

TEACHER TALK IN THE ESP CLASSROOM – THE RESULTS OF A PILOT OBSERVATION STUDY CONDUCTED IN THE TOURISM CONTEXT

Ildikó Szendrői

Budapest Business School, Faculty of Commerce, Catering and Tourism
ildiko@hu.inter.net

Abstract: The present research was conducted as a pilot observation study focusing on three aspects of teacher talk in a college level L2 tourism class. The relevance of the investigation lies in the fact that teaching ESP in Hungary is gaining more and more importance. Teacher talk has been widely investigated in EFL classrooms but little is known about the characteristics of teacher and student talk in the ESP context. Firstly, the investigation aims to shed light on the ratio of teacher talk to student talk, secondly, it aims to gain an insight into the role of the mother-tongue in the teaching process, and thirdly, it purports to characterise the questioning technique of the participating teacher in her efforts to elicit meaningful utterances from her students. The findings indicate that the amount of teacher and student talk in the ESP classroom is similar to empirical data obtained in L2 EFL settings. The use of the mother-tongue was perceived to be exaggerated and in some instances unjustified. Results concerning the use of referential and display questions coincide with data obtained in EFL classrooms; communication was maintained by posing display questions with only a few occurrences of referential ones. It is believed that the results of the study will enable ESP teachers to plan their classroom talk more consciously and obtain a more critical stance when analysing their own talk.

Keywords: classroom observation, teacher talk, English for Specific Purposes, the use of the mother-tongue, questioning technique

1 Introduction and theoretical background

The foreign language learning classroom is a goldmine of research opportunities and it offers a wide variety of investigation focusing on teachers and students alike. Teacher talk is a widely researched area which is partly due to its important role in language teaching and partly to the various fields it opens up for researchers. The present research project is embedded in a tertiary education ESP context. ESP is gaining more and more importance in Hungary since teaching ‘the general language’ in the language classroom has been eliminated from tertiary education and has been replaced by foreign language classes in which students learn the specialised language of their future profession.

1.1 Teacher Talk

Teacher Talk (TT) is the language typically used by foreign language teachers in the process of teaching. Allwright and Bailey claim that “talk is one of the major ways that teachers convey information to learners, and it is also one of the primary means of controlling learner behaviour” (1991, p. 139). Studying the instructor’s classroom speech has been in the focus of attention for several reasons. Firstly, teacher talk is the major source of

comprehensible target language input in the instructed language learning environment, thus it plays an integral role not only in the organisation of the classroom but also in the processes of acquisition (Nunan, 1991, p. 189). Secondly, empirical data obtained in EFL settings suggest that teachers dominate classroom speech; on average teacher talk accounts for between one half and three quarters of the talking done in foreign language classrooms (Allwright, & Bailey, 1991). In the major part of the language lesson teachers dominate classroom speech by using the I–R–F framework (teacher’s initiation – student’s reply – teacher’s feedback/follow-up) which results in twice as many teacher utterances as students’.

Teachers’ classroom speech has generated several research areas during the past 40 years. In the beginning researchers were primarily concerned with the differences of teachers’ classroom talk and mundane talk, i.e. any talk that occurs naturally outside the language classroom. Chaudron (1988) points out that the primary approach of these studies was to describe the characteristics of L2 teachers talk and reveal what distinguished it from speech to L2 learners in non-instructional settings: “The main goal of this research has been to determine what makes teacher talk an aid to learning” (Chaudron, 1988, p. 8). As a result, several further avenues of research have opened up, such as describing and quantifying the features of teacher speech, for instance the speech rate, syntax, vocabulary, pragmatic functions (Chaudron, 1988), the amount of teacher talk (Bellack, 1966; Legaretta, 1977), rate of speech (Griffiths, 1990), modification in syntax (Pica, & Long, 1986, in Ellis, 1994) and modification in vocabulary (Henzl, 1979). Further research fields include the investigation of error-treatment (Fanselow, 1977; Nunan, 1989a), functional distribution (Bialystok et al., 1978, in Ellis, 1994), and the degree of communicativeness (Thornbury, 1996). Code-switching (Romaine, 1989), turn-taking (Allwright, 1980, in Ellis, 1994; Seliger, 1977) and classroom interaction (Leo van Lier, 1988) were also investigated while the three-part framework of classroom interaction, i.e., initiation – reply – evaluation/feedback was analysed by Mehan (1979). The most prevalent features of teacher talk are summarised by Chaudron (1988) who claims that teacher talk is characterised by a simplification of speech in terms of grammar and vocabulary, exaggerated pronunciation, a slower pace of talk, self-repetition, more frequent and longer pauses and the IRF framework.

Notwithstanding the distinctive attention teacher talk has gained in classroom research in the past decades, little is known about what constitutes optimal teacher talk (Ellis, 1994). It is beyond the scope of this small-scale investigation to define optimal teacher talk; it merely aims to supplement studies investigating the characteristics of teacher and student talk. However, it is believed that the results may prove to be useful not only for EFL teachers but for the increasing community of ESP teachers alike.

1.1.1 The use of the mother-tongue

On the basis of a few publications on teacher training and teacher development (Hubbard, Jones, Thornton, & Wheeler, 1983; Doff, 1988; Bowen, & Marks, 1994; Celce-Murcia, & McIntosh, 1979; Underwood, 1987; Edge, 1993) it appears that little attention has been devoted to the issue of using the mother tongue in EFL/ESP settings. Atkinson (1987) made an attempt to fill in this research gap by conducting a study focusing on translation tasks in an EFL classroom. Drawing on the results of his investigation he describes a variety of applications of L1 use and maintains that there are several instances when the use of the mother tongue can be encouraged, though he cautions against its immoderate and injudicious overuse as well.

The appropriate proportion of the use of L1 and L2 is difficult to determine as it depends on factors such as the target language competence of the students, the teacher's ability to speak L1, or the type of tasks. Nowadays "the general guidelines in many countries recommend that lessons be planned to be as monolingual as possible, drawing on the mother-tongue only when difficulties arise" (Butzkamm, 2003).

Native teachers of English are at an advantage in conducting 'all-English classrooms' due to their presumed inability to speak L1. Being exposed to L2 speech exclusively during the English language lesson, however, may have disadvantages as well. The exclusive usage of L2 teacher talk may result in lengthy, complicated and incomprehensible explanations that add to teacher talking time. Consequently, some language learners will fail to get the message or the correct meaning of a word, they will be likely to lose the thread, feel frustrated and eventually give up any attempt at keeping up with the teacher.

1.1.2 Teachers' questions and learner production

Teachers inevitably ask a lot of questions in the language classroom. Referential questions are genuinely information-seeking questions, aiming to acquire new information, whereas display questions are the ones for which the teacher already knows the answer, they simply test the learner's knowledge of previously taught studies (Ellis, 1994, p. 587). Nunan (1989b) states that a major characteristic of genuine communication is the occurrence of referential questions. Referential questions predominate interactions between native speakers outside the classroom (Long, & Sato, 1983). The foreign language classroom, however, seems to be an artificial environment in which there are fewer opportunities for the learner to get engaged in authentic, genuine interaction and where the majority of elicitations are of the display type. Nunan observed that classroom interaction is characterised by the use of display questions to the almost total exclusion of referential questions (1989b, p. 29). Van Lier (1988), however, discarded the importance of drawing a distinction between referential and display questions and argued that "what distinguishes instructional questions from conversational (non-instructional) ones is therefore not their referential or display nature, but rather their eliciting function" (van Lier 1988, p. 223, in Nunan, 1989b, p. 30). For the purposes of the present study the author finds it useful to keep the distinction between referential and display questions, as the results obtained for Research Question 3 (see Section 2 and Section 4.3) are to disclose the mean length of students' responses for display and referential questions.

Acquiring a good questioning technique for teachers is of great importance for two reasons: first, an increased use of referential questions over display questions suggests that language learners are involved in more genuine interaction which is therefore more beneficial to second language acquisition (Seedhouse, 2004). Secondly, referential questions might provide more opportunities for learner output. This latter assertion is supported by Brock's (1986) research conducted among advanced ESL students. He found that students' responses to referential questions were longer (mean length = 10 words) than responses to display questions (mean length = 4.23 words) (Brock, 1986, in Ellis, 1994, p. 590). Hence, it is obvious that by answering display questions students have less communicative involvement. More referential questions result in longer student utterances, through which the proportion of teacher and student talk could become more evenly balanced. Lynch's (1991, p. 202) general conclusion drawn on the types of questions in foreign language classrooms is that referential

questions make up a mere 14 per cent of questions, so the communicative use of the target language makes up only a minor part of typical classroom activities.

1.2 Teaching English for Specific Purposes

Since the 1960s “the teaching of ESP has been seen as a separate activity within English Language Teaching (ELT), and ESP research as an identifiable component of applied linguistics research” (Dudley-Evans, & St John, 1998, p. 1). ESP has grown into a major field within ELT with reason, as it covers such significant subfields like English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). In their definition Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, pp. 4-5) identify absolute and variable characteristics of ESP:

Absolute characteristics:

- ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner;
- ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves;
- ESP is centred on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

Variable characteristics:

- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
- ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
- ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be used for learners at secondary school level;
- ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students. Most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

1.2.1 The ESP teacher

Describing the roles of the ESP teacher is a controversial issue (Hutchinson, & Waters, 1987). Dudley-Evans and St Jones (1998) state that apart from the main tasks of the general English teacher, i.e. controlling ongoing classroom activities, providing information about skills and language, organising pair- or groupwork, in other words ‘acting as provider of input and activities’, the ESP teacher fulfils the additional task of a ‘facilitator or consultant’. This latter role describes the case when

the teacher knows relatively little about the content or the skill that is being taught in the ESP class, and proceeds by pulling together and organising the information that the learners, and – if possible – their lecturers [the real specialists of that content area] are able to provide. (Hutchinson, & Waters, 1987, pp. 149-150)

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) make two important distinctions between general English teachers and ESP teachers. Firstly, they claim that “in addition to the normal functions of a classroom teacher, the ESP teacher will have to deal with needs analysis, syllabus design, materials writing or adaptation and evaluation” (p. 157). As the second major distinction, they point out that “the majority of ESP teachers have not been trained as such” (p. 157), i.e., they need to obtain a more thorough knowledge of a specific field which they have not been qualified in and are not completely familiar with.

As a consequence of the above mentioned occasional but inevitable ill-preparation or lack of sufficient background knowledge, the ESP teacher is likely to face intimidating and

face-threatening situations during the teaching process. The term ‘In-class Subject Knowledge Dilemma’ devised by Wu and Badger (2009) aims to describe classroom events in which the ESP teacher’s subject knowledge is challenged. Therefore, the phrase ‘reluctant dwellers in a strange and unchartered land’ coined and put forward by Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 158) to describe ESP teachers appears to be appropriate.

In contrast to the above, it is vital to emphasize that teaching ESP at the Budapest Business School particularly requires that ESP teachers be in possession of more content knowledge than their students. Thus, an essential role of the ESP teacher is of an ‘explainer’ of content knowledge whereby the amount of time spent on elaborate explanations of the content material may seriously increase the amount of teacher talk.

1.2.2 The content area of tourism

By consulting a few coursebooks on tourism written for pre-intermediate (*Dubicka, & O’Keeffe: English for International Tourism, Pre-Intermediate, 2003*), intermediate (*Strutt: English for International Tourism, Intermediate, 2003*) or upper-intermediate (*Jacob, & Strutt: English for International Tourism, 1997 Upper-Intermediate; Harding: Going International, 1998*) students, one could presume that teaching English for tourism is a relatively easy task and does not require the teacher to possess a great deal of tourism-related content knowledge. This creed is clearly underpinned by the fact that it is difficult to mark the boundary between general English and English for tourism vocabulary. The great majority of the words used and topics discussed (describing one’s holiday experiences, booking rooms, checking-in a hotel or introducing the facilities and services of a luxury hotel) in English for tourism classes can occur in general English classes as well. Nevertheless, this is only apparently the case. English for tourism has its own professional vocabulary and content-related difficulties, and there are numerous instances when – depending on the depth of their content knowledge and experience – ESP teachers act as reliable, unflinching and precise sources of information. Such events occur, for example, when the topics of ‘marketing in tourism’ or ‘the general economic issues of tourism’ are dealt with. In the former case students learn about the perishability, inseparability, intangibility and heterogeneity of the tourism product whereas in the latter they take in such terms as visible trade, the balance of payment, leakage (the meaning used in finance) or the multiplier effect. It is difficult to define how many years of tourism-related teaching practice an ESP teacher is required to have in order to feel confident in class, but the author believes that acquiring the ins and outs of tourism as a professional subject calls for an additional amount of study and preparation.

1.2.3 ESP classes at the Budapest Business School (BBS), Faculty of Commerce, Catering and Tourism (FCCT)

Students studying at the BBS–FCCT obtain three terms of English (or any other) language studies in their respective specialisations. Students are encouraged to pass a B2 or C1 level business or catering/tourism exam as the language exam certificate is one of the most essential documents of obtaining a degree at the end of their tertiary studies. Due to certain harmonisation attempts of the foreign language studies of the three colleges at the BBS (College of International Management and Business Studies, College of Commerce, Catering and Tourism, College of Finance and Accountancy), in the first two terms of their studies business and catering/tourism students study general business English. The professional

topics and terminology of their own specialisations (commerce-marketing or catering-tourism) are introduced in Term 3.

Experience shows that the third term does not seem to be sufficient enough to acquire all the predetermined material. Teachers have about 60 hours of teaching to impart the relevant specialised knowledge. Considering that students concurrently prepare for a B2 or C1 language exam – in which there are eight different tasks – the ESP teacher needs to teach an abundance of material in a very short time.

Foreign language classes at the BBS belong to the so called ‘B module’ subjects. These classes generally precede more professional classes, such as marketing, tour operation, hotel operation, etc. This structure of the curricula entails that besides teaching and practising a foreign language, ESP teachers often find themselves taking the role of a lecturer, defining terms, notions, or explaining the relevant topical knowledge to the smallest detail.

It does not fall within the scope of the present study to take sides in judging the professional competence and authority of the foreign language teacher in the ESP context. Nor is it the author’s aim to identify the boundaries of topics behind which the ESP teacher, who is predominantly a language teacher, should not venture. It is argued, though, that certain phases of foreign language ESP classrooms bear the characteristics of monologue speech production such as lectures, thus are more prone to the dominance of teacher talk and the decrease of student talk.

2 Rationale and the research questions

The hypothesis that has triggered the present investigation was formulated by the author in the course of teaching ESP in the past decade. Personal experience obtained through fifteen years of tourism and business English teaching allows the author to assume that the characteristics of teacher talk obtained through the study of ESP classes may yield different data compared to those obtained in general language classes. Based on the author’s teaching practices it is claimed that the proportion of teacher talk increases through the transmission of content knowledge that is concurrently conveyed along with practising the four basic skills in a foreign language. On many occasions the language teacher is required to teach and explain business, catering or tourism topics that students are not familiar with. Consequently, the aim of this study is to verify or challenge the above hypothesis with the help of measuring the amount of teacher and student talk both in the target (English) and the native (Hungarian) language.

Hence, the research questions guiding the investigation are the following:

- (1) What is the proportion of teacher and student talk in the English for tourism classroom?
- (2) In what cases does the teacher use the mother-tongue?
- (3) How can the teacher’s questioning technique be characterised in terms of referential (i.e., genuine information-seeking) and display (i.e., knowledge-testing) questions?

3 Method

Having obtained permission from both Andrea (pseudonym), the participating teacher and 17 students of an English for tourism class to observe and video record five 90-minute lessons, the researcher took on the role of a non-participant observer. The COLT (Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching system; Allen, Fröhlich, & Spada, 1984, in Allwright, & Bailey, 1991; Fröhlich, Spada, & Allen 1985) observation schedule was chosen to guide the observation process. Being present in five lessons made it possible for the observer to choose the most relevant categories of the existing COLT schedule which enabled her to analyse the characteristics of classroom talk and to supplement it with new categories. Due to practical considerations data analysis was done outside class after transferring the data onto DVDs.

3.1 The participating teacher

Choosing Andrea for the study was suggested by a previous piece of research in which three ESP teachers had been interviewed about their classroom talk. The present participant was among the ones interviewed and was the least reluctant to take part in further research, i.e., classroom observation.

Andrea is a part-time teacher with the Foreign Language Department of the BBS, possessing a Hungarian-English degree from the Teacher Training College in Eger. She is 45 years old and has been teaching English for 15 years. She started her career teaching general English but due to a shift in tertiary education towards offering only profession-related language studies to students, she gradually switched to teaching business and catering/tourism courses.

3.1.1 The participant and her perceptions about her own teacher talk

Andrea took part in a semi-structured in-depth interview a few weeks prior to observation carried out focusing on her classroom talk. She showed a definite interest in the way she communicated with her students, monitoring her own errors, the situations in which she drew on the mother-tongue and her amount of talk in class. She approached students having low or high language competence in a different way. With beginners and pre-intermediate classes she made use of several tools: slower rate of speech, gradual complexity of input, simple sentences and instructions, a more basic vocabulary and metacommunicative means.

With regard to the amount of teacher talk, Andrea thought the proportion to be around 30 per cent (for the teacher) and 70 per cent (for the students) on average. She elaborated lengthily on the diverse causes which may result in excessive teacher talk. She admitted conducting her lessons differently before the examination periods – when the focus fell on practising exam tasks – or during the teaching of the professional material. Before the language exam she primarily concentrated on discussing test scores and/or explaining mistakes and difficulties which usually resulted in excessive teacher talk. Andrea believed that she tended to out-talk her students to avoid the awkward situation of silence. She claimed

that silence often prevailed in classroom interaction if students needed to indulge in an unknown topic. The students' anxiety, shyness and reluctance to enter into communication could have possibly led to an inordinate amount of teacher talk. She admitted repeating the students' responses and also reacting to the students' answers, i.e., following the I-R-F framework. She partly put this practice down to the teaching circumstances. The traditional classroom seating arrangements were likely to generate more repetitions, while the students' reluctance to speak up or noisy classrooms entailed the same effect.

Apart from translation and mediation tasks into Hungarian, Andrea expressed a firm commitment to applying L2 during the whole of the language lesson but her efforts fell through occasionally owing to time constraints, students' poor language competence and even poorer topic-related competence. She admitted using the mother tongue in a few further occasions: when fulfilling administrative or organisational duties or giving the Hungarian equivalent of technical vocabulary.

3.2 The class

The observed students attend the second year of the college and are preparing for an intermediate (B2) level exam in tourism English. They are between 19 and 22 years of age. At this phase of their studies all the students – 17 in total – possess an intermediate level exam in 'general' English and have been studying tourism English for three terms. They have two 90-minute English lessons a week. Andrea teaches the class on Mondays and Fridays and besides teaching from *English for International Tourism* (Dubicka, & O'Keefe, 2003) – an intermediate book for would-be tourism specialists – she discusses exam-specific tourism topics taken from a college publication that was especially compiled for students of that major. Class attendance was regular (average 13-14 students per occasion), though involvement in class activities was rather low.

3.3 The classroom setting

The classroom featured the traditional desks and chairs arrangement, thus students were sitting behind each other in the majority of the cases. This particular seating arrangement prevents students from hearing each other well and hinders the casual and uninterrupted flow of interaction. Still, Andrea did not make any effort to rearrange the classroom into a U-shape which would have enabled the students and the teacher to hear each other better and be more involved in the classroom activities. The classroom could seat 40 students and was originally not meant to be used as a language classroom but as a small lecture room. Considering its dimension and its cramped layout even with the traditional classroom arrangement, it seemed impossible to easily arrange the desks and chairs into a U-shape without a considerable waste of teaching time. This may have been her reason for deciding to leave the room as it was.

Andrea sat at her desk most of the time only occasionally did she stand up and walk up and down along the desks to monitor students' conversations during pair-work activities. Teacher-fronted activities outnumbered group- or pairwork activities. During these five classes the main focus was laid on improving listening skills, oral practice and testing of new

and already acquired material, as well as discussing homework assignments (letters, reports, emails, memos).

3.4 Classroom observation

3.4.1 The observation process

Having gained a written permission from all the students of the class, the researcher observed and video recorded five 90-minute lessons focussing on the teacher. The lessons were recorded in the same classroom and the researcher assumed the role of a non-participant observer. Attending the class enabled the observer to devise, pilot and fine-tune an observation schedule (detailed in 3.4.2) which was to be used for the current, pilot study and in further research projects.

Recording the lessons on video proved to be a very wise decision as it allowed the observer to review the material later to enhance the reliability of the analysis. The obtained video-recorded data were transferred to DVD which resulted in easier and faster data analysis, especially in the transcription phase. The first and second research questions could have been answered by filling in the observation schedule, but for the third question data analysis needed to be done outside the classroom with the help of the transcribed script. The observed lessons were thus transcribed and then analysed. Since the observer used her own camcorder and had known afore that the quality of the video recorded material would be good enough to make both the teacher's and the students' utterances audible and thus transcribable, a separate audio recording of the classroom speech was unnecessary.

3.4.2 The observation schedule

The observation schedule that was planned to assess the amount of teacher and student talk and also the frequency of L1 and L2 was devised on the basis of the COLT schedule – Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching system (Allen, Fröhlich, & Spada 1984 in Allwright, & Bailey, 1991; Fröhlich, Spada, & Allen 1985). The COLT system is a highly complex and exhaustive schedule, but for the purpose of the present analysis only those columns were selected which dealt exclusively with the amount of teacher and student L1 and L2 talk. Therefore, several columns of the COLT system were discarded and a substantially simplified schedule was devised (see Table 1).

The observation schedule was devised, piloted and finalised during the first two observed and recorded classes. It also went through a validation process which included the comments of a colleague who suggested supplementing the schedule with a 'silence' category for easier and more comprehensible data analysis. Leaving out the 'silence column' would not have modified data but it was admittedly much easier to count the occurrences of silence provided that it was tallied in a separate column. Appendix A contains an extract of the observation schedule filled in for the first ten minutes of Lesson 1.

Time (minutes)	Teacher L1	Teacher L2	Student L1	Student L2	Silence	Field notes
0'15"	✓					teacher-fronted activity, distributing handed in and corrected letters and discussing the mistakes
0'30"	✓					
0'45"		✓				
1'00"					✓	
1'15"		✓				
1'30"				✓		

Table 1. Instantaneous sampling

Talk as such is not easy to 'measure'. For the current investigation instantaneous sampling was selected as the most convenient and suitable means to tally the amount and the type (L1 or L2) of classroom talk. Instantaneous sampling involves recording if a behaviour has or has not occurred at specific sample points (Pellegrini, & Bjorklund, 1998, p. 81). This type of sampling implies that the observer records what happens in the classroom at particular points of time, at predetermined moments of the 90 minutes, in the present case at 15-second intervals of the lesson (see Table 1). Talk immediately preceding and succeeding this point of time cannot, unfortunately, be tallied. The shorter the interval, the more our data will approximate the genuine amount of classroom talk.

In order to find a tried and tested measurement method Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2000) guidelines were followed and instantaneous sampling was found to be the most feasible method for this task. Still, it is the observer's firm conviction that the interval is not short enough to arrive at reliable data of the talk occurring in class. Keeping the time with a stopwatch would offer the most consistent data, but it seems hardly feasible to carry out such research with just one device. The instances of parallel teacher and student talk would require two devices and enormous advertence on the part of the researcher.

3.4.3 Data collection and analysis

As the aim was to find an answer to three research questions, data collection and analysis demanded several viewings of the relevant DVD material besides gathering data in class as well. During the observation process the observer concentrated on the following two tasks: (1) collecting data by recording five 90-minute lessons with a video recorder and (2) testing and modifying the COLT system prior to devising, and piloting a tailor-made observation schedule. For practical reasons (operating the camcorder, adjusting the focus on the participant teacher as she moved within the class, changing the videocassette after 60 minutes) the bulk of the analysis was decided to be done outside the classroom.

The lengthy and elaborate phase of the data analysis was preceded by transcribing the recorded material. In order to answer the research questions, the recorded lessons were viewed anew, whereas the transcribed data came in handy in dissecting the teacher's questioning methods.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 The proportion of teacher and student talk in the ESP classroom

Contrary to expectations, the results obtained in the five 90-minute lessons regarding the proportion of teacher talk are similar to the data supported by empirical studies – teacher talk accounts for between one half and three quarters of classroom talk (Allwright, & Bailey, 1991) –, as shown in Table 2. More longitudinal research on the issue could reveal to what extent the results are due to Andrea's efforts of having monitored herself and consciously attempted to speak less during the observation process and if the results are valid throughout a whole term.

On average 71 per cent of the talk was done by the teacher whereas 29 per cent of the classroom talk was filled by student talk. The types of classroom activities reflect well the above proportion. Andrea favoured teacher-fronted activities which inevitably led to more talk done by her. The high amount of teacher talk in Lesson 3 (78 per cent) is due to the fact that an 18-minute chunk of the lesson, in which Andrea hoped to discuss the interrelationship of tourism and the environment, was conducted as a teacher-fronted activity. It seemed obvious that the students had failed to prepare for the lesson, nevertheless, the teacher insisted on covering the material. This, however, resulted in excessive talk on her part and a rather protracted elicitation process.

A thorough analysis of the classroom activities of Lesson 2 revealed that excessive teacher talk was due to a lengthy monologue delivered by Andrea highlighting the details of both the oral and written language exams. Naturally, the figure for teacher talk of Lesson 2 (76 per cent) stands out due to this one-sided speech event. The relatively low amount of teacher talk in Lesson 5 may be traced back to the inclusion of one groupwork and two pairwork activities.

	teacher talk (%)	student talk (%)
lesson 1	74	26
lesson 2	76	24
lesson 3	78	22
lesson 4	71	29
lesson 5	57	43
Average	71	29

Table 2. Percentage of teacher and student talk

On average, teacher talk accounted for 71 per cent of all the talk done in this English for tourism classroom. The obtained data do not give enough justification for stating that this amount of teacher talk can be traced back to the characteristics of ESP teaching and the added tasks of the ESP teacher. The outstanding amount of teacher talk in Lessons 3 and 2 has no relevance to teaching English for tourism. Andrea's elicitation strategy in Lesson 3 – in spite of the fact that the students had apparently failed to prepare for the lesson – and the lengthy transmission of exam-related information in Lesson 2 could have occurred in general English classes as well. Firmer conclusions could be drawn if classes of a few more teachers could be visited and if observations could be conducted over a more extensive period.

4.2 The use of the mother-tongue

The following table highlights the proportion of L1 and L2 classroom talk during the five observed classes.

	English (teacher)	Hungarian (teacher)	English (student)	Hungarian (student)
lesson 1	42	32	21	5
lesson 2	30	46	11	13
lesson 3	67	11	19	3
lesson 4	28	43	16	13
lesson 5	39	18	34	9
Average	41	30	20	9

Table 3. The proportion of L1 and L2 teacher and student talk in percentages

The results have revealed that the use of the mother-tongue is a substantial element in the classroom and it is used as a resort not only in cases of clarifying technical terms or tourism-specific issues but in several additional cases when its use did not seem justified (see Appendix B). A thorough investigation of the lesson transcripts shows that Andrea reverted to L1 regularly when introducing and explaining a task, when reacting to individual student's comments, or when setting homework tasks. Outlining the requirements of the forthcoming language exam was also done in Hungarian which seems understandable considering the lack of genuine information and the excess of false information that the students had concerning this matter, as well as the various preconceptions that the students had previously had about the language exam. A retrospective interview was planned to explore the reasons for the salient use of L1 but it was eventually cancelled due to practical difficulties and Andrea's reluctance to view the recorded material.

4.3 The proportion of display and referential questions

Table 4 shows the number of referential and display questions put forward in English in the five observed lessons. Questions of both types formulated in Hungarian are not included in the table. Andrea made only few efforts to ask referential questions.

	number of display questions	percentage of total	number of referential questions	percentage of total	total number of questions asked	total
lesson 1	71	92%	6	8%	79	100%
lesson 2	83	90%	9	10%	92	100%
lesson 3	44	94%	3	6%	47	100%
lesson 4	61	90%	7	10%	68	100%
lesson 5	52	87%	8	13%	60	100%
Average	total: 62	90%	total: 7	10%	69	100%

Table 4. The proportion of display and referential questions

The figures indicate that there seems to be a preponderance of display questions over referential ones seeking genuine-information. Out of the average 69 questions posed by the

teacher, there were 62 occurrences of display questions on average compared to only seven referential questions. During the observation period no attempts were made to encourage students to get engaged in activities in which they could have synthesized their thoughts and knowledge on the acquired material. This way, Andrea failed to offer the opportunity for her students to respond to referential questions. Only display questions were formulated to check if the set material had been acquired. Accordingly, it was found that there were hardly any instances of ‘real’ communication, i.e. situations when Andrea was not fully aware of the adequate answer. Genuine information was elicited when, for example, students were asked how familiar they were with the language exam or what experiences they had had at travel agencies as trainees. Unfortunately, some of the referential questions were asked in Hungarian, and therefore could not be involved in finding an answer to Research Question 3.

Table 5 contains the data concerning the length of the students’ answers to the above two types of questions. Appendix C contains a few examples for display and referential questions extracted from an 18-minute section of Lesson 3 in which *the interrelation of tourism and the environment* was discussed.

Question type	Number of questions	Length of answers
display questions	42	4.3 words
referential questions	3	8.1 words

Table 5. The mean length of students’ responses for display and referential questions in an 18-minute extract of Lesson 3.

5 Conclusions and pedagogical implications

Several conclusions may be drawn on completing the analysis. First of all, practising teachers should be encouraged to take part in classroom observation studies either as an observer or a participant. Having the opportunity to look inside classrooms through recorded material and/or as an observer is a unique experience which can inevitably yield constructive and valuable comments and advice on one’s methodology and classroom management. Consultation with the observer and/or taking part in a retrospective interview may contribute to a greater understanding of each other’s routines and may lead to abandoning long-standing, inefficient practices.

Regarding the amount of teacher talk in the ESP classroom, the investigation did not bring forward any surprising results. Additional and more extended observations should be conducted with the participation of many more teachers to see if there is a significant difference between the results obtained in the ESP classroom and those of the EFL setting. Having a more extensive database and statistical data analysis could verify or challenge the hypothesis conceptualised in Research question 1.

The salient role of the mother-tongue has proved to be a surprising finding of the analysis. The mother tongue was used at several points of the lessons, and at times when the students could have understood the teacher in English as well. A retrospective interview following the observation process might have yielded revealing results and would have given the opportunity for Andrea to defend her practice. Unfortunately, owing to reasons beyond the observer’s control the retrospective interview could not be conducted. Nevertheless, it is thought that there is room for improvement for Andrea in her usage of L1 and L2. The study may therefore be helpful in raising her awareness to the issue.

The results regarding Andrea's questioning technique brought similar results as data found in academic literature. Unfortunately it is impossible to draw comprehensive conclusions on the mean length of students' responses on the grounds of the present analysis. Still, it seems obvious that the teacher's questioning technique did not encourage the students to produce extended responses which fact is represented in the low score of the average word count of students' answers in an 18-minute extract of Lesson 3.

All in all, classroom observation has proved to be a privileged event despite the lengthy observation process, the meticulous transcription phase and the time-consuming data analysis. Being present in a series of lessons as an observer enabled the researcher to find several further areas of investigation which had not been as salient outside class as inside it.

The above investigation introduced just one teacher and the results of only five 90-minute lessons. It would be unwise to draw far-reaching conclusions and generalisations from the results of the three research questions that the study purported to investigate. Therefore, this study warrants further research on analysing the practices of many more participants and the recorded observation of many more lessons in the ESP context followed by retrospective interviews with the participants in order to be able to arrive at more comprehensive conclusions. Furthermore, the investigation of other factors (e.g., the teacher's L2 competence, personality, communication skills and competences in teaching methodology) would enhance our understanding of why teachers make certain decisions in the language classroom and to what extent these factors may influence one's teaching practice and thus the obtained results.

In the course of the observation sessions and the data analysis further research areas have opened up. An invaluable result of the study is the set of video recordings that the author now has at her disposal. The recorded data will make it possible for her to focus on a number of further aspects of teacher talk:

- The clarity of the teacher's questions and instructions;
- Question posing: Does the teacher pose the question first and then select and call on a student to respond?
- Pause: Does the teacher allow sufficient time between posing the question and calling on a student to answer?
- Wait time: Does the teacher give the student enough time to answer the question before calling on someone else? Are the students given equal time to respond?
- The type-token ratio of teacher talk

Part of the list above was suggested by Celce-Murcia and McIntosh (1979).

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APPENDIX A

The observation schedule and the coding of data of a 10-minute period of Lesson 1.

Time (minutes)	Teacher L1	Teacher L2	Student L1	Student L2	Silence	Field notes
0'15''		✓				teacher-fronted activity; checking if students have learnt 'the functions of travel agents and tour operators'
0'30''	✓					
0'45''				✓		
1'00''					✓	
1'15''				✓		
1'30''				✓		
1'45''		✓				
2'00''				✓		
2'15''		✓				
2'30''					✓	
2'45''				✓		
3'00''				✓		
3'15''		✓		✓		
3'30''		✓				
3'45''		✓				
4'00''		✓				
4'15''					✓	
4'30''				✓		
4'45''				✓		
5'00''					✓	
5'15''				✓		
5'30''				✓		
5'45''		✓				
6'00''		✓				
6'15''		✓		✓		
6'30''		✓				
6'45''	✓					
7'00''		✓				
7'15''		✓				
7'30''					✓	
7'45''					✓	
8'00''		✓				
8'15''		✓				
8'30''		✓				
8'45''		✓				
9'00''		✓				teacher explains pairwork task: students brainstorm events, inventions that contributed to the development of tourism
9'15''				✓		
9'30''		✓				
9'45''				✓		
10'00''			✓	✓		

APPENDIX B

Appendix B contains transcript excerpts for unjustified mother-tongue usage. The texts first appear in the original, then in English translation. In the translated version italics represent the original English utterances of the teacher, while plain text represents her Hungarian utterances.

Example 1:

Teacher: Hát ez nem nagyon megy. De legalább megtalálták [a kiadott lapon lévő házi feladatot]?
 Ilyen papírt kell keresni: 'useful phrases in structuring the discussion, asking for somebody's opinion, saying you're optimistic, interrupting, protesting', ... két papír, igen, nem, három. ... Megvan? Hogy tanulták, ha ennyire elkavarodott? ... Na jó.

Example 1 (translation):

Teacher: Well, this doesn't go very well but you have at least found it (the homework handout). You should be able to find a handout titled *useful phrases in structuring the discussion, asking for somebody's opinion, saying you're optimistic, interrupting, protesting*, ... two handouts, yes, no, three. Got it? ... How could you learn it if you can't find it at all? ... Okay, then.

Example 2:

Teacher: A következőképpen fogjuk megcsinálni a szituációt. Azért ismételtük át részben az 'employment' szavait, mert a szituáció erről szól. Lesz majd erről listening is, elég nehéz listening, csak nem tudom, hogy bele fér-e még az időnkbe. Ööö, úgy fogjuk megcsinálni a szituációt, hogy ... kicsit csendesebben lányok ..., hogy kiadom előre az egyiket, mondjuk az A feladatot és aztán kiadom a B-t. Fel fognak készülni úgy, mintha a vizsgán lennének, jó? Tehát megkapják mindkét felét a szituációnak. Nem tudják, hogy a másiknak mit kell csinálni. Ötleteket kell gyűjteni. Eléggé leszabályozott a szituáció, eléggé ... pontosan meg van mondva, hogy hová kell eljutniuk. Arra felhívom a figyelmüket, hogy a vizsgán szigorúan tilos felolvasni ami ide van írva a papírra.

Example 2 (translation):

Teacher: We'll do the situation in the following way. We have reviewed part of the words of 'employment' because this is what the situation is about. We'll have a 'listening' about it too, a very difficult one, I just don't know if we have time for it. ...Er.... We'll do the situation like this: ... can I have some silence, girls, please?, ... I'll hand out one of the partner's tasks, say Student A's, then I'll give you the prompts for Student B. You'll prepare for the task in the same way as if you were in the exam, all right? So, you'll get both parts of the situation. You won't know what your partner will have to do. You'll have to brainstorm ideas. The situation is fairly guided ...well ... you are told what you'll have to achieve. I strictly warn you against reading out the prompts from your paper in your exam.

Example 3:

Teacher: Az angol nyelvnek ez egy szépsége, hogy a szó ugyanabban a formájában jelenthet főnevet, jelenthet igét. A szó mondatbeli helye elmondja, hogy mi a jelentése.

Example 3 (translation):

Teacher: One of the beauties of the English language is that the same form of a word can mean both a noun and a verb. The place it takes in the sentence tells us what it means.

Example 4:

Teacher: Azért választottam ezt a feladatot, mert ez életszerű kicsit. Ha bárkinek is volt bármiféle nyári munkája, akkor elbeszélgethetett már a munkaadójával, nem? ... Nem? Nahát, akkor itt az ideje, hogy gyakoroljuk.

Example 4 (translation):

Teacher: I have chosen this task because it is fairly realistic. If anyone has ever had a summer job, they surely had the opportunity to talk to their employer, I suppose. ... You didn't? Well, it's high time we did some practice, then.

Example 5:

Teacher: Értik a feladatot? Képből vannak?

Example 5 (translation):

Teacher: Do you understand the task? Do you get the picture?

Example 6:

Teacher: Nincs annyi időnk, hogy bármibe belefogjunk, úgyhogy el fogom magukat engedni. Viszont ne felejtsek el a leckét: a levél a könyvben, illetve adnék még egy papírt, amit az órán szerettem volna megcsinálni. Tehát egy levelet kell írni, ott van a könyvben, 'letter of confirmation' a szituáció alapján. Amit most kiadok, azt olvassák végig.

Example 6 (translation):

Teacher: We don't have enough time to start a new task now, so I'll let you go. Don't forget to do your homework: the letter in your book and I'll also give you a handout that I wanted you to do during the lesson. So, you'll have to write a letter on the basis of the situation, a *letter of confirmation*, it's in your book. I'll give you a handout which you'll have to read through.

APPENDIX C

Examples taken from an 18-minute discussion in Lesson 3 on *the interrelationship of tourism and the environment*. Students' sentences are in bold, the word count of their utterances is given in brackets.

Example 1:

Teacher: Rehabilitation? What does it mean? Could you explain it?

Student: **For example rebuild a heritage ... or a building or ... rehabilitating a place. (12 words)**

Example 2:

Teacher: I don't think do-good-holidays are a good example for rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is giving new life. Can you think of any examples when a building, an attraction, anything has got a new life, a new function because of tourism?

Teacher: Okay, mansions in Great Britain. Do you know what a mansion is? Castles, no?

Teacher: A mansion is where rich people live or used to live ... quite a big house ... similar to the ones we have in Gyula, Gödöllő

Student: **Lillafüred (1 word)**

Teacher: Lillafüred, very good. Okay, what are they used for nowadays?

Student: **They are museums. (3 words)**

Teacher: Museums, yes ... or ...

Student: **... hotels ... (1 word)**

Teacher: Hotels, very good, mansion hotels are good examples for rehabilitation.

Example 3:

Teacher: What problems are there [regarding the environment]? Just give me or tell me some of the problems we have to face. We have several problems.

Student: mass tourism

Teacher: Okay, but general problems... in general... any problems? Judit?

Judit: **traffic jams (2 words)**

Teacher: Traffic jams, yes. What else?

Student: **air pollution (1 word)**

Teacher: Air pollution, very good.

Student: **ozone lawyer (2 words)**

Teacher: layer ... Ádám, yes?

Ádám: **Animals extinct from that place. (5 words)**

Teacher: Oh, I see, ...aha..., so animals become extinct.

Example 4:

Teacher: How green are you? What do you do to save the environment? What do you do at home? ... Ildikó?

Ildikó: **... I ... when I wash my teeth I turn off the tap ... (11 words)**

Teacher: Yes, very good. What else?

Ildikó: **... or I turn off the light. (6 words)**