



## ENHANCING STUDENTS' INTERACTION THROUGH SILENCE OF THE TEACHER

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### ABSTRACT



The teachers' lecture method doesn't allow the students to be interactive in class. The ultimate aim of teaching is to get positive outcome from the students. In such a teaching-learning process, the teacher is a mere facilitator. So, classrooms should not be teacher-oriented. Student's participation in the learning process is important. Interaction will maximize the interest of learners. This paper aims at interactive classrooms by the silence of the teacher. The present study was conducted through a set of questionnaire given and collected from the students as well as the teachers at the undergraduate level. As less the voice of the teacher, the more is the voice of the students. In order to do that the Teacher Talking Time (TTT) should be reduced and leave some space for the students to talk.

**Keywords:** *Silence, Lecture, Teaching, Facilitator, Participation, Interaction, Learning.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Day by day, new trends emerge in the pedagogy of English Language Teaching. The teacher needs to use creative and elicit methods in order to get the students' attention. English language fluency can be obtained only by practicing. In the today's EFL classrooms, there is least time to practice. It is because the English language is seen as a mere subject. Dadds (2001, in Black, 2007:279) asserts: "there is a conflict between pedagogy for delivery and pedagogy for learning. Under the pressure of coverage, learning is sacrificed for teaching". The

silence of the teacher can be used as pedagogy to make the classrooms interactive.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Negative effects of teachers talking for an excessive amount of time have been observed in a number of studies. Allwright (1982: 10) claimed that teachers who 'work' too much in the classroom were not teaching effectively. He commented that a good language teacher should be able to 'get students to do more work' in the classroom. Ross (1992 cited in Nunan, 1999) also indicated that constant teacher talk during the lessons did not significantly improve students listening comprehension and



communication skills. These studies suggested, at least indirectly, that the amount of TTT might be inversely correlated to the degree of students' active learning opportunities, *i.e.* the greater the amount of TTT, the less the students get to practice L2 in a classroom and therefore, the less the effectiveness of the lesson (Paul, 2003).

#### STATEMENT OF THE PURPOSE

It aims at investigating the need to reduce TTT in order to improve STT. It proposes that the classrooms can be interactive when the teacher be silent and make the students to talk.

#### HYPOTHESES

The present study was started with the following assumptions in mind:

1. The classroom lacks interaction as there is one-way communication between the teachers and the students.
2. The teachers knowingly or unknowingly talks all the time which results in the limitation of time for interaction in the class.

#### Research questions

The following research questions which were framed at the beginning helped to pursue the research work successfully.

1. What is the need for interaction in EFL/ESL classrooms?
2. Does the teacher talks all the time in the class?
3. What is the reason for the teachers to talk all the time?
4. Can reducing TTT increase STT?
5. How TTT can be reduced?

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

As the study is about increasing students' talking time, the subjects are 20 undergraduate students chosen at random from among the arts and science colleges in Sivakasi. Twenty five students were contacted in person. The questionnaire was prepared after gone through the existing literature in the field. The questionnaire consists of 10 statements on a Likert-type five point scale which consists of "Strongly agree, agree, don't know, disagree, and strongly disagree"

#### RESULTS

From the questionnaire collected, the following result was framed. 45% of the students strongly agree and 30% agree that their teacher follows lecture method in teaching. 35% of the students strongly agree and 20% of the students agree that there is no space for interaction. 10% of the subjects strongly agree and 40% of the students agree that the teacher poses the questions and answer it themselves. 15% of the students strongly agree and 65% of the students feel that the teacher's repetition of certain things is boring. 10% strongly agrees and 35% agrees that the teacher talks unnecessarily to fill the silence. 20% strongly agrees and 25% agrees that enough time was not given for them to think and answer. 15% of the subjects strongly agree and 45% of the subjects agree that the teacher corrects their mistake before they complete. 45% of the subjects feel that listening has been a ritual. 15% of the students strongly agree and 55% of the students agree that the excessive amount of TTT reduces the STT. 45% of the students strongly agree to the suggestion that teacher's silence can motivate the students' talk. And 50% of the students agree to the above suggestion. Hence it is proved that teacher being silent may result in the students' interaction.

#### DISCUSSION

Today's EFL/ESL classrooms lack interaction. It is because of excessive TTT. Teacher Talking Time (TTT) refers to the total amount of the time the teacher takes to speak in class, either as a part of lecture or in discussions. TTT is not always a bad thing but it should not go overboard. The ESL/EFL students should be given more time to speak so that they can practice what they have learnt. When the teacher talks all the time, the students feel that the class is so boring. The ESL/EFL teacher should set up a goal that he or she should take not more than 50% of the total class time by talking. Excessive TTT limits the amount of STT.

What actually happens in teacher-centered classrooms is the teacher introduces the new content at the beginning of a lesson, explains the problematic concepts and clarifies the complex activities during the lesson and the teacher sums up the new content taught at the end of the lesson. Teacher



should not summarize at the end of the lesson. The teacher should remain silent and give the opportunity to the students to summarize or paraphrase. While teaching, the teacher repeats certain words or instructions repeatedly. This may lead the students to a state of boredom. While questioning, the teacher asks lengthy questions and also echoes what students have just said in answer to a question. Every question that a teacher asks should demand a student's response. Instead of teacher asking questions to the students, the teacher can make one student question the other.

The teachers focus on covering the syllabus as early as possible to get more time to train the students for exams. So the teachers follow lecture method in teaching. One cannot expect classroom interaction where the main focus is on teachers. The students feel that just listening to the lecture is like a formality. No learning can take place where the teacher talks all the time. Nunn (2001) quoted Bratten that "Teacher-fronted classroom interaction has been defined as a 'ritual': The questions are repeated and so are the answers but nothing happens as a result. It must seem a strange ritual for the learner for it bears little resemblance to the way in which he uses his own language." If the teacher needs to get interaction as the output then the question should be given as input. And the questions posed should be open-ended. Then only it will leads to interaction.

The students get bored when they listen to the teacher for a long time. To facilitate their participation and enhance their involvement in the lesson, it is necessary to allow interaction, between themselves and with the teacher. This means that the teacher should plan the lesson in a different way, giving more space to students, asking questions which require them to extend their thinking and which encourage them to increase their contributions, as the more students are involved with the content, the more they will understand and the longer they will retain their understanding.

The first step to reduce TTT is simply to be aware of it. The teacher should be self-critical. They should analyze how much time they take for talking and how much time they gave for the students to

talk. The teacher should be able to tolerate the silence. When the teacher talks all the time in class, they have to concentrate much on what they are saying. They may fail notice the students' activities. Silence frees the teacher to observe the class. Inexperienced teachers in particular tend to fill by unnecessary talking. Silence is important not only when students are working individually but also provides processing time between instructions, during explanations, while waiting for a student to respond and during monitoring of activities.

Cooley (2014) commented on teachers that occasionally we can feel ourselves justifying our need for TTT as we return (unconsciously perhaps) to the belief that 'the teacher who talks a lot is teaching a lot'. Some teachers have the idea that they should talk for a long time as to prove themselves as an erudite scholar. But the teacher should reduce their talking time and wait for the student to respond. Students are more encouraged to talk when they feel the teacher is attentive and interested in what they say. Hence, the use of open questions promotes a collaborative mode of discussion, the development of new ideas and the common pursuit of a solution.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

Here are some suggestions to increase students' participation.

- i. The teacher should plan the lesson in such a way that it should focus on student activities
- ii. The teacher should ask leading questions. Don't answer the questions passively. Try to get the answers actively from the students.
- iii. Incorporate more group activities into the lessons.
- iv. Don't answer every single question. Try to change engage students in group discussions.
- v. Ask for feedback.

### **SUMMING UP**

LarsenFreeman (2000) quoted Gattegno that, "The teacher works with the student; the student works on the language." In ESL/EFL classrooms there should be a balance between student satisfaction and academic achievement. The



more the ESL/EFL students talk, the more likely they improve. They listen when they concentrate, they learn when they practice. The teacher should try to minimize TTT so that the students will have more time to practice. The teacher should be a mere facilitator. The teacher should be silent as much as possible. The result will be a classroom with more silent space in which students' voice can flourish.

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