"Teacher Talking Time VS Student Talking Time: Encouraging Speaking in EFL Classroom- A Case Study at the "Sami Frasheri" Gymnasium in Prishtina"

Trendeline Haliti[*]

Lagjja Kalabria,10000 Prishtine, Kosovo
Email: trendeline.haliti@ubt-uni.net

Abstract

The main goal of most language learners is how to achieve fluent speaking in the target language. But, at the same time it is a challenge for teachers to develop it in and to try to make communication in this target language part of everyday situations and contexts, because of the fact that English is not the native language. This challenge is enhanced even more when it comes to classes consisting of a large number of students with about 40 minutes to finish the class. Thus, this paper aims to present a research in the role of teacher talking time (TTT) and student talking time (STT) in promoting a communicational and collaborating environment for non-native speakers of English, in an English as-a-foreign language class (EFL). In my paper, I provided definitions and theories of TTT and STT. I showed the difference between these two favoring a higher amount of STT over TTT and the positive uses of it. Furthermore, I conducted a study in one of the high schools of Prishtina regarding STT and TTT. I analyzed the data collected at "Sami Frasheri" gymnasium in Prishtina, where I examined two groups of 11th graders and exposed them to the same lesson plan. In one class most of the talk was done by the teacher, a role that I took, whereas the other class was student-centered. For this research, I used exploratory research methodology. Through classroom observation, post-test, delayed test and a survey, I gathered data that clearly indicated the ways STT and TTT affect communication and collaboration in class.

Keywords: Teacher Talking Time (TTT); Student Talking Time (STT; communication; learner-centered classroom; communicative approach.

----

* Corresponding author.

1. Introduction

As English is becoming a dominant world language, the need for good communication skills has increased too. Thus, the educational system is imposing a demand for more teaching strategies that improve the quality of teaching communicative and collaborative language skills. Part of these methods and strategies is also creating a comfortable environment for students to speak. Expressing their thoughts and ideas leads to a higher self-confidence for them. Besides this they have the opportunity to collaborate more with one another and do not need to rely on the teacher that much. Hence, in this thesis I am focused on finding out and explaining how a higher Student Talking Time (STT) than Teacher Talking Time (TTT) can provide communication and collaboration in the target language, avoiding the fear of talking in students, the hesitation that they might make any mistake and the idea that the teacher should be the controller of the class and students should stay passive. *"The world in language is half someone else's. It becomes one's own when the speaker populates it with his own intentions, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention."[13]* This research is important, first, because it gives researchers and educators a detailed insight on how increasing STT and decreasing TTT can have a big potential in developing students communicative and collaborative skills and in acquiring the language through incorporating them in the language teaching program. The significance of this research can be reflected on the impact that a higher amount of STT has in creating an environment where, differently from the traditional methods, students take the class in their hands and direct it towards a leaner-centered classroom instead. Nowadays, the role of the teacher has changed significantly and the temptation of spreading the awareness regarding this issue has increased considerably. It is suggested that the teacher is no longer in the center of the class which means that the teacher should no longer be the controller of learning environment and does not do most of the talk leaving students passive. According to [16], teachers should not be the dominant people in class. Instead their role should shift to being facilitators in the process of learning and make communication easier for learners among each other. What is more, this suggests that students need to be accompanied by teachers through different works and activities only by guidance and suggestions. According to [11] in most of the cases the domination of the teachers in class happens unconsciously, as suggested in their research. According to them, teachers are often unaware of what they do in class, and among some of the comments that they got from those teachers, are also that half of the class was being ignored by them; that they were having no idea about how much they were talking and leaving very little space for students to practice; that their instructions were very confusing and so on. According to another result of a research conducted by [4] on TTT and STT, 100% of the respondents claimed that they spend approximately between thirty and forty minutes talking in a class of 60 minutes, which means that they spend fifty percent of the total class time talking. Thus, the present study is important to educators and the field of teaching English because it promotes the reflective teaching which identifies the effectiveness of the classes, it shows ways how to do that by giving a real situation of the EFL classroom in a high school of Prishtina, it states the importance of communicative approach in English classes thus motivating more the teachers who apply it and making those of a more traditional classroom reflect on their methods.

1.1.   STT

Recently, many authors have stated the importance that the role of student talk plays in an English as-a-foreign

language classroom. This means that gradually, a shift from the theory that teacher talking time is the one that should dominate in the classroom and teachers should be in the center of the class to the one that EFL classes should be more student centered has been noticed. Reference [10] has a word on this where he shows how grateful he feels about the new progresses, new technological ways and new theories and concepts because they make us develop our perspectives regarding teaching and update them. Consequently, English classes have gradually transformed from the traditional to contemporary ones. There are many definitions given by many researchers regarding student talking time. It is also suggested that the time students spend talking and interacting with each-other during the class is what defines STT. Furthermore, STT represents the amount of time that students use in classroom to produce the language that they learned. The good teacher maximizes the STT and minimizes TTT [10]. Otherwise, there would be no logic behind if the teacher does most of the talk in the classroom where students are the ones who need to practice. Learners can themselves improve in practicing learning [5]. In learning environments that are focused on students; thoughts, ideas, and activity in general, there are much higher chances for students to learn and acquire language. In fact, according to [8] for most of the students it is the only place where they can use English so why lose them the opportunity to do that.

1.2.   TTT

Teacher talking time refers to the time that teachers spend talking in classroom context [2] whereas according to [17], TTT refers to the length of time that teachers use for delivering the subject. According to [3] it is the year 1970 since authors and researchers focused their attention and researches on teacher talk and since then there has been done a great job. There are many authors who stick to the approach that TTT is crucial in EFL classes rather than STT. Authors such as [2,19] and so on, found that generally, teacher talk in L2 classroom occupied about two-thirds of the total talking time. They support their theory mainly by stating the importance that input has for students during the process of learning English. They claim that in English teaching classrooms, not only communication is important but what matters more is that at the end the objectives are met and the content is delivered successfully. They even go on by emphasizing the fact that success in class depends on the language that teacher uses in class, and not in the amount of time that students talk. As cited in [20] success is often measured and decided based on how much the teacher talks and the quality of his/her talk [9]. Strong supporters of this approach are also Corder and Krashen who claim that language is acquired best from the input which is provided by the teacher talk. According to them, all the pedagogical process in the classroom involves teacher talk: Giving explanations and instructions, monitoring the students, providing the feedback. The American scholar Wong-Fillmore after three years of conducting an observation in primary language classrooms claimed that success in SLA is seen only in teacher-centered classes, and not in student-centered ones. She explains this issue by supporting her results with the theory of input as mentioned above. As cited in [18] she believes in the fact that students learn best from the input that teachers bring in the classroom, whereas in the contrary, in classes with low TTT she claims that it is difficult for objectives to be met since the situation in classroom is controlled by students. The majority of teachers talk during the class in an unconscious way and do not really know about the importance of their talk. Teacher talking time is very important and crucial in class if the teacher knows how to get the best of it, how to direct it for the benefit of a good atmosphere within the classroom and the improvement of teaching. This can only be done if the awareness regarding the amount of talking time and quality of it is raised. Reference [7] also supports the theory about the importance of TTT. He

asserts that the importance of teacher talking time, for both organizing the classroom and the process of acquisition, cannot be denied and is crucial not only for organizing the class but also for the processes of acquisition. He also gives two main aspects that this input affects more, and they are: class management and language acquisition. According to him it is the teacher the one whose talk serves in meeting the class objectives by giving instructions and managing the students' learning. At the same time, they are like a mirror to the students: teacher's use of language will affect the students' language improvement to a considerable degree.

2. Aims of the research

The purpose of this topic is to do a research in one of the most important aspects of foreign language acquisition- the amount of talking time students and teachers spend in an EFL classroom. Therefore, the main purpose of this paper is to analyze this issue, to explain the roles of STT and TTT, to show the difference between these two favoring a higher amount of STT over TTT and the positive uses of it, to present the results of the case study in the high school of Prishtina regarding the amount of Teacher Talking Time and Student Talking Time, to discuss the data and also tries to contribute to the field by suggesting some strategies and activities related to reducing TTT and encouraging the amount of STT that takes place in the EFL classrooms. In overall, the idea is that since students are the ones whose speaking opportunities are limited to a considerable degree, the time teachers speak in a class of English as a foreign language should decrease in order to provide more time for students to participate actively in classes.

2.1. Research questions

Fostering English language speaking among students in English as-a-foreign language classrooms requires a reduction of teacher talking time and increase of student talking time leading to a more learner-centered approach. The research questions of this research were based upon the assumption that the Teacher Talking Time in high schools of Prishtina is higher than Student Talking Time most likely leading to a teacher-centered approach. To be more precise this research was set to answer the following research questions:

1. Is TTT or STT more effective in acquiring language in EFL?
2. Why do students talk or do not talk during the classes?
3. How can TTT be reduced in the classroom, and the amount of STT be increased?

2.2. Research Methodology

For the methodology of this research, I adopted an exploratory research framework. Exploratory research usually aims to give the researcher an insight to a problem by doing a direct observation of a limited number of subjects for obtaining and exploring information on a particular problem. Exploratory research is rarely definitive since the samples of this kind of research might not be a representative one (Crossman, Exploratory section, para.4). I chose this method because I wanted to gain a more descriptive and in depth comprehension of how TTT and STT work in an EFL classroom when it comes to enhancing students' communicative and collaborative skills as well as for observing two different ways of working with the same lesson plan. In order to

gain deeper understanding, I explored the complexity of this phenomenon by presenting descriptions, perspectives and explanations.

2.2.1. Data Collection

The data for this research was collected in two sessions, one in a traditional classroom setting and the other one in a modern classroom. In the process of developing the present research, I used lecturing, post test, questionnaires and a delayed test. Both sessions lasted 2x45 minutes, during which I observed students and delivered the lesson plan that I prepared. In the traditional classroom I did most of the talk, whereas in the modern classroom I left space for students to take control of the lesson plan whereas I was only a guider and supporter of the students when needed. Before starting the research sessions, an approval from the school and teachers was obtained to have the classes and students in disposition. Also, the topic was chosen in concordance with the English professor, who claimed that they were currently working on some presentations about different topics with students, as part of their assignment, and this topic was not covered until then.

2.2.2. Settings

I collected the data for this study at "Sami Frasheri" gymnasium in Prishtina for two times during the months of September and October, 2018. I have chosen this school randomly, as well as the classes. I chose two classes, where one of them was experimental group, which helped me apply my interactive lesson plan, whereas the other class was control group which helped me apply my traditional lesson plan. Both, the school and the classes were chosen randomly.

2.2.3. Participants

For this study, students of 2 classes from the high school "Sami Frasheri" in Prishtina were selected. The classes were chosen randomly and were of the same level, of 2nd year (11th grade), age 16-17. One class was an experimental group, the other a control group.The aim of the research was to compare the results in a classroom with a higher TTT with the other of a lower TTT. So, in overall, 65 participants were part of this research with a pre-intermediate level of English proficiency. The reason why I chose students of such an intermediate level to conduct this lesson plan to is because of the "plateau effect" described by [10] having to do with this particular level of language proficiency. At this point, according to him, success is not easily tracked and noticed because their level of English is already satisfying. Consequently, it may seem that they do not improve that much or that fast as before anymore. Thus, it is all up to the teacher to give his/her best to show students what else they need to know and how to get out of their comfort zone. According to this author, this is only possible by activating them as much as possible, putting them to the center of the class and challenging them as much as possible. Also, another reason for this is that grade 11 consists of adolescents, and according to [10] this is the age when students have a great capacity of learning, creative thought, and passionate commitment to what they are interested in. In this respect, taking into consideration these elements, the interest for making a research with students of this grade was high.

2.2.4. Data collection process

The process started with conducting the lecture. I used a lesson plan, based on the topic about cyber bullying. The lesson plan was used in two classes with the same level of English but with different methods of teaching. In one class I was the controller, with a high TTT and very low STT leading to a teacher-centered class. In contrast, in the other class I made sure the STT increases, leaving space to students to do most of the work.

In the first case I played the main role in class whereas in the second case I was only a facilitator of the lesson. The reason after the decision of having the same lesson plan for both groups relates to my goal of showing the way how the way of delivering the same lesson plan can change all the effect of it in students. Also, the reason behind choosing this topic, is that it is a very relevant one for students of their age, and they can relate to it. The seating arrangement also differed, since the students in experimental group were grouped and worked in groups of 4-5 students.

Whereas, in the control group, the students did not have to work in groups at all, and were seated two by two. In both these groups, besides lecturing, I did a direct observation in their attitudes toward the lesson and their feedback. My observation was based on a rubric, as seen below: My attitudes in class were in concordonace with the ones explained on this table, and my observation was based on their reactions towards those attitudes. Basically my methodology of teaching was based on the table above, which more or less describes my behaviors in class, aimintg to also serve as suggestions for other pople as well.

Since the students' teacher was present in class, I am grateful that she volunteered in taking notes about their behavior in class which helped me a lot regarding the part of observation.

Next, after the lesson, at the end of the class students were given a test. They were told to answer some questions related to the topic discussed in the class that they just had. The results of the test from students of both classes helped to compare and figure it out which group is more successful in remembering what they learned. The 20 minutes of the next class were spent in this test.

After the test they were given also some questionnaires to fill in, which lasted about 10 minutes. There were questions aiming to investigate their preferences within the classroom, if they like to talk or not, when do they like to talk more, their favorite activity in class and so on. This served as an insight into the students' viewpoints about English classes and to discover what works best with them. After 3 weeks, the same test that was given to them the first class was repeated.

This served to compare the results from the first time with this time and to see which approach in English as-a-foreign language classroom proves to be more effective, that with a higher TTT or STT.

In order to have a better comparison of the lessons in both settings, in the table below, I have presented an outline of the same.

Table 2: Lesson plan outlines

Control Group Setting **Lesson plan time: 60 min**	Experimental Group Setting **Lesson plan time: 60 min.**
- Students are presented with the topic by the teacher. - The teacher starts the lesson by explaining what the topic means. - The teacher writes on the board some new words that are going to be introduced about the topic, together with their translation, and asks students to write them down in their notebooks. - The teacher asks students to listen to her carefully while she reads two reading passages about cyberbullying which include the words written before on the board. - The teacher asks some students to read the text aloud again and to translate it. - Finally, the teacher explains some of the ways how to stop cyber bullying in case they witness it or how to prevent it. - Students take the test. - Students fill in a post survey questionnaire.	- Students are divided in groups of 5-6. - The teacher gives each group a picture with cyberbullying illustrated on them and asks them to discuss in group what they see there and what words they could use to describe it. - The teacher writes on the board a list of words and asks students to work in group in order to provide a definition for each of them, and to see if these words match with the ones they already thought about and if they describe the picture given to them. - After they share their ideas, the teacher asks them to read two reading passages with the words included there and to see if their definitions match with the context in reading parts. - Now students have to guess what the topic was about. - After sharing their ideas, they will read about what cyber bullying is and its consequences. - Finally, the teacher raises a discussion in class where students can give ideas how to stop and prevent cyber bullying. - Students take the test. - Students fill in a post survey questionnaire.

3. Findings

In order to address the three research questions:

1. How can TTT be reduced in EFL classroom, and the amount of STT be increased?
2. Why do students talk or do not talk during EFL classes?
3. Is TTT or STT more effective in acquiring language in EFL?

The analysis of the data resulted with two big categories: findings from the questionnaires and findings from the classroom research through the lesson plan and the test. These categories are then divided into three major units corresponding with the three research questions. In a nutshell, the lesson plan delivered during the lecture helped in answering the first research question, questionnaires answered the second question, whereas the third question was helped by the test results of both groups, in both post-test and delayed test. All these were summarized and represented as descriptive statistics. I observed students' reactions and attitudes when being exposed towards both: interactive and traditional classes. I also observed the experimental group students'

engagement in class and how they autonomously took control of their communication without the help of the teacher. Similarly, I did so with students of control group, who were passive and were not given any chance of taking responsibility and communicate in class. Furthermore, I also investigated their preferences with regards to learning in English classes and suggested ways how to make classes more interactive by only changing the perspective and concepts of teaching. The data collected showed that students who were exposed to a higher STT learn things and acquire language more efficiently both in short term and long term period of time. Conversely, students who were exposed to a higher TTT showed worse results both when it comes to short and long term period of time. I also found out that students like to talk in English in EFL, and like to work in in groups during the class, but they are not given the opportunity to do this often, and when they are, they do not feel comfortable at all, since they are afraid of making any mistake. Finally, this study gave an example how the same lesson plan can be delivered to students in many ways. It is all up to teachers' attitude in class, if they want to shift roles with students, so that the control of the class is mostly up to them. In order to increase STT in class and meet the expectations of students, the survey results show that more debates, topic discussions, and basically learning by doing is applied in class.

4. Conclusion

This study served as a great opportunity in experiencing two contrastive sides of a teacher: that of being closer to students, minding their preferences, feedback during the class and fitting their needs and meeting their expectations; and that of the traditional teacher who wants to be heard by students all the time, is eager to explain to them everything but indeed is not effective at all, because this resulted to not be what the students really want. In experimental group, this study provided for students a very warm and energized atmosphere, where students felt comfortable in expressing their opinions and interacting with others, by discussing about a very relevant topic for them. On the other hand, for the sake of research, in the control group this was not the case, but hopefully this research will serve as a good hint for further researches and improvements in the educational system of Kosova, in English classes particularly. As it was stated since the beginning of this paper, one of the main aims of this research was also to provide a different viewpoint for English teachers regarding the methods of teaching. In this respect, the fact that the lesson plan was the same in both control group and experimental group but the way of delivering it was different, means a lot. It shows that it is all up to the teacher, whether he/she wants to make a change and to update the teaching methods or not. Otherwise, there is no obstacle regarding this. Therefore, to conclude, the goal of the research has been accomplished and the hypothesis has been approved. It resulted that providing higher opportunities for students to talk in class and be involved in it, eventually leads to many benefits, including here the improvement of language skills, learning things easier and in more effective way, and acquiring language effectively.

References

[1] C.Chaudron, "Second Language Classrooms: Research on Teaching and Learning". Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (1993).

[2] C. Chaudron, "Second Language Classroom: Research on Teaching and Learning". New York:

Cambridge University Press. (1988).

[3] C, Wangru, "The research on strategies of College English Teachers Classroom Questioning", International Education Studies; Vol. 9, No. 8; 2016 ISSN 1913-9020 E-ISSN 1913-9039, Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education, (2016)

[4] C.R.B, Quinatana, "A Study of Teacher Talking Time and Student Talking Time Practices among ESL Instructors at an Intensive English Program", ECTESOL REVIEW VOL. 1, NO. 1, (2011)

[5] Dick Allwright and Judith Hanks, "The Developing Language Learner: An Introduction to Exploratory Practice". Basingstoke: PalgraveMacmillan, 312 pages, ISBN 978-1403985323ijal_26, 2009

[6] D, Nunan, "The Learner Centered Curriculum, A study in second language teaching", Cambridge University Press, (1988).

[7] D, Nunan. "Language Teaching Methodology: A Textbook for Teacher". Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, (1991).

[8] D, Paul, "Teaching English to Children in Asia", Asia: Longman, (2003).

[9] Hakanson, G. "Quantitative studies of teacher talk(A)learning, teaching and communication in the foreign language classroom(C)". Aarhus: Aarhus University Press. (1986)

[10] J. Harmer, "The Practice of English Language Teaching". London: Longman. (1991)

[11] J.C, Richards & C, Lockhart, "Reflective teaching in second language classrooms", Cambridge University Press, (1996)

[12] McCombs,L,B & Miller, L, "Learner-centered Classroom Practices and Assessments, Maximizing Student Motivation, Learning and Achievement", Corwin Press, A sage publications company, Thousand Oaks, California 91320, (2007).

[13] M.M, Bakhtin, "The Dialogic Imagination, Four Essays", University of Texas Press Slavic Series, No.1, (1981)

[14] M,Weimer , "Learner-Centered Teaching, Five Key Changes to Practice", John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158-0012, (2002)

[15] P.M Lightbown, "Classroom Research and Second Language Teaching", Concordia University, Montreal, Oxford University Press, (2000),

[16] R. Zhenhui, "Modern vs. Traditional. English Teaching Forum", 37(3), 27-30. (1999)

[17] Sakoda, "Studies on Second Language Acquisition for Japanese language education", Tokyo: ALC, (2002)

[18] X,Yan, "Teacher talk and EFL in University Classrooms" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Chongqing Normal University & Yangtze Normal University, China, (2006)

[19] X. H, Zhao, " A survey and analysis of teacher talk non-extensive reading class. Foreign Language World, (2), 18-23. (1998)

[20] X.Zhou & Y. Zhou, "A survey and analysis of teacher talk in college English classroom". Foreign Language Teaching and Research, 34(1), 59-68. (2002)

[21] Y, Zhouyuan, "The Analysis About the Factors of Silence in College English Classroom", Vol. 12, No. 5, 2016, pp. 105-110 DOI:10.3968/8402, (2016)