

## Intro

It's no secret that [student talking time](#) is important in the [ESL](#) classroom. After all, if the teacher spends a lot of time talking and explaining, then the students will talk less and be bored. That's why English teachers must minimize their teacher talking time or [teacher talk time](#) (TTT) and maximize student talking time or [student talk time](#) (STT) instead. The traditionally accepted ratio of STT to TTT in the EFL/ESL classroom is about 80% - 20% respectively. For more advanced classes TTT can go down to 10% and for lower-level classes, the TTT can go up to 30%. But this also depends on the lesson type as well.

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For example, let's consider a class of 24 [ESL students](#). If the class time is 60 minutes long, then every minute that the teacher spends talking is a minute that the students aren't talking. So if the teacher talks 10% of the time (6 min), then each student in a pair talk can get 27 minutes of talking. If TTT goes to 20% then the SST goes down to 24 minutes. If the TTT is 30% of the time then each student in a pair talk gets 21 minutes of SST. You see how each minute of TTT cuts into the SST of each student in the EFL/ESL classroom.

As English teachers, then, our goal should be to reduce the amount of talking we do in class and instead maximize the amount of talking that students are doing. This does not mean for teachers to talk less at all costs. This means improving the quality of TTT (TTQ). This will not only help keep our students engaged, but it will also enable them to develop their [language skills](#) more quickly and effectively over time. So if you're

looking to cut down on teacher talking time in your classroom, here are a few tips to help you get started:

## **1. Plan Ahead**

Before each class, take a few minutes to plan out what you're going to say and do. This will help you be more concise and focused when you're teaching, and it will also free up more time for students to talk.



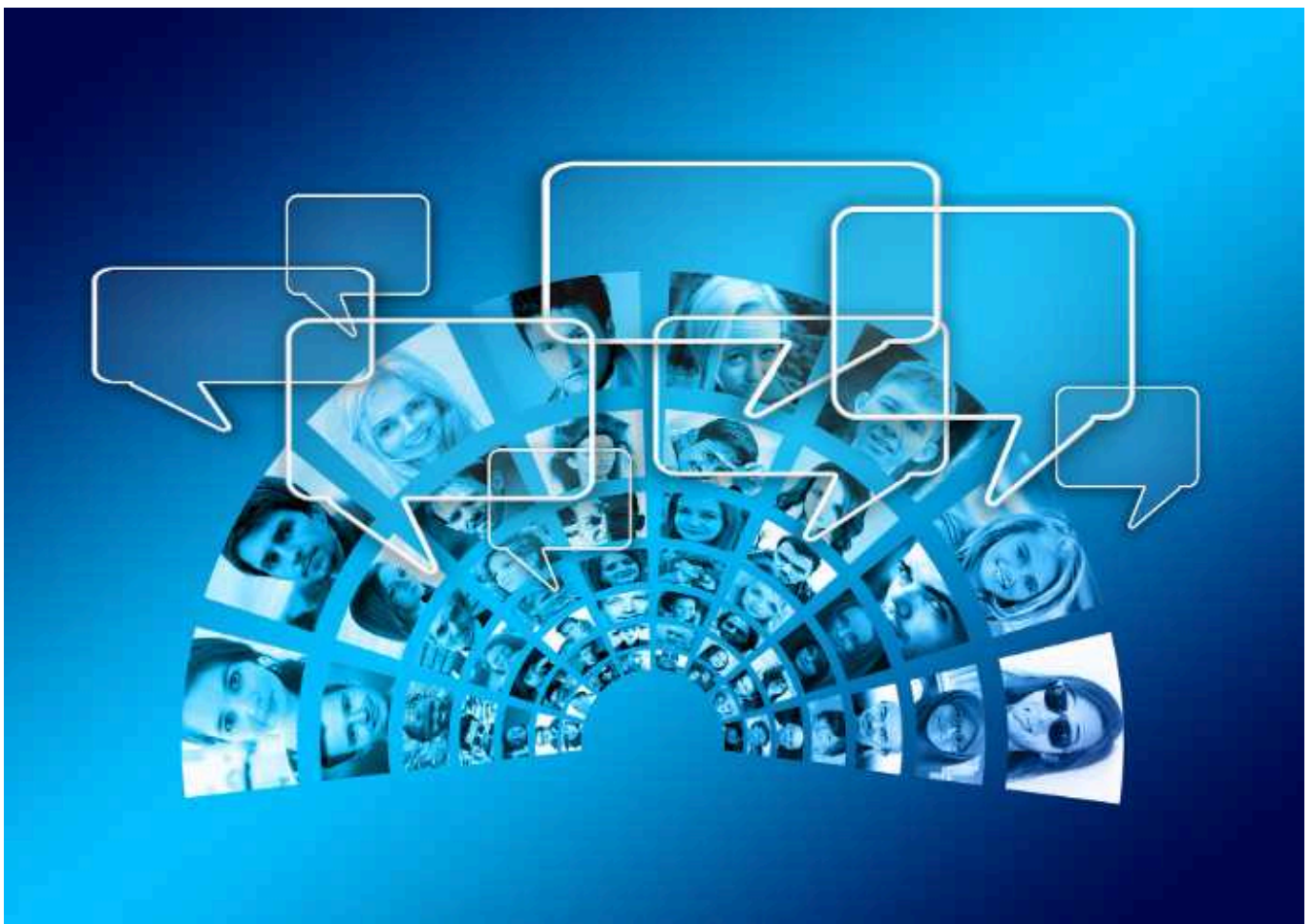
### ***Encourage students to come prepared***

If you're teaching a unit on a particular topic, encourage your students to do some reading or research beforehand so that they'll have plenty of interesting things to talk about in class (i.e. **blended learning**). And if you notice that some students tend to dominate the discussion, subtly try and steer the conversation towards other topics so that everybody gets a

chance to speak.

### ***Rotate groups regularly***

Students need to get the chance to work with different classmates regularly, so try and divide your class into new pairs or small groups every class or even during class. This will not only help to keep things fresh, but it will also encourage each student to speak more since they'll have to present new ideas to different people regularly.



### ***Use pair work and group work activities to encourage student interaction***

Whenever possible, encourage students to interact with each other instead of relying on you to lead the conversation. You can do this by asking questions and letting students first reflect on these questions with their partners before giving their answers in front of the class. Have



students work in pairs or small groups as much as possible. Not only will this give them plenty of opportunities to practice their [speaking skills](#), but it will also help them to learn from and bond with their classmates.

## 2. Make use of Technology

When appropriate, make use of technology to help you deliver your lesson. For example, you could show a short [video clip](#) or use a PowerPoint presentation instead of spending a lot of time talking about the topic yourself.

Technology can be a great way to engage students and promote student talking time. If used effectively, things like PowerPoint [presentations](#), video clips, and online forums can help get students to talk and interact with the material. Just be sure not to overdo it - too much technology can be just as bad as too little. There is plenty of video content on the Internet that you may use in your [EFL/ESL](#) classroom to spark interest and conversation. Short motion pictures or animations may have a bigger effect on students' engagement than the teacher's speech/introduction/explanation. Balance it, and make it relevant to the topic.



### 3. Classroom Management Tips to get more STT

One of the most important ways to encourage student participation is by demonstrating your own enthusiasm and engagement in the lesson. If you are excited about what you are teaching, this will help to engage your students and get them interested in participating as well. You can do this by using [interactive activities](#).

#### ***Use questions effectively***

Asking questions is a great way to get students thinking and talking, but it's important to use them wisely. Try to avoid yes/no questions, and instead focus on open-ended questions that will encourage students to share their thoughts and opinions.

#### ***Give students plenty of opportunities to practice speaking***

Whether it's through games or activities, role-plays, or discussions, try and provide your students with as many opportunities as possible to use English in a natural and authentic context. This will help them feel more confident when speaking in class, and it will also give them the chance to put what they're learning into practice.

#### ***Allow for spontaneity***

Of course, it's important to plan your lessons, but that doesn't mean you can't be spontaneous when teaching. If a particular activity or game is going well and the students are enjoying it, there's no need to cut it short just so that you can move on to something else. Instead, allow the energy and excitement in the classroom to guide your teaching and keep things moving naturally and organically.

#### ***Take feedback from your students seriously and encourage student input***

At the end of each class, try and find a few minutes to get some input

from your students about how they feel it went. This can be as simple as asking them to write down a few notes about what they liked and what they didn't, or it could involve holding a more formal discussion with the whole class about their overall experience and how they can improve moving forward. **Encouraging feedback** from your students will help ensure that you're always providing them with the best possible learning environment.



In addition, it's also important to encourage student input on the material being covered in class. Whenever possible, try and solicit feedback from your students on what they think about the topic at hand and how it relates to their lives. Doing this will help ensure that everyone feels like they're being heard and are an important part of the learning process.

### ***Use concise language***

When you do need to talk, use concise language instead of long-winded explanations. Give specific instructions. This will help you get your point across quickly and efficiently without taking up too much time. But you also need to rough-tune your language to the level of students so that they do not feel intimidated by your English **language skills**. Use simple language and short sentences so that your students can understand and



follow your instructions, and perhaps integrate them over time into their speaking habits.

### ***Be aware of your body language***

Your body language can say a lot, even when you're not speaking. If you want to encourage more student talking time, make sure your body language is open and inviting instead of closed off or unapproachable. The way you stand in the classroom, cross your arms, facial expressions, etc. are all clues you subconsciously give off which may have positive or negative effects on how your students respond to you and your lessons. The more comfortable students feel in your class, the more L2 they are going to produce, and be more satisfied with their learning experience.



### ***Encourage questions***

Questions are a great way to get students talking. Encourage your

students to ask questions throughout the lesson, and take the time to answer them thoughtfully. This will help create an environment where it's okay to speak up and ask for clarification, which is essential for [effective communication](#). Sometimes, you may instruct your students to first, very quickly (1 min) tell their partner what question would they like to ask the teacher regarding a certain issue. This allows your students to formulate the question and get feedback from their partners. This boosts confidence and may lead to more questions from your students and better classroom interaction.

### ***Check for understanding***

When you're finished talking, take a few seconds to check for understanding before moving on. This will help ensure that students are absorbing what you've just said and can help you correct any misconceptions that students may have. Ask one or a few students to tell you what you just explained (i.e. a language item, instructions for the next task,...).

### ***Give your students space to talk***

It can be tempting to jump in and answer every question that comes up during a lesson, but this isn't always the best approach. Try and give your students room to talk amongst themselves and let them work through things on their own whenever possible. This will help ensure that they're able to actively engage with the material and participate fully in the class. A few moments of silence, while you are waiting for their answer, is fine. It shows all your students that their contributions are important.

### ***Use minimal instructions***

As much as possible, try to minimize the number of instructions you give during a lesson in favor of open-ended questions or prompts for students to answer on their own. This will help ensure that students can think critically about what they're learning and find the answers on their own.

***Be mindful of your tone of voice***

Your tone of voice can say a lot about what you have to say, so it's important to be aware of how you sound when giving instructions or responding to questions. If possible, try and keep your voice calm and even so that students don't feel like they're being berated or talked down to.

***Be patient and understanding***

Above all, try and be patient and understanding with your students when you're teaching them. Not everyone learns at the same pace or in the same way, so it's important to keep this in mind when you're trying to promote student talking time. By being understanding and encouraging your students who are struggling with the material, you can help ensure that everyone can succeed.

**Final Thoughts**

Student talking time is an essential part of any successful ESL class for learning English - after all, there's no point in learning a new language if you don't get the chance to practice it. By promoting student participation and creating an inclusive learning environment, you can help ensure that all of your students have plenty of opportunities to use English in a meaningful way. Learning a language is a skill, just like learning to ride a bike or being a barista. The learner must be involved to learn it, and mistakes are part of the learning process.



Students learn when they get enough chances to use and learn new words and vocabulary. But this cannot happen in a class where there is too much TTT. In every English lesson, every lesson plan should reduce the teacher's talking time and increase the students talking time. Only then will students have enough time to practice to make mistakes, self-correct, and eventually boost confidence and improve their English skills.

### **Cite this article**

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