



## Managing High Teacher Talk

Unnecessarily high teacher talk is the bane of most trainers on initial training courses. New teachers seem to equate talking at the front of the class with teaching and learning. The fact that many of the learners have very low levels of listening comprehension seems to mean little to new teachers.

On initial training courses we take a two-prong approach at reducing high TT. The first is to explain about efficiency in meeting aims. Teacher talk is fine if it is meeting the aim of the activity. Hence, if the teacher's aim is to set up a student task then the language needs to be graded, clear and economical. Instruction wording should start with an imperative form and be supported with gesture/demonstration and checked where necessary. However, the teacher's language will change tone, and vocabulary base if they are working with a learner to untangle a lexis or grammar meaning issue, this becomes more of a dialogue although the teacher's language still needs grading and checking. Teacher language needs to efficiently meet the aim of what the teacher is trying to achieve at that point. However, to be fair many new teachers struggle to understand the aim of what they are doing but that is another article!

Another approach we use is to set out our expectation of the level of teacher talk we want based on the type of lesson, for example:

### Lesson Type

Input skills (reading /listening)	10 – 15%
Language (lexis or function)	15 - 20%
Production (speaking or writing)	10 – 15%

*\*\*The figures above came from polling many teacher trainers over many years.*

For example in a 40 - minute lesson, if the plan shows T/S for 16 minutes, it means that there are 24 minutes left for individual, pair and group work. The teacher has planned to be at the front for 40% of the lesson, which should set-off the observers alarm bells.

### High levels of teacher talk can lead to:

- A slow pace
- Lots of frustrating down time for learners (as the teacher is doing all the talking)
- Learners not being on task leading to management issues with bored students
- Confusion with learners not understanding everything the teacher is saying
- Low levels of individual support from the teacher and a lack of collegial atmosphere

### Tip for the lesson observer

- 1 Check the teachers plan is labeled with the accurate interaction patterns
- 2 Add up the time spent on T/S and S/T, S/S or S
- 3 Calculate the interactions as a percentage of the entire lesson



## ELT Lesson Observation & Feedback Handbook

- 4 If the T/S interaction is over 25% ask yourself:
- does the lesson type merit it?
  - can the lesson be easily made more learner centered?
  - Is the teacher using the most efficient to meet the stage aim?