have switched off from the lesson. Also the teacher knows the language, but the students who need to practice speaking it.

Teacher talking time (TTT) is the time the teacher spends talking in his/her classroom lecturing, giving instructions and explanations. While Student Talking Time (STT) is the time that students spend in the classroom speaking the target language asking questions, giving opinions, interacting with the teacher or with each other.

Teaching learning process is very weak, and our classroom environment is totally based on memorization. Teachers are not concerned for the development of intellectual and thinking skills among students who are given very little time for active participation and interaction. The teacher seems to be in a very dominant role in his/her class.

Literature Review

Krashen (1981) believes that Language acquisition is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language--natural communication--in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding.

Richards (2006) states that the type of classroom activities proposed in CLT also implied new roles in the classroom for teachers and learners. Learners now had to participate in classroom activities that were based on a cooperative rather than individualistic approach to learning. Students had to become comfortable with listening to their peers in group work or pair work tasks, rather than relying on the teacher for a model. The classroom is like a community where all learners learn through collaboration and sharing.

Regarding to the amount of teacher talk, Chaudron (1988) states that 'research in first language classrooms has established that teachers tend to do most of the talking about 60 % of the moves'.

Classroom-centered research or classroom-originated research investigates the

process of teaching and learning as they occur in classroom setting. "It simply tries to

investigate what happens inside the classroom" (Allwright & Bailey, 1991:3)

This is too high for a communicative language teaching classroom. While Krashen (1981) asserted that comprehensible input is "the crucial and necessary ingredient" (p. 9) for second language acquisition, Swain (1985) demonstrated that input alone is insufficient for developing language production skills and argued instead for the importance of comprehensible output, noting that learners need to pay more attention to meaning when producing language than for comprehension. Moreover, Nunan (1991) explains that while excessive teacher talk is to be avoided, understanding what

is 'excessive' is subjective. He argues that teacher talk is necessary to provide learners with what can be their only access to live target language input.

Dillon (1998) visited 27 classrooms in six schools. He found that questions accounted for over 60% of the teachers' talk and for less than 1% of the students' talk. Tsui (1995) also points out that studies conducted on classroom interaction have shown that student talk accounts for an average of less than thirty percent of the total talk in teacher-centered classrooms. She believes that learners not only learn to talk, but they also talk to learn. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes the communication inside the class, pair and teamwork and student involvement in the learning process. Therefore, there is a belief that teacher's presence in the class should be reduced.

Reason to Reduce TTT

In a communicative language teaching the use of too much teacher taking time should be minimized due to different reasons: Firstly, it minimizes students talking time; secondly, too much teacher talk bored the learners and they fail to concentrate on their learning; Thirdly, if the teacher talk too much, he or she concentrates on discreet language items like grammar rule, vocabulary and feedback. This strategy never create learning opportunity and the learner is told about the language not to use the target language; fourthly, excessive teacher talk also make the learner passive participant and discourage interaction; and too much TTT minimizes

students learning autonomy and they do not want to take any learning responsibility(Darn,2007).

The importance of implementing communicative language teaching to increase students interaction and communication in our classrooms.

According to Littlewood (2000), a communicative approach views language not only in terms of its structures (grammar and vocabulary), but also in terms of the communicative functions that it performs. Freeman (2011) believed that the communicative language teaching approach was one of the most successful ways of teaching and learning English language in this century. Teachers should build a strong relationship with their students in order to use language to communicate.

When a teacher increases the interaction between students, this will help them to have more opportunities to use English in the class. Moreover, the interaction between students would help them receive feedback for their mistakes and errors. If the atmosphere is comfortable for the students, there will be a stronger relationship between the students and their teacher. This comfort surely will work since the student will feel more confident using the target language in class as if it is used in the real life situations. Shartri (2010), states that language can be learned according to the purpose of learning it. Many learners have goals of learning the language and by using this approach the learners can focus on their target acquisition part of the language.

Data collection and analysis

A questionnaire was conducted which contained 10 questions to prove the hypothesis for this research in the department of English Language Faculty of Languages University of Tripoli. The participants were 4 males and 6 females, 4 PhD. and 6 MA. 9 of them have more than 11 years of experience, teaching different subjects like; conversation, reading comprehension, general English, grammar, composition, applied linguistics, theoretical linguistics, and translation.

1.How often do you ask your students questions to express their opinions?

Often sometimes rarely never

The results show that 70% of the participants answered "*sometimes*" and 30% "*often*".

Students should be always asked questions to express their opinions and feelings in order to learn the language and to be more fluent. As we can see from the participants responses the percentage of *often* is very low.

2.How often do you raise topics that are related to students interests?

Often sometimes rarely never

Results show that 50% of the instructors have chosen *sometimes*, 20% have chosen *rarely*, and only 30% of them have chosen *often*.

The instructor should notice himself/herself talking a lot in the classroom and his/her students not saying much. Ask them some questions, ask them how the topic relates to their lives, and get them talking to each other. A discussion can bring out your students' interests and motivate them; it's a chance for students to talk about opinions they really care about. Giving and justifying opinions in English can also bring students a sense of accomplishment, as they are using the language to express complex ideas.

3. How often do you ask your students to volunteer to participate?

Often sometimes rarely never

70% of the participants have chosen *sometimes*, **10%** *rarely*, and only **20%** of them have chosen *often*.

In addition, instructors should encourage their students to volunteer to participate and speak to increase their skill of speaking, but this cannot be seen as the participants' responses show.

4. How often do you give your students opportunity to ask questions in the class.

Often sometimes rarely never

The results show that **40%** have chosen *sometimes*, **10%** have chosen *rarely*, and **50%** of them have chosen *often*.

No doubt that opportunities should always be given in the language class to students to speak whether they ask questions or give answers or make discussions.

5. Do you give priority to students' interaction in the class?

Often sometimes rarely never

The answers show that **60%** of the participants have chosen *sometimes*, **10%** have chosen *rarely*, and **30%** have chosen *often*.

This percentage shows that **70%** of the instructors don't give priority to students interaction in the class, and this surely affects the students fluency and confidence.

6. Do you often give long explanations in the class?

Often sometimes rarely never

The results illustrate that **40%** of the participants have chosen *sometimes*, and **60%** of them have chosen *often*.

As a result of the findings, instructors should use elicitation rather than explanation. And they can reduce TTT presenting with clear examples and guiding questions. Long explanations prevent students of speaking and interacting in the class.

7. What do you usually do when your student cannot answer your question?

a. Wait a few seconds then move to another student.

b. Wait until the student's face turns red, and then move to the next student who is raising his/her hand.

c. Reform the question, wait a few seconds, and then give the answer yourself.

The results show that **70%** have chosen (a), and **30%** have chosen (c). which indicates that the instructor doesn't give the opportunity to the students to answer his/her question, when he/she moves directly to another students for the answer.

8. When your student gives a one or two-word response, what do you usually do?

- a. Say, “good job” feeling happy that he/she said anything at all.
- b. Move to another student to get the full answer.
- c. Encourage him/her to make it longer.
- d. Other:

The results show that **40%** have chosen (a), and **60%** have chosen (c).

The instructor should ask other students to give explanations or definitions rather than he himself – seeing what other students know before he tells them. Asking open questions requiring longer answers, not just Yes/No answers - so questions with 'what', 'why', 'when', 'how', and so on. Give your students time to think and talk. Instructors should not be afraid of silence and jump in.

9. What do you think is the ratio of your talk to your students talk in the class? (your talk - your students' talk).

90:10 80:20 60:40 40:60 20:80 10:90

The results show that 60% have chosen 80:20, 10% have chosen 90:10, 20% have chosen 60:40, and only 10% of the participants have chosen 40:60.

Most English teaching experts now believe that the ideal ratio of Talking Time should be around 30% for the teacher, 70% for the students. This will depend on the lesson, so sometimes more, sometimes less. But as the answers for this question indicate that most of the participants 90% speak more than their students in the class, and this has a negative impact on the process of the interaction. And also if TTT is much more than STT, students will not take any

responsibility for their own learning but learn what the teacher decides and when. Student autonomy is thus limited.

10. Are you satisfied with the amount of your students talk in your class?

Very satisfied Satisfied Not satisfied

50%of the participants are*not satisfied* and **50%**are *satisfied*.

Furthermore, instructors should not be satisfied with this low amount of students speaking in the class, and for those that are not satisfied, should find a way to promote a discussion among students.

I have more than sixty records, they were all conversation exams in the English Language Department. But only two will be presented as examples of poor level of fluency.

This is the first sample of students speaking level. It was a final exam, it lasted for 5 minutes. A male student, he has been studying English for about 9 years, only 3 were in the English Language Department.

Instructor: good morning. This is the speaking final exam.

Student: good morning doctor.

Instructor: can you tell me something about yourself? What do you do for example in your free time? Do you have a hobby or something?

Student: yes, I have two dogs.....(silence) I take all of time with them.

Instructor: why dogs?

Student: dogs(silence) I love dog I love animal ...I have dogs and birds.

Instructor: why do you think some people have hobbies?

Student: (No answer)

Instructor: you like birds, you like pets for example.

Student: yes.

Instructor: do you think this is important for someone to have a hobby?

Student: no, not important, butsome people love themand some people don't love them.

Instructor: I am not talking about animals, I am talking about a hobby. Do you think people should have hobbies?

Student: yes, should have hobby.

Instructor: why?

Student:because this is what they love.....

Instructor: ok. Sometimes people spend too much time on a hobby. Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Student: no not good.

Instructor: why?

Student? Because you have another work you should do it ...

Instructor: and some people actually they don't have hobbies. Why do you think so?

Student:I don't know, but

Instructor: ok, now let`s talk about TV. Programs. What is your favorite TV.Program?

Student: my favorite TV. Program National Geographic.

Instructor: why?

Student: because it have a lot of program about animal

Instructor: ok. And why only animals. Why don't you like to watch other thing?

Student: I don't worry about another things. Just animal that's what

Instructor: why do you think animals are important to us?

Student: not to us to me it's important. I love them very much. Because when I went to the home I go to my dogs play with them.

Instructor: ok. Some people think that we should not keep animals in zoos (closed area), animals should be free. What do you think of this?

Student: animal should be free in a jungle not in atown.

Instructor: is it a good idea to have zoos for example?

Student: yes, is a good idea.

Instructor: why?

Student: because people in Libya, a lot people love animal, go to see them in the zooa lot of kind of animal they can't buy them

Instructor: but some people think that animals are free and should live freely in the (we say) rural areas not to be kept in these rooms or cages. What do you think of this?

Student:(No answer)

Instructor: ok. Now let's talk about travelling. Have you ever travelled before?

Student: yes.

Instructor: where did you go?

Student: I travelled to Turkey, Jordan.

Instructor: ok. Is there a country that you would like to travel to in the future?

Student: yes

Instructor: where?

Student: France.

Instructor: why France?

Student: I listen about it verya lot of things wonderful.....

Instructor: ok. What is you after you graduate from your college?

What`s your dream job? What do you like to do in the future?

Student: the airport

Instructor: what do you mean the airport?

Student:(No answer)

Instructor: you work at the airport?

Student: yes.

Instructor: what type of job would you like to do?

Student: Flight departure (student said it in Arabic)

Instructor: you don`t have to speak Arabic.

Instructor: why the airport? Why is it a special job for you?

Student: I love travellingand in one year you have free ticket to any country you want.

Instructor: thank you, and this is the end of the exam.

And this is the second sample, a female student. She has been studying English for 10 years, only 4 were in the English Language Department.

Instructor: good morning.

Student: good morning doctor.

Instructor: if you remember we took a topic about woman and the jobs women do. What type of jobs do you think are suitable for women?

Student: about me a housewife

Instructor: is that a job?

Student: yes.

Instructor: why?

Student: because I like cookingand baby.....and clean the house.....

Instructor: some people think that women can't do difficult jobs. What do you think of this?

Student: difficult?

Instructor: repeated the question.

Student: difficult jobsmaybe working the company.

Instructor: is that a difficult job?

Student: yes.

Instructor: and some people think women can't do these jobs. Why?

Student:(No answer).

Instructor: yes.

Student:(No answer).

Instructor: have you ever had a dream of travelling to another country?

Student:anything any country.

Instructor: any country? Have you ever travelled before?

Student: yes.

Instructor: where did you go?

Student: Czechoslovakia

Instructor: can you tell me something about that country?

Student: it is very beautifulI love itit is a bigandthere is many pretty people.

Instructor: can you tell me about the weather?

Student: it`s cold.....very cold.....and raining every day

Instructor: how about the summer in the Czech?

Student: no, no it`s cold.....sometimes it`s sunny.....and everyday it`s cold.

Instructor: do you think that there is a relationship between the personality of a person and his name?

Student:no.....

Instructor: in what way? Why no?

Student:different name and personality

Instructor: do you think that parents should choose any name they like or they should think about their children`s opinion? About names.

Student:maybe any name.....

Instructor: why any name?

Student:maybe your father choose or your mother.

Instructor: but many people now they don't like their names, why do you think so?

Student: sometimes name very big..... .

Instructor: what do you mean by a big name?

Student: no, not big.

Instructor: why do you think people don't like their names?

Student: maybe is not nice nameyes.

Instructor: thank you very much, this is the end of the speaking test.

As we can see, even in the exams of speaking the amount of TTT to STT is very high. This is where the student should be asked a question and be most of the time responding by giving explanations, examples, clarifications...etc. we noticed in the two samples that the students are not fluent, although they have been studying English for many years.

Conclusion

Speaking a language is intuitive which is why students need to be given time to speak. Being told how to speak a language doesn't reflect the trial and error process and exploration that leads everyone to learn their first language. The traditional role of a teacher lecturing and students listening doesn't represent the way people actually communicate. Actual communication goes on without feedback from an instructor and prompting. People also have a tendency to lose concentration which being lectured. This results in classroom time

not only being ineffective but not even beneficial. So excessive TTT will surely limit the amount of STT and results in teacher-centered lessons, loss of concentration, boredom and limited speaking skills.

There are some good strategies to eliminate teacher talking time. One strategy is to encourage interaction between students instead of between the teacher and student. Pairs and team work can be used to discuss topics and review material. Another strategy that a teacher can adopt is not to repeat correct answers given by students. This strategy has two advantages. The first being that time isn't taken up by repeating answers a student gave correctly which is unnecessary and secondly it promotes confidence to continue speaking without being prompted. Another strategy for a teacher to use is not confirming everything a student says. A more effective way to promote interaction is for a teacher to simply not respond and wait attentively by giving the student an opportunity to give more information and details. This will accustom students to naturally start speaking more and expressing in English.

While teacher talking time has many advantages, which are necessary, especially for the first stages of student's learning a language, it should be avoided at the university stage at least.

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