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# **Understanding Teacher Talking Time and Student Talking Time Practices among ESL/EFL Teachers: A Practicum Design**

*Cesar R. Bazo Quintana*

## **Abstract**

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This practicum design helps future ESL/EFL instructors gain practical understanding of Teacher Talking Time (TTT) and Student Talking Time (STT) practices in the classroom. It provides a deeper understanding of TTT vs. STT application within the Communicative Approach (CA) or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

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## **Purpose of the Practicum**

This practicum is designed to help students who want to become English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers better understand Teacher Talking Time (TTT) and Student Talking Time (STT) practices in the classroom.

## **Background**

Most adult ESL and EFL teachers around the world currently subscribe to the Communicative Approach (CA) or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This language teaching method is based on beliefs that learners will learn best if they participate in meaningful communication (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013). CLT advocates a methodology which emphasizes communication in the classroom, pair and group activities and student involvement. In CLT, students learn by communicating, i.e. doing communication tasks with a limited role for explicit teaching and traditional practice exercises (Scrivener, 2005).

Due to the extended worldwide diffusion of CLT practices that emphasize classroom activities where learners communicate by completing real-life tasks by means of interaction with each other, the role of the teacher has dramatically changed. Language classrooms are no longer teacher-centered; the teacher is no longer the controller of the learning environment who does most of the talking to the detriment of his/her students' participation. Instead of being the dominating authority in the classroom, in CLT the teacher facilitates the communicative process among all the learners and between the students and the various tasks, giving guidance and advice when necessary

(Zhenhui, 1999). Thus, present-day classrooms have become more student-centered.

One direct consequence of the development of CLT practices is the belief that the teacher's presence in the classroom should be reduced. According to research, TTT makes up to 70% of classroom language (Cook, 2000; Chaudron 1998). Hence, current ESL and EFL practitioners advocate the reduction of TTT and the augmentation of STT in adult classroom settings.

## **Practicum Description and Objectives**

In order to help future ESL and EFL professionals, this practicum focuses on a specific population according to the needs of the future instructor. The focus is on the direct observation of teaching behaviors displayed by teachers during their classes by means of classroom observations. The classes to be observed should range from beginning to advanced ESL classes. Observing classes of different language levels helps determine if increased TTT is influenced by the language level of the class. In addition, the behaviors exhibited by the teachers are indicative of whether the instructors are leaning more towards TTT or STT practices while teaching their regular lessons. This allows instructors to gain more insight into their current teaching practices, and it assists them in improving their balance of TTT and STT practices in their own classes.

In order to execute this practicum, it is necessary to spell out the objectives and corresponding questions.

**Objective 1:** To raise teachers' awareness about the amount of TTT and STT present in their classes.

**Questions:**

- What are the teachers' current perceptions about TTT?
- How much time do they think they spend speaking in class?
- What factors contribute to an increase in TTT?

**Objective 2:** To identify behaviors that are conducive to excessive TTT.

**Questions:**

- What specific classroom practices contribute to an increase in TTT?
- How does a high level of TTT manifest during the class?

## **Activity Design**

This practicum focuses on determining the TTT and STT classroom practices present in ESL classes and consists of a three-step process. As the first step, a survey is administered to the teachers taking part in the practicum. The

objective in applying the survey is to raise the teachers’ awareness of the issue. Additionally, the expected result of its application is to make all the teachers involved in the practicum think about feasible changes to reduce TTT in their classes.

The second step of the practicum involves conducting class observations employing an observation instrument that focuses explicitly on teaching behaviors displayed by teachers during their classes. These behaviors are indicative of whether the instructors are leaning more towards TTT or STT practices while teaching their regular lessons.

All this collected information, in turn, is carefully analyzed in order to draw conclusions and design an appropriate action plan that will translate itself into a reduction of TTT practice and an increase of STT among the teaching staff.

The final step in the process includes a post-observation meeting with all the teachers involved in this practicum in order to share the findings of the survey, discuss the class observations, and examine possible courses of action to improve the balance of TTT and STT practices in their classrooms.

<b>Events</b>	<b>Time Frame (example)</b>
Distribution of Surveys	Wednesday, May 24, 2017
Collection of Surveys	Wednesday, May 31, 2017
Class Observation # 1	Friday, June 9, 2017
Class Observation # 2	Friday, June 16, 2017
Class Observation # 3	Friday, June 23, 2017
Meeting with Participants	Friday, June 30, 2017

*Figure 1.* Activity Management (tentative dates)

## **Resources**

The major resources required for this practicum are the initial surveys and the class observation instruments. The surveys are employed to raise the teachers’ awareness of the issues. Additionally, the expected result of its application is to encourage reflection about feasible changes to reduce TTT in classes. The class observation instruments focuses explicitly on teaching behaviors displayed by teachers during their classes. These behaviors will be indicative of whether the instructors are leaning more towards TTT or STT practices while teaching their regular lessons.

## **Evaluation**

After ESL instructors complete the initial surveys, the class observations are performed, and the post-observation meeting with the teachers takes place, all the collected data from these sources is then analyzed and compiled into a final report. The report includes a description of the theory,

practice, findings, and limitations of the practicum as well as the implications for the future. It also contains the instructor’s reflections during this time. This final report is submitted at the end of the semester and includes all the resources used during the practicum.

**Teacher Talk Time / Student Talk Time Survey**

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions.

I. Select the percentage of class time to complete each of the following statements.

<i>1. Percentage of class time I think I spend talking in class</i>	<b>0-20%</b>	<b>20-40%</b>	<b>40-60%</b>	<b>60-80%</b>	<b>80-100%</b>
<i>2. Percentage of class time I think I should spend talking in class</i>	<b>0-20%</b>	<b>20-40%</b>	<b>40-60%</b>	<b>60-80%</b>	<b>80-100%</b>

Figure 2. TTT (Adapted from Warren-Price, 2003)

Are there any differences between your answers for number 1 & 2? Do you feel that you need to make any adjustments to the amount of verbal input you provide to your students? Describe and justify the changes you would make.

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In what stage of the lesson do you tend to talk more in class: during the warm-up, presentation, controlled practice, free practice or follow-up? What can you do to maximize STT during that specific stage of the lesson?

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	<b>Behaviors Conducive to Increased STT</b>		<b>Behaviors Conducive to Increased TTT</b>
	The teacher's explanations are concise and opportune.		The teacher gives long and unnecessary instructions or explanations inappropriate for the language level the students are in.
	The teacher elicits from students when presenting new language or when reviewing previous class.		The teacher does not elicit from students enough when presenting new language or when reviewing previous class.
	The teacher encourages students to ask questions.		The teacher asks questions when there is an opportunity for students to do so.
	The teacher gives students opportunities to summarize and/or paraphrase.		The teacher summarizes and/or paraphrases instead of giving students opportunities to do so.
	The teacher only expresses opinions about facts and ideas that are relevant to the class.		The teacher gives opinions about facts and ideas that do not pertain to the class.
	The teacher encourages students to use complete ideas and to elaborate.		The teacher completes students' ideas.
	The teacher encourages students to add additional information to their classmates' responses.		The teacher adds additional information to students' responses.
	The teacher encourages students to answer her/his questions as well as their classmates'.		The teacher poses questions and then answers them her/himself.
	The teacher has students do the wrap-up.		The teacher does not involve students in the wrap-up.
	The teacher provides students enough wait time.		The teacher does not provide enough wait time for students.
	The teacher refrains from unnecessarily repeating what he/she or the students have said.		The teacher unnecessarily repeats what he/she or the students have said.
	The teacher encourages Students to guess the meaning of words from context.		The teacher defines all the new words for Ss.

Figure 3. Class Observation Form (Adapted from ICPNA, 2011)

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**César Bazo** has been teaching English for more than 28 years. He taught English at all levels at IC, the language school of the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, and worked as an Academic Supervisor at ICPNA, a Binational Center, both in Lima, Peru. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Education, Master's in Hispanic Studies at Auburn University. His professional interests include language teaching, methodology, teacher-training and materials development and is currently seeking a Ph.D. in Adult Education at Auburn University.