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A CASE STUDY OF TEACHER TALK TIME AND STUDENT TALK TIME IN AN IRANIAN  
LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Dr. ESMAIL ZARE-BEHTASH<sup>1</sup>, TAYYEBEH AZARNIA<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>English Department, Chabahar Maritime University, Iran

<sup>2</sup>TEFL MA student, Chabahar Maritime University, Iran



Dr. ESMAIL ZARE-  
BEHTASH

ABSTRACT

Iranian language schools claim to be the advocates of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology. However, reflecting on the present state of language teaching in Iran clarifies that language classrooms are not really communicative. This inconsistency has been attributed in part to the teachers' lack of awareness of classroom processes. Thus, for encouraging teachers to reflect on classroom processes, the present study addressed teacher talk and more specifically teacher talk time (TTT). Four teachers of an Iranian language school were selected as the cases of the study. During five successive weeks, some intermediate level classes of these teachers were recorded. Eight out of sixty sessions were selected through systematic randomization and transcribed for the purpose of analysis. The duration of teachers' and students' moves were measured in seconds. The findings revealed that, in investigated language classrooms, teachers talk a large proportion of class time that is almost 75% of the class time while student talk time (STT) comprised less than 20% of the class time. The findings of the study are in line with the literature reviewed on TTT which came to the conclusion that teacher talk usually comprises more than two-thirds of the class time.

**Key words:** teacher talk, teacher talk time, student talk time, reflective teaching, classroom processes.

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INTRODUCTION

A major proportion of class time is taken up by teachers talking in front of the classroom (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). No matter what teaching strategies or methods a teacher uses, it is necessary to give directions, explain activities and check students' understanding (Richards & Schimdt, 1985). This clearly emphasizes the importance of teacher talk in language classrooms. Walsh (2011) claimed that teacher talk is more important in language classroom than any other classroom since in this context the language being used by teacher is not only the means of acquiring new knowledge; it is also the goal of the study.

Walsh (2011) also claims that in language classrooms, teachers control patterns of communication, they are able to interrupt whenever they like, take the floor, hand over a turn, direct the discussion, and switch topics. All these functions are achieved through teacher talk. Teachers obtain their power and authority

through effective language use. In fact, by the language they speak and the words they choose teachers not only manage their classrooms but also dominate and control learners' opportunities for language learning. Teachers take the floor and lead the class whenever they like through their speech. As Breen (1998) puts it, it is the teacher who orchestrates the interaction (Walsh, 2011). Arguably, a teacher's ability to orchestrate the interaction not only determines who may participate and when, it also influences opportunities for learning (ibid). The consequence of this is that the teachers clearly talk more and occupy more of the interactional space of the classroom and learners' opportunities for classroom participation are largely controlled by the teachers.

Yet, no matter how natural the dominance of teacher talk in language classrooms seems, for years, excessive teacher talk has been the source of criticism for restricting learners' opportunities of language production and classroom participation. Harmer (2007) claims that learners will have less opportunity for class participation if teacher talks and talks. Years before that, Long (1983) in his Interaction Hypothesis suggested that when second language learners experience communication problems and they have opportunity to negotiate solutions, they are able to acquire the new language (as cited in Krashen, 1982). In other words, opportunities to negotiate, participate, and discuss are considered crucially important in learning process. Hence, teachers are recommended to provide learners opportunities to negotiate meaning. Swain (1985) as cited in Ellis (2008) argued that input alone is insufficient for developing language production skills. According to her whereas comprehension of a message can take place with little syntactic analysis of the input, production forces learners to pay attention to the means of expression. Therefore, as Ellis (2008) reports both Long (1983) and Swain (1985) value teacher talk for providing learners with opportunities for language production and blame excessive teacher talk for restricting learners' chances for classroom participation.

CLT methodology emphasizes the importance of learners' production and verbal participations in language classroom. According to (Larsen-Freeman, 2000) in CLT classrooms, learner has a choice not only about what to say, but also how to say it. If teachers talk almost two-third of the class time, the question arises whether any choice is left to the learners at all. Teachers' dominance on language processes will logically reduce learners' choices. One of the basic principles of CLT methodology is that students should be given opportunities to use the language and communicate with others (ibid). The problem is that if teacher talks too much, learners' opportunities for language production will be deduced. Harmer (2007) claims if learners are not engaged in the discourse actively, they will have little opportunity to try out and learn a new language, test their hypotheses or develop strategies for dealing with unknown language.

Despite all that, research on TTT clearly shows that most of the times, teacher talk devotes a large proportion of the class time. On the average, it seems that teachers tend to talk around two-thirds of the class time (ibid). The problem is that most teachers do this unconsciously. As Richards and Lockhart (1996) contended teachers are often unaware of what's actually going on in their classrooms and they are often unaware of their own teaching habits. In Iran, students have to study English as a compulsory school subject for seven years, yet the education they receive doesn't seem to be effective (Dolati & Mikaili, 2011). Many studies have shown that, in Iran, students face many problems in higher education due to their lack of required language knowledge (ibid). Dolati and Mikaili (2011) reported a wide range of surveys carried out by Mahdi Dahmarde and Azam Noora (2008) in Iran about the effectiveness of language teaching. The findings revealed that the method used in Iranian schools which is a combination of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Audio Lingual Method (ALM) is not really effective. This inefficacy derives students to the outside language schools.

Iranian language schools claim to be the advocates of CLT methodology; however, reflecting on the present state of language teaching in Iran clarifies that there is a gap between theory and practice (Farhady, Sajadi & Hedayati, 2010). Research shows that although the knowledge base of the Iranian language teachers regarding methodology is at an acceptable level, language classrooms are not really communicative (ibid). This inconsistency has been attributed in part to the teachers' lack of awareness of classroom processes. Considering the fact that many things happen almost simultaneously during a lesson, it is sometimes difficult for teachers to be aware of what actually happens in their classrooms while teachers are in a position to

evaluate their teaching and to decide if aspects of their teaching could be changed or not (Richards & Lockhart, 1996). As a result, through investigating TTT and STT, the current study attempted to draw teachers' attention to the significance of classroom processes and more specifically on the amount of their speech in language classrooms.

The time that teachers spend talking in front of the classroom is one of the controversial issues in teaching trend. There is a long running debate about the amount of time teachers should spend talking in the classroom (Ur, 1996). Learners will have less opportunity for class participation if teacher talks and talks (Harmer, 2007). Yet, there are conditions that teacher talk may account for 80 percent or more of the spoken interaction (Tsui, 1988, as cited in Walsh, 2011, p. 44). Chaudron (1988) has done a comprehensive review on TTT some years ago. Legarreta (1977) investigated five bilingual education kindergarten classrooms, using time intervals to code segments of teacher talk and student talk (Chaudron, 1988). She found that the students talk accounted only 11% to 30% of the total talk, so that teachers accounted for 70% to 89% with a median of 77 % of time of the class.

In contrast, a study conducted by Enright (1984) in two bilingual kindergarten classes similar in context to those in Legarreta's study, it was found that the teachers were speaking noticeably less (Chaudron, 1988). Here, the range for a variety of small group and whole class activities was between 42.9% and 84.9%, with a median of 64.5%. Enrich counted numbers of speech acts that are utterances and parts of utterances with distinct meanings (ibid). Chaudron (1988) reports that a proportion for teacher talk similar to Enright's was observed in a comparison between one sixth grade of French immersion class and one core grade French class in Canada by Bialystok, Frohlich and Howard (1978). In this study the number of teachers and students moves was counted. The results indicated that 68.8% of the moves were the moves of French immersion teacher, and 61.3% were the moves of the core French teacher. Although Chaudron (1988) review on TTT and STT was comprehensive, but Ellis (2008) reports that after that studies which investigate and review the amount of teacher talk and student talk in language classrooms have been rare. While, the amount of teacher talk has a crucial impact of learning process.

"As a general rule, we may say that the teacher should do no more than 25 percent of the talking in class, and that the students should be permitted to do 75% of the talking" (Wright, 1975, p.338, as cited in Yan, 2006). However, as literature review on TTT revealed, in real life situations, this is not the case and teachers usually talk a large proportion of class time and do not let learners to practice enough. Respecting the undeniable role of student production and involvement in learning process, in many Iranian language schools, for years, the primary motto has been minimizing teacher talk and maximizing learners' verbal participations. The question is whether this objective has been achieved or not. Thus, the following research question is to be examined in the present study:

**Q:** What is the amount of TTT and STT in investigated language classrooms?

Considering the research question and literature reviewed on TTT and STT, the following hypothesis is formed:

**H:** Teacher talk devotes a large proportion of class time in investigated language classrooms.

The present study is descriptive since it describes and interprets what is happening in some intact classes in terms of TTT and STT and it is primarily concerned with the present. This is a case study research in which the collected data are qualitative. This study as a naturalistic inquiry is concerned with what goes on in some naturally occurring classrooms that have been constituted for the purpose of teaching and learning. Yin (2003) has categorized case studies into exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory case studies (as cited Nunan & Bailey, 2009). This study is a descriptive case study, since it provides a detailed description of the teachers' and students' amount of speech in some intact classes and describes what's going on in these classes in terms of TTT and STT.

Discourse of the classes gathered through recording process is the subject of the present study. As Nunan and Bailey (2009) state in case studies the phenomenon is analyzed, described, and interpreted in the context. To make the context of the present study completely clear it should be said that the general context of the study is language schools, at Iran's EFL context. The more specific context is Isfahan's Kavosh Language School, a great advocate of CLT methodology with three subsidiaries in Isfahan city. The main objective of this

school is providing the most interactive classes with highest proportion of learner involvement. Production stage of language learning receives lots of attention from the school's teaching principal since it is believed that denying this stage leads to teacher-fronted classes.

This language school enrolls both males and females, but females and males are taught in separate classes. The age of the learners in investigated classes ranged from 15 to 30 years old. To determine the appropriate level of learners, when they come to the school's office to enroll in classes, they are required to take a placement test. Thus, the presupposition is that learners' at each class are almost at the same language proficiency level. Classes were conducted three times a week, every other day. Every class lasted one hour and forty five minutes and was conducted in the afternoons. Intermediate level Top Notch book was the main course book in classes under investigation. Furthermore, intermediate level of Select Reading books served as the complementary course book in these classrooms.

### Procedures of the Study

This study was conducted based on the following procedures:

#### Selecting Cases

Four teachers of Kavosh Language School were selected as the cases of the current study. In case studies, the rationale for the selection of the cases is crucially important since the selection of cases should not only fulfill the objectives of the study but also ensure external validity (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). In this study, two important rationales shaped the selection of cases including accessible context and common features.

- **Accessible context.** According to Nunan and Bailey (2009) in case studies, the selection of the cases may be due to accessible context. Accessible context sometimes prompts the choice of the some cases that are within the reach of researcher. In current study, one reason for selection of cases was accessible context.
- **Common features.** The second reason for selection of cases was teachers' characteristics, educational background, and teaching experiences. Yin (1998) suggests that in case studies the selection of the subjects needs to be done more carefully to assure that they are typical of those to whom we wish to generalize (Best & Kahn, 2006). Consequently, researcher selected two males and two females' language school teachers who share many features with other Iranian language school teachers.

The selected cases of the present study are four teachers of Isfahan's Kavosh Language School. All of the teachers have intermediate level classes and are native speakers of Persian. These teachers were not informed of the main purpose of the study however they were informed of the recording process. Table 1 in the following represents the characteristics of the cases of the study

**Table 1: Distinguishing characteristics of the teachers participated in the current study**

Teachers	Age	Gender	Educational background	Teaching experience
T1	27	Female	BA. Teaching	6 years
T2	31	Female	BA. Teaching	7 years
T3	34	Male	MA. Teaching	8 years
T4	29	Male	BA. Literature	7 years

*Note.* BA refers to Bachelor of Arts Degree and MA refers to Masters of Arts degree.

#### Audio Recording Process

To investigate features of teacher talk in language classrooms audio-recording was used. Two advantages of recording a lesson is that it allows choice of focus and it can be replayed and examined many times and can capture many details of a lesson that cannot easily be observed by other means (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Audio recordings were used since they are less intrusive than video cameras. During five successive weeks the one determined, intermediate level class of cases were recorded. The same class was recorded for each teacher during 15 sessions. The recordings started from the second session of the term. In five weeks, 15 classes were recorded for every teacher that is 60 sessions for all the teachers.

#### Sampling Recorded Classes

Generally 60 sessions were recorded during 5 weeks. Since the number of recorded classes were finite that is 60, as suggested by Best and Kahn (2006), systematic randomization was a good choice for

sampling. Thus, systematic randomization was done in order to select 8 sessions out of 60 sessions. To achieve this goal, first recorded classes' files were entered into the computer and listed. After that, 15 sessions for each teacher were listed in a disorganized manner but successively to make sure that systematic randomization leads to two sessions for each teacher participated in the study. And finally, each seventh file was selected which led to 8 selected sessions including 2 sessions for each teacher.

#### **Transcribing Data**

The 8 sampled classes were used for the purpose of analysis. The files were transcribed following Duff (1996) transcriptions' conventions (see appendix A, figure 1) cited by Nunan and Bailey's (2009). Since Chaudron (1988) argues that recording has the effect of shutting down everything which is a threat to reliability, fifteen minutes of the beginning of each session was omitted; Consequently, 90 minutes of eight sampled classes including a total of 12 hours were transcribed and analyzed for the purpose of the current study.

#### **Coding Transcripts**

Transcripts can be analyzed through varied means, including coding (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). This procedure involves identifying selected bits of data as belonging to a certain class or category of behaviors (ibid). Thus, attempts were made to use the classifications which best serve to the purpose of the study. To investigate TTT and STT, two codes were identified including teacher talk moves and student talk moves. Transcripts of classrooms were segmented into moves and then the duration of moves was measured for the purpose of analysis.

#### **Data Analysis**

In the present study, discourse analysis of the selected sessions was done through functional discourse analysis. The analysis of oral language samples requires recorded speech to be segmented or divided into units (Egins, 2004). In this study, the data were analyzed by considering move as the basic unit of count. According to Nunan and Bailey (2009) transcripts of the lessons and audio recordings of classroom interactions are qualitative data. Yet, qualitative data can be quantified in some way. In the current study, the moves were used to quantify the results and the data analysis was done through statistical procedures such as counting frequency and determining percentages. For the analysis of the recorded data, the length of each teacher and student move was measured in second(s) including pauses and board writing that occurred within a move and the move lengths were rounded up to the nearest second.

#### **Reliability and Validity Issues**

Four important criteria should be considered in case studies including construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability (Behling, 1980; Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Cook & Campbell, 1979; as cited in Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). Yin (1994) claims one of the main challenges for case study researchers is to develop a well-considered set of actions to establish a clear chain of evidence in order to allow the reader to reconstruct how the researcher went from the initial research questions to final conclusion (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). Therefore, by providing careful description of data collection and analysis procedures, the researcher attempted to give a clear picture of the methodology of the study and ensure its construct validity.

External validity or generalisability is grounded in the intuitive belief that theories must be shown not only in the setting in which they are studied, but also in other settings (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). With only one or few subjects, the argument goes, we can never be sure the population is well presented (Best & Kahn, 2006). This does not however mean that case study researcher should give up on generalisability. Bromley (1986) as cited in Best and Kahn (2006) noted a case is not only about a person but also about that kind of person. He argues that a case is an exemplar of, perhaps even a prototype for, a category of individuals.

Thus, the selection of the subjects of the case study needs to be done carefully to assure that they are typical of those to whom we wish to generalize (ibid). As mentioned before, in this study the selection of the cases was done carefully to achieve generalisability of the results. Furthermore, four cases were selected; since, Eisenhardt (1989) argued that case studies involving four to ten cases may provide a sound basis for generalization (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). Although more cases would add to the external validity, making transcripts of classroom talk is a time-consuming, demanding task. To illustrate this challenge, Allwright and

Bailey (1991) estimated that it takes up to twenty hours to produce a high quality transcript of one hour of classroom interaction (as cited in Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Consequently, four cases and eight recorded sessions were considered reasonable for the purpose of the current study.

Internal validity refers to the presence of causal relationships between variables and results and it is a major concern when establishing a causal relationship; therefore, thus, in the current study internal validity was not a matter of concern. Consolo (1996) suggested that recording reveals classroom phenomena with a considerably high degree of reliability. Yet, this is not seen as sufficient; therefore, to ensure the reliability of the results of the current study, some extra actions would be taken. Silverman (2005) suggested that in case studies such as this one reliability can be ensured by determining the inter-rater reliability checks in data analysis (ibid). Thus, in the current study the inter-rater reliability between two raters was gained for two sessions of T1 since it was assumed that ensuring the inter-rater reliability of 25% of the analyzed data would confirm the reliability of the whole. To fulfill this goal, following steps would be taken. Two raters were chosen. The first rater was the current researcher and the second rater was an MA student of TEFL at Najaf Abad Azad University. Using Cohen's Kappa formula (Keyton, Mabachi, Manning, Leonard, & Schill, 2004) inter-rater reliability was measured by SAS statistics software, between the findings of the two raters. Measured Kappa was 0.87 which is considered satisfactory.

After all, it should be noted that ethical issues received attention from the researcher and the attempts were made to respect the rights of the individuals who are involved in the study. Considering ethical issues, in the current study researcher needed to make sure that she has the permission of Kavosh language school manager. Thus, she talked with teaching principle and emailed a summary of the procedures and objectives of the study to the manager of language school. Giving a brief explanation of non-intrusive nature of audio-recording and insights that the results would probably bring into language classrooms, manager finally gave permission for recording classes in his language school. Before conducting research, 10 teachers were selected, however just 4 teachers who had the required features including similar educational backgrounds, years of teaching experience, and teaching intermediate level classes for the present project agreed to help through recording process and 6 other teachers were excluded.

At first, selected teachers were just informed that classroom language was the general subject of the study since it was assumed that giving detail explanations of the focus of the study would probably jeopardize the reliability of the gathered data. However, teachers were ensured that their names won't be mentioned and their voices won't be used for any other purposes. Thus, researcher obtained the consent of both the manager and the teachers participating in the study. Learners' names also were changed and coded. In addition to the steps taken to ensure ethical issues in the present study, it should be noted that the subject under investigation in the present study is the discourse of the teachers and not the teachers themselves and teachers are not to be judged by any means.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 represents the means of TTT in eight sampled classes. As indicated in this table, the means of TTT for T1, T2, T3, and T4 are respectively 81, 79, 58, 83 percents of the class time. The overall mean of TTT in eight sampled classes is 75.25% of the class time.

**Table 2 The overall results of TTT for T1, T2, T3, and T4**

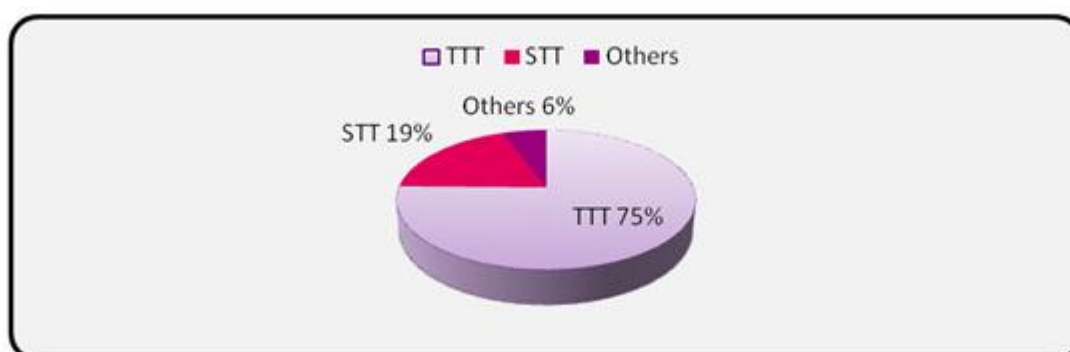
classes	T1	T2	T3	T4	Means
Class A	77%	83%	55%	79%	73.5%
Class B	85%	75%	61%	87%	77%
means	81%	79%	58%	83%	75.25

As table 2 shows, T3 has talked less than the other teachers. In contrast, T4 has talked averagely 83% of the class time in two classes which involves the highest percentage of TTT in investigated language classrooms. Table 3 in the following, represents the means of STT in sampled classes.

**Table 3: The overall results of STT for T1, T2, T3, and T4**

classes	STT(T1)	STT(T2)	STT(T3)	STT(4)	Means
Class A	18%	12%	36%	16%	20.5%
Class B	11%	19%	32%	9%	17.75%
means	14.5%	15.5%	34%	12.5%	19.125%

As indicated in table 3, the means of STT for T1, T2, T3, and T4 are respectively 14.5, 15.5, 34, and 12.5 percents of the class time. The overall mean of STT in eight samples classes is 19.12% of the class time. Comparing tables 2 and 3, it can be claimed that in 2 classes of T4 where teacher talks almost 83% of the class time, learner talk comprises almost 12% of the class time. In other words, in 2 classes of T4, learners talk less than the other investigated classes. Whereas, in 2 classes of T3 where teacher talks considerably less, learners' verbal contributions to the learning process is considerably higher that is 34% of the class time. To sum up the findings, in classes under investigation, TTT has comprised 75% of the class time and STT has comprised 19% of the class time and the remaining time of the class that is 6% has been devoted to other activities such as silent reading or writing. Figure 1 demonstrates a clear picture of overall means of TTT, STT, and times spent on other activities in investigated classrooms.

**Figure 1 The overall means of TTT and STT**

As can clearly be seen in figure 1, in classes under investigation, teacher talk constitutes a large proportion of class time and the research hypothesis which claims that teacher talk devotes a large proportion of class time is confirmed. Results of the current study are consistent with the findings of previous studies which came to the conclusion that teacher talk dominates language classrooms. Although the current study has taken a stance against too much teacher talk, it should be noted that, this is not the primary concern of this study. In fact, the primary concern of the study is criticizing teachers' unawareness of their amount of speech in language classrooms. A teacher may intentionally talk a large proportion of class time to fulfill the ultimate objectives of a course of study, under such circumstances, excessive teacher talk is considered appropriate or even favorable; yet, there are conditions where teachers unconsciously talk and talk. This situation was seen in the comments made by teachers after watching videotapes of their own lessons.

According to Richards and Lockhart(1996) one of the most frequent comments made by teachers after watching the videotapes of their own lessons was that " I had no idea I did so much talking and didn't let students practice"(p.3). As a result, the main point of the present study is raising teachers' awareness of their amount of speech in language classrooms. The current study does not intend to urge teachers to reduce the amount of their speech, but it intends to encourage teachers to carefully monitor their amount of speech and decide whether it serves their pedagogical goals and context of teaching or not. Drawing teachers' attention to the undeniable contributions of teacher talk and TTT to the learning process is the primarily focus of the current study.

## CONCLUSION

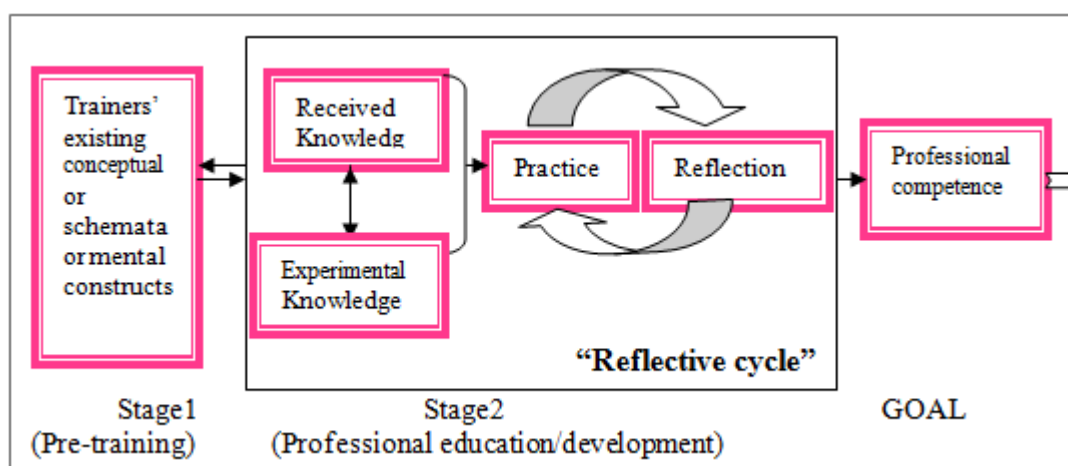
Considering the results of the current study and combining it with the findings of the previous studies on TTT, it can be concluded that teachers should contemplate whether too much teacher talk fulfills the predetermined goals of a course or not; if it doesn't, they should probably listen more and talk less. It is suggested that rather than deciding whether we should or should not talk excessively, teachers would do well

to consider the appropriate amount of their speech in relation to their intended goals through critical reflection on classroom processes. Teachers are encouraged to follow the skills and principles of reflective teaching to monitor the effectiveness of their speech on a daily basis.

Thus, the current study suggests teachers to focus on reflective model of teacher education. This model is proposed by Wallace (1991) and it incorporates teachers more actively into the educational process (as cited in Jourdenais, 2009). "Reflective teaching is an approach to teaching which is based on the assumption that teachers can improve their understanding of teaching and the quality of their own teaching by reflecting critically on their teaching experiences" (Richards & Schmidt, 1985, p. 451). It is claimed that critical reflection on interactional processes would raise teachers' awareness about classroom processes and enable deeper understanding of variables related to teaching.

If teacher students become familiar with the principles of reflective teaching, they can learn how to self monitor their teaching process, improve their teaching habits, and also the quality of their speech on a daily basis. Wallace (1991) outlines a distinction between teaching as a "craft" and teaching as "applied science" (as cited in Jourdenais, 2009). In craft model, trainee learns from the example of a "master teacher", whom he/she observes and imitates. In this model, the trainer is the master teacher, providing an example to be followed. In applied science model, the trainee studies theoretical courses in applied linguistics and other allied subjects which are then applied to classroom practice. These two models of teacher education have received criticism. Thus, Wallace (1991) as cited in Jourdenais (2009) proposed the "reflective" model of teacher education (see figure 2).

**Figure 2 Reflective practice model of professional education/development (Wallace, 1991, as cited in Jourdenais, 2009)**



In this model, teachers draw from both the received knowledge of the field and the experimental knowledge of the classroom practitioner. This model suggests that as a teacher utilizes experiential and received knowledge in their practice, they engage in reflection which allows them to re-examine their practice in light of their decisions, concerns, experiences, and knowledge. This reflection feeds back into their practices. Thus, the current research advocates the use of this model as a means of gaining insight into actual process of learning. The current research on teacher talk, was formed mainly due to teachers lack of awareness of classroom processes and to shed light on ambiguities of teachers talk. Teachers are required to be initiative and reflect on their teaching which involves posing questions about how and why things are the way they are, what value systems they represent, what alternatives might be available, and what are the limitations of doing one way as opposed to another through critical reflection on their teaching (Richards & Lockhart, 1996).

The major assumption underlying the current study is that teachers can use classroom events to develop a deep understanding of their teaching process and to evaluate their stage of professional growth and the aspects of their teaching they need to change. When critical reflection is seen as an ongoing process and a routine part of teaching, it enables teachers to feel more confident in attempting different options and assessing their effects on teaching (ibid). This study has implications for teacher education and training



programs; implications for language teachers; and eventually implications for teaching. It encourages teachers to reflect deeply on classroom processes. Critical reflection can trigger a deeper understanding of teaching. Critical reflection involves examining teaching experiences as a basis for evaluation and decision making as a source of change (Bartlett, 1990; Wallace, 1991, as cited in Richards & Lockhart, 1996). It also encourages teachers to conduct action research.

It is believed that if teachers are actively involved in reflecting upon what is happening in their own classrooms, they are in a position to discover whether there is a gap between what they believe in and what they actually do (Richards & Lockhart, 1996). The present study encourages teachers to learn about teaching through self-inquiry and detailed analysis of teaching process. This study as a guidance attempts to encourage teachers to take action and provide immediate changes through conducting action research in their own language classrooms.

It also encourages teachers to benefit from audio-visual recordings. One of the advantages of recording a lesson is that it allows choice of focus- this could be the teacher or a particular group of students. An additional advantage is that the recording can be replayed and examined many times and can capture many details of a lesson that cannot easily be observed by other means, such as the actual language used by teachers or learners during a lesson. This study emphasizes that audio-visual recordings are valuable means of collecting data which have the potential to provide a great chance for detailed analysis of interactional patterns of language classrooms. Generally, in the current study, attempts has been made to encourage reflective teaching as an essential component in developing knowledge and theories of teaching, and consequently as a key element in one's professional development. It is hoped that critical reflection would improve the quality of teacher talk and consequently teaching instruction in Iranian language schools.

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#### A Short Sample of Transcripts (T1)

T: Just a minute please. Think about a period of time in the past for example yesterday at this time, yesterday at this time, ask Golnaz.

S: What were you doing this morning?

T: oh <surprised>yesterday at this time.

S: Yesterday at this time?

T: EXACTLY, yes.

S: What were you doing yesterday at this time?

G: I was watching TV when my aunt called.

T: Okay, yes, you used the simple past tense also. So I was watching TV when my aunt called. You Maede ask Parastoo about your mother this morning

Maede: What was your mother doing this morning?

T: Uhu

P: My mother was driving the home when I em when I=

S: = Excuse me (xxx)

T: Yes?

S: *Tattil shodan az madrese chi mishe?*

T: I arrived home, when I came home, and I want you to ask a WH-question. Okay? For example, Zahra got my message, she got an letter, now ask about an activity she was doing at the same time?

S: What were you doing when you got my message, uhu?

T: When you got my message, uhu.

S: I was watching TV when you got your em (#)

T: I was watching TV when?

S: When I got your message.

T: Of course, I wanted Zahra to answer, anyway no problem, okay. Look at the grammar booster, in grammar booster that's page G7, the past continuous (xxx) in grammar booster we have more examples of past continuous. The page G7, the past continuous. Zohreh would you please read it?

Zo: The past continuous. The past continuous describes an action that was continuous (xxx) the moment at which another action takes place. The word when or while are often used with past continuous.

T: So with the past continuous to be verb plus ing, was and were plus ing, we use when or while.

Would you please give an example, make an example with while Hengameh?

H: While he was exercising Ali arrived.

T: Ali arrived, Ali came, uhu, very good. Do you use a comma here?

SSS: Yes.

T: Because the time clause is first, can you use when instead of while?

SSS: Yes.

T: When and while are possible to be used for the past continuous phrase, okay? But for this phrase we use when. We say that he was exercising when Ali arrived.

S: While is em always first at em beginning?

T: While is for action that was in progress so you can use this phrase second. You can say Ali arrived while I was exercising. You say Ali arrived while I was exercising.

SSS: [while I was exercising]

T: Now repeat he was talking on the phone, the storm began.

SSS: He was talking on the phone, when the storm began.

T: Or he was talking on the phone the storm began, or?

TSSS: When the storm began he was talking on the phone

T: Or with while?

TSSS: While he was talking on the phone, the storm began.

T: Or the storm began while he was talking on the phone. Next one, while I was living in Chili I got married.

Ss: While I was living in Chili, I got married.

T: Or Zahra?

Za: I was living in Chili while I got married.

T: Yes.

SSS: I got married while I was living in Chili.

T: Chili, or? (#) or if? Or? If you want to use, em=

S: = When I got married, I was living=

T: = I got married in a time clause. Samira?

S: I got married while I was living?

T: She said that, no, something else. Hengameh, Hengameh?

H: When I got married, I was living in Chili?

T: Yes, that's it, very good. Zohreh continue.

Zo: The past continuous also describes two continuing <wrong pronunciation>=

T: =Occurring, happening=

S: =In the same period of time.

T: Very good. Sometimes this action is in progress but this action is in the simple past tense <writing on board>. Sometimes we don't use while and when, when <coughing> both of them are in progress. We say last night at nine thirty they wear eating and music was playing.

SSS: They were eating and music was playing.

T: Uhu, it means that both of them happen at the?

S: Same time =

T: = Same time, okay? And none of them interrupted the other one. The music was playing, they were eating and they were dancing, okay?

S: It's also used when we report someone else's word <wrong pronunciation> =

T: = Someone else's word.

T: So sometimes someone makes an investment but for statement is in progress. It's in continuous form. For example my mother said Ali said. She said I am coming, uhu, why do you want to report it? Ali called you today and told you I am?

SSS: Coming =

T: = Coming and now this is evening and you want to report it. You say Ali said I was uhu?  
S: *Nemige Ali mige mige oon mige.*  
T: No, you want to report it. Do you know report? You say it in your own words. You say a statement in your own words. When we have quotation it means that this is direct speech of what the others have said. Means exactly what they have said.  
S: Yes.  
T: Okay? but when you remove the quotation here it means you are [reporting]  
Ss: [reporting]=  
T: =Uhu, what the other one said. You say Ali said he was coming. Of course it's not a usage of past continuous, because we have many sentences and when you report it. It has its own rules. For example past perfect, present perfect, so just forget about this part, okay? Just these parts okay? When actions are in progress or when one action interrupts the other one, okay? That's okay?  
SSS: Yes.  
T: And of course we have some sentences you have to write questions with past continuous. Zahra do number 1.  
Za: me?  
T: Yeah.  
Za: She was (#)  
T: She was taking a test at school.  
Za: Where was she taking the test?  
T: where was she taking the test? Where? where was she?  
Za: next?  
T: No, no number 2, Maryam.  
Ma: I was talking to my mother and my friend. What were=  
T: =What were you doing? It's a person.  
S: Who?  
T: Uhu.  
S: Who were you taking on the phone?  
T: Who were you talking to on the phone?  
S: Can I, em I say were you talking to phone?  
T: No.  
S: Me?  
T: Yeah, continue  
T: Yeah, Fatemeh number 3  
F: Who was driving? Mr. Kim was driving.  
T: Yeah, who was driving? Number 4 Zohreh?  
Zo: Em, em... what was the teacher doing at three o'clock?