



## 'Let's move on': second language trainee teachers' talk and its impact on learner interaction

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## **‘Let’s move on’: second language trainee teachers’ talk and its impact on learner interaction**

### **Abstract**

Second language trainee teachers need to use effective classroom language, or ‘teacher talk’, otherwise opportunities for second language learning can be reduced. However, trainees are often not aware of how their teacher talk influences opportunities for language development in the classroom. This study explores teacher talk data collected from lesson transcripts of teaching practice recordings and from stimulated recall interviews with nine trainee teachers who were studying on a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages Master’s programme at a UK university. It encourages the trainees to look up-close at their teacher talk in order to raise their awareness of its impact on second language learning. The findings of this research show that trainee teachers use teacher talk features which close down learner interaction and that this may be due to their concern with getting through and moving on with the lesson rather than with supporting learning.

### **Keywords**

Teacher talk; English as a Second Language; trainee teacher; classroom management; second language classroom interaction; SETT.

### **Introduction**

It has long been recognised that interaction is crucial for successful second language acquisition and, more recently, research has shown that teacher talk can either support or hinder this (Johnson 1995; Cullen, 1998; Nunn, 1999; Seedhouse, 1997, 2004, 2005; Walsh 2002, 2003, 2006a, 2006b, 2011). Experienced teachers tend to gain expertise in using teacher talk effectively through practice, they know when and how their use of language might close down or open up opportunities for learner participation, however, this is not always a skill which trainee teachers have, and may not be one which they are explicitly taught. This study involves English as a Second Language (ESL) trainee teachers on an MA in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and has come about because comments drawn from teaching practice performance

reviews produced by university tutors on this programme showed that trainees found effective use of classroom language challenging. Tutors commented in their feedback: ‘reduce the amount of talk’, ‘allow learners to respond’, ‘avoid echoing so much’, ‘avoid asking and answering questions’, ‘let discussion evolve rather than interrupt’ and ‘avoid talking over learners’. These comments suggested that trainees may use language which has the potential to discourage, rather than encourage potential interaction and learning. The current study fills a gap in research by exploring which features of second language trainee teachers’ classroom language is ineffective, in particular which features impact on opportunities for learner interaction and why trainees choose to use these particular classroom language features. The research finds that trainees have a tendency to use features of teacher talk which helps them ‘get through’ the lesson and that this can hinder rather than support learning. This finding is important because if teacher educators and trainees can become aware of the impact of this on learning then there is potential for change and therefore better learner interaction for acquisition.

The study takes a qualitative case study approach. It includes nine trainee teacher participants who took part in a six week overseas teaching practice (TP) placement as part of their MA TESOL at a UK university. They taught in Hungarian primary and secondary schools for 12 hours per week and were observed and given feedback on their teaching by their university supervisors and host teachers. The participants transcribed (Appendix A) classroom language from TP lessons and took part in a stimulated recall (SR) interview with the researcher to explore features of, and reasons for, their teacher talk.

## **Rationale**

Teacher talk is an important issue in all teaching but especially in second language teaching. Two features common to second language classrooms, whatever the language, are significant here. Firstly, teacher talk in second language classrooms represents a special kind of classroom discourse given the status of the second language as ‘doubling up’ as not only the subject matter - lexis, structure and phonology but the medium or tool of communication. Secondly, teacher talk is particularly important in second language teaching because learners need opportunities to communicate in the second language in order for meaningful learning to take place, and teacher talk can either encourage or discourage that communication. Therefore, the quality of teacher talk may hold more weight in terms of opportunities for learning in second language learning classrooms than in other subject classrooms.

The current study used Walsh’s (2003) Self Evaluation of Teacher Talk (SETT) framework to explore this issue further. Walsh (2003) suggests that teacher talk varies depending on the pedagogical purpose of the stage of the lesson, and, as part of his SETT framework, proposes four ‘modes’ or phases of classroom interaction (see Table 1 below). Each mode corresponds to a pedagogical goal and entails particular ‘interactional features’ (Walsh 2006a, 63) or as Seedhouse (2005) describes, its own distinctive ‘fingerprint’.

Firstly, Skills and Systems mode where the four language skills or grammar and vocabulary are the focus; secondly, Managerial mode where organising tasks and the classroom is the focus; thirdly, Materials mode where the focus is on learning through using resources, and lastly, Classroom Context mode where the focus is on eliciting learners' feelings, attitudes and emotions. According to Walsh (ibid.), 'effective' teacher talk is that which is appropriate for the pedagogical goals of a particular phase of the lesson. For example, when setting up pair work in managerial mode, a teacher may say - 'first of all, I'd like you to choose a partner, after that practise your part individually. Has everybody got that? OK let's get started'. According to Walsh's SETT, this talk is effective because it includes specific features of managerial mode which are appropriate for its pedagogical goals, such as, transitional markers (first of all, OK), confirmation checks (...got that?) and an extended teacher turn.

Table 1: SETT modes, their pedagogical purpose and appropriate teacher talk features (Walsh, S. 2006b).

<b>Mode</b>	<b>Pedagogic Goals</b>	<b>Interactional features</b>
<b>Managerial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To transmit information</li> <li>• To organize the physical learning environment</li> <li>• To refer learners to materials</li> <li>• To introduce or conclude an activity</li> <li>• To change from one mode of learning to another</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A single extended teacher turn which uses explanations and/or instructions</li> <li>• The use of transitional markers</li> <li>• The use of confirmation checks</li> <li>• An absence of learner contributions</li> </ul>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide language practice around a piece of material</li> <li>• To elicit responses in relation to the material</li> <li>• To check and display answers</li> <li>• To clarify when necessary</li> <li>• To evaluate contributions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predominance of IRF feature</li> <li>• Extensive use of display questions</li> <li>• Form-focused feedback</li> <li>• Corrective repair</li> <li>• The use of scaffolding</li> </ul>
<b>Skills and systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To enable learners to produce correct forms</li> <li>• To enable learners to manipulate the target language</li> <li>• To provide corrective feedback</li> <li>• To provide learners with practice in sub skills</li> <li>• To display correct answers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of direct repair</li> <li>• The use of scaffolding</li> <li>• Extended teacher turns</li> <li>• Display questions</li> <li>• Teacher echo</li> <li>• Clarification requests</li> <li>• Form-focused feedback</li> </ul>
<b>Classroom context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To enable learners to express themselves clearly</li> <li>• To establish a context</li> <li>• To promote oral fluency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended learner turns</li> <li>• Short teacher turns</li> <li>• Minimal repair</li> <li>• Content feedback</li> <li>• Referential questions</li> <li>• Scaffolding</li> <li>• Clarification requests</li> </ul>

The SETT framework was chosen for two reasons. Firstly, it provides a purposeful way to explore the trainee teacher talk transcript data in order to answer the first research question:

- What features of second language trainee teachers' classroom language impacts on opportunities for learner interaction?

Secondly, it provides a metalanguage that the researcher and trainees can use in stimulated recall interviews to explore the lesson recordings and transcripts (the stimuli) to answer the second research question:

- What reasons do trainees give for their choice of teacher talk?

This next three sections of this paper will review relevant theory, describe the methodology and present and discuss findings.

## **Theoretical background**

### **Sociocultural theory of learning**

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning (1978) is used as the theoretical lens through which the two research questions are explored. Vygotsky's proposal that learning occurs in social places where learning is a 'situated practice' is relevant as language classrooms are social where students can learn from each other and from the teacher through talking. Vygotsky believes that this learning occurs most successfully through talking to another who is more experienced, the 'expert knower' (ibid.), i.e. the teacher or a more proficient student. An important feature of Vygotsky's theory (ibid.) is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). This term relates to the difference between what a learner can achieve on his or her own compared with when s/he is supported by a more able other. A key ZPD concept relevant to teacher talk is scaffolding – the linguistic support typically given to a learner by a more able other and in particular a teacher. For example, a teacher may rephrase the question 'Would you mind opening the window a little bit for me please?' to 'Can you open the window?' For effective learning to occur, language teachers need to work out when is the best time to scaffold, how much scaffolding a learner might need and what type of scaffolding to provide. From a sociocultural perspective, learning is conceptualized as participation and negotiation rather than knowledge acquisition (Donato, 2000).

Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1996) is also relevant to teacher talk as it develops the sociocultural theory of learning and proposes that not only is the level, complexity and amount of language input, e.g. teacher talk, crucial but negotiation between learners themselves and with their teacher must occur for learning to take place. Long (1996: 451) emphasised the importance of the 'competent interlocutor', which is the teacher in

language classrooms, the one who has the best use of the language and can ensure that negotiation is managed and interaction takes place. Taking the work of Long further, Swain's (2005) output hypothesis is important in terms of the effectiveness of teacher talk as it holds that provision of comprehensible input, e.g. teacher talk, is important but so are opportunities for comprehensible output in order for interaction to become acquisition. For example, when a teacher makes it clear they do not understand a student's contribution, then they are giving that student an opportunity to adapt their language to make their second language output comprehensible. By doing so, the student has to check existing second language hypotheses which pushes their second language and awareness and knowledge further.

It is generally accepted that ESL classrooms are social contexts in their own right, where language learning occurs in a social situation, ideally in a ZPD where there is an expert knower/competent interlocutor who uses teacher talk effectively in order to scaffold, and to support negotiation and interaction which pushes participants to participate. It is the interactions in classrooms that enhance language learning as a social enterprise, jointly constructed and intrinsically linked to learners' repeated and regular participation in activities (Consolo, 2006). Sociocultural theory, is therefore, an appropriate lens with which to explore teacher talk.

### **Research into teacher talk**

Teacher talk is a major component of classroom discourse, so its importance for facilitating effective second language learning is obvious. Walsh (2006a: 5-12) identifies four key features of classroom discourse: control; elicitation; modification and repair. Regarding control, the Initiation Response Feedback (IRF) pattern, is a typical way teachers control interaction, as highlighted by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). Here, the teacher Initiates with a question, 'What does furious mean?' the learner Responds, 'It means very angry' and the teacher gives Feedback; 'yes, very angry, good'. IRF, although common in all classrooms, has been criticised in the context of second language teaching for supporting a closed rather than an open communication format, with researchers proposing a 'Follow-up' move instead of a 'Feedback move' as a way of pushing for more learner contribution (Cullen, 2002; Thornbury, 1996; Seedhouse 1997). For example; Initiation - What does furious mean? Response – It means very angry; Follow up – yes, can you describe a situation which has made you furious? Elicitation, or the teacher's move to elicit some kind of knowledge from the learners is the second of Walsh's key features of teacher talk. Previous research (Long & Sato, 1983; Nunan, 1987; Musumeci, 1996) in L2 classrooms focuses on effects of using 'referential questions' (i.e. those questions teachers do not know the answer to) e.g. 'why didn't you do your homework?' and 'display' questions (i.e. those questions teachers already know the answer to) e.g. 'what's the opposite of 'up' in English?'. Display questions are less likely to open up interaction than referential questions and as with the IRF move, can be used by teachers to constrain interaction, and, in effect, confine learner contribution.

Modification, or adaptation, of teacher and learner language is another of Walsh's key features of second language classroom talk. This often plays out in teachers' 'scaffolding' their learners' language. Gibbons' (2003) study, illustrates how a teacher 'scaffolded' their primary learners' science knowledge and ability to express this in English. A learner was asked to talk about the behaviour of two bar magnets in relation to the position of the poles. The learner explained: 'you can feel . . . that they're not pushing . . .if we use the other side we can't feel pushing' which is rephrased by the teacher with 'when they were facing one way you felt the magnets attract and stick together when you turn one of the magnets around you felt it repelling or pushing away' (ibid. pp: 258-259).

Walsh suggests repair as the last unique feature of second language teacher talk. In his study (2002:10) one teacher's way of correcting does not match the pedagogical aim of the phase of the lesson and s/he 'obstructs' by interrupting a fluency activity with an explanation of why 'to be agree' is wrong; whilst another teacher uses an economical and direct approach which 'constructs' learning, for example 'PIN not pen'.

To summarise, these studies emphasise which interactional features are necessary for effective control, elicitation, modification and repair in the classroom. It can be surmised that if these features are not used or used inappropriately, then interaction in language learning may be constrained. The methodology of the current study is described next, then findings are presented and discussed, finally, conclusions are drawn.

## **Methodology**

The participants comprised a convenience sample of two male and seven female trainee ESL teachers, aged between 23 and 54 who were studying on a MA TESOL programme at a UK university. Five of them were non-native speakers of English (from Bangladesh, China (x 2), Greece and Russia) and four native speakers. These characteristics may limit generalisability to other contexts. The data for the present study consists of 18 video-recorded ESOL lessons and 18 stimulated recall interviews and comes from a data pool which has been collected for the purpose of a larger research project<sup>1</sup>. This paper is based on a subset of the data, 10 minute extracts from the 18 ESOL lessons.

### ***Video recording of lessons***

The trainee teachers chose two ten-minute extracts from two videoed lessons to transcribe. This first data set consisted of 18, ten-minute long transcriptions of video-recorded lesson extracts, that is, two transcriptions for each of the nine participants. The recordings were made towards the end of the participants' teaching practice as it was assumed that they would, at this stage, be more familiar with their teaching environment and

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<sup>1</sup> A range of data were collected between 2015-2016 from a number of trainee teachers carrying out a teaching practice placement in schools in Hungary. This data included transcripts of teaching practice lessons, stimulated recall interviews, questionnaires, lesson plans and post lesson reflections and was gathered in order to explore what was going on with ESL trainee teachers' talk.

would no longer be nervous, and thus their teacher talk would be at its most normal. The researcher was not present in order to minimise any observational interference. In order to answer the first research question, what features of second language trainee teachers' classroom language impacts on opportunities for learner interaction, the researcher read and re-read the lesson transcripts and used the SETT framework to explore episodes where trainees' talk encouraged or discouraged interaction, and for the purposes of this paper, those which hindered interaction were explored.

### ***Stimulated Recall***

Before the study took place, the trainees had participated in teaching sessions in which they had learnt about Walsh's modes, pedagogical purpose and appropriate interactional teacher talk features. So they were able to understand and to a certain extent use, the SETT meta-language when they sat in front of a computer with the researcher to watch their video recordings and to discuss their choice of teacher talk. For example, why do you use transitional markers here? How do your learners respond to your display questions? This second data set consisted of 18, fifteen-minute long transcriptions of Stimulated Recall interviews, that is, two interviews for each of the nine participants. The stimulated recall interview method was chosen because it encourages critical reflection and with the exception of Walsh's work (2003, 2006b), this type of verbal reporting research on trainee teachers' talk is scarce. In order to respond to the second research question, what reasons do trainees give for their choice of teacher talk, the researcher read and re-read the SR transcripts, then focused in on the episodes where trainees gave reasons for choosing teacher talk which hindered learning.

### **Ethics**

The study adhered to standard guidelines for the ethical conduct of research and received approval from the University where the research took place. Pseudonyms are used to refer to the participants. One potential issue was that the research was undertaken with the researcher's own learners. Burman and Kleinsasser (2004: 68) make the point that involving one's own students in research 'may equalise the relationship to a certain extent, but it never completely removes students' vulnerability as there will always be an inherent power relationship as the teacher is the one who is seen as the evaluator of ability'. To address this, participants were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time and were reminded at various points that their participation or non-participation would have no impact on marks or teacher/researcher's attitude towards them.

Although the trainee teachers are drawn from a convenience sample of students on the MA TESOL programme, their teacher talk data does provide rich qualitative data which can inform research into classroom language and teacher talk. In terms of the SETT framework, much of the trainee talk analysed was effective in that use of teacher talk features were appropriate for the mode or phase of the lesson. The specific extracts of classroom interaction and their accompanying stimulated recall interviews presented and discussed below have been chosen to illustrate that at points where interaction is hindered, trainees' classroom language reflects



a concern with getting through the lesson rather than with supporting learning. In order to improve the consistency of the interpretation of data, two colleagues possessing research and second language teaching experience analysed lesson and stimulated recall transcription data to confirm representation of this finding.

## Findings

In response to the first research question, ‘what features of second language trainee teachers’ classroom language impacts on opportunities for learner interaction’ findings show that a lack of transitional markers and pause, a use of IRF and display questions as well as overlapping and latching are features of trainee teacher talk which hinder learner involvement or restrict interaction in some way. In response to the second research question, ‘what reasons do trainees give for their choice of teacher talk?’ the idea of ‘moving on’ and ‘getting through’ the lesson is evident in the stimulated recall transcripts. The lesson transcription is presented alongside the trainee’s stimulated recall interview transcript and after each extract comments and interpretations are made concerning how features of trainee teacher talk demonstrate support or hindrance to interaction.

### Amelia

In extract 1 below Amelia is working in both Managerial and Materials mode. This extract is taken from the middle of a 50 minute class involving a group of 16 Hungarian pupils at Pre-Intermediate level. The teacher’s aim at this point was to gather responses to questions about a text about holiday destinations.

Extract 1:

A Lesson extract	B Stimulated Recall
<p>24. L3: yes (7)            25. L4: copy?=            26. T: =no no NO she will not COPY ... she will listen in class and she will write the answers what about exercise B? Edward?            27. L2: =when I was young ... when I was young ... I used to spend ... I spent all the holidays ... summers at Cape Cod in [Massa]            28. T: [Massachusetts] b ... 1 and 2 right what about the others            29. L4: Cape Cod is lovely place which=            30. T: =attracts lots of tourists tourists</p>	<p><i>what do you think is happening in line 26?            I just want to get away from the confusion about what Learner 3 has to do so just moved on quickly to ask Edward a question.</i></p> <p><i>what do you think of Edward’s answer to your question in line 27?</i></p> <p><i>he takes a while so I need to scaffold him why do you need to help him finish?</i></p>

<i>I need to hold on to what I am saying to get to the next part of the lesson because I it is going too slowly</i>
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In the extract above Amelia uses teacher talk to quickly change from Managerial mode to Materials mode without using transitional markers to signal to her learners that they are doing so. Walsh labels this ‘mode switch’ and explains (2011: 131) mode switching is bound to happen as teachers and learners make decisions about how they interact from moment-to-moment. When mode switch or transition is clearly signalled then the movement between phases of lessons can be smooth but when it is not clearly signalled, then problems can occur as the discourse can become multi-layered, complex and pacy.

Amelia does not pause or use a transition of any type when she moves from ‘she will write the answers’ to ‘what about exercise B? Edward?’ and this, in effect, constrains opportunity for learner interaction (26). Edward (L2) has to move attention from the issue about the other student copying to his response to exercise B. He has no time to prepare so his response is patchy including repetition, rephrasing and hesitation (27). One of the second coders noticed the lack of coherence caused by the switch: ‘the language seems very fragmentary making the transcript a little difficult to understand: e.g. the transition from “write the answers” to “what about exercise B”?’ (second analyst, email communication). Jacknick calls (2011: 33) this type of transition ‘an intra-activity shift’ and states, this ‘presents little opportunity for learners to respond because there is little space between one item and the next’.

Amelia’s SR comment suggests that this choice of teacher talk, i.e. her lack of use of transitional markers, is based on concern with managing the progress of the lesson rather than on her students’ learning: she wanted to ‘get away from the confusion’, ‘to move on quickly’ and ‘to get to the next part’. Rather than, as Long (1996) suggests, ‘negotiating the meaning’ with learner 3 about what they have to do next, and giving the learner an opportunity for interaction, Amelia moves away from the site of confusion as soon as possible. Furthermore, she explains that she is short of time and the impact of this is that Edward is not given enough time to finish pronouncing the word ‘Massachusetts’ correctly. Swain’s (1985) Output Hypothesis proposes that learners should be ‘pushed’ to produce language because their act of speaking is, not only an opportunity to practise and thereby to build fluency, but it also enhances their ‘noticing’ of what they need to know, as they see gaps between what they can say and what they want to say. These ‘gaps’ act as triggers for further acquisition. If instead of overlapping Edward’s attempt to pronounce Massachusetts with her own version of the word, Amelia had pushed him to complete ‘I used to spend all the summer at Cape Cod in Massa ....’ Edward may have been able to check whether his uncertain pronunciation of Massachusetts was correct or not. Swain’s (1985: 249) original idea was that output pushed learners from ‘semantic processing,’ that is

understanding the meaning of their output, to ‘syntactic processing’ which requires them to analyse what their output is made up of.

The sense of ‘hurrying up’ apparent in Amelia’s extract, occurs again in line 30 when she interrupts L4’s contribution ‘a lovely place which’ with ‘attracts lots of tourists’- evidence that she is concerned with taking interactional control with less regard to Edward’s learning. The second analyst concurs, ‘she does realise that he needs help but she just supplies the word herself and then “rides on” to something else’ (ibid.). Jacknik (2011: 27) notes that ‘teacher attempts to move on are often discursively structured to un-invite further student initiation by selecting no next speaker’ a proposal that Waring (2008: 584) supports - ‘not inviting is the same as inhibiting’. Amelia’s contribution aligns with one of the teachers in Johnson’s (1995: 21) study who passes over a learner’s misunderstanding of the meaning of the adjective ‘warmest’ and instead focuses on eliciting the grammatically correct form of the adjective in order to keep the interaction pattern going smoothly by focusing on his/her teaching point. What can be assumed in Johnson’s study, just as with Amelia’s data, is that the teacher constrained the interaction in order to get the answer that fitted with their perceived teaching aim, rather than attending to an opportunity to promote a student’s learning.

Amelia explains she wants to ‘hold on to’ the interaction because the lesson ‘is taking too long’. She is concerned about Edward taking up too much time with his contributions and so finishes off what he is saying for him. This is evident in the following IRF pattern in lines 26 - 28 **I**: what about exercise B? Edward? **R**: when I was young ...when I was young ... I spent all the holidays at Cape Cod in Massa **F**: Massachusetts b ...1 and 2 right what about the others? Cullen (2002: 122) suggests that teachers need to use a *Follow-up* move rather than a Feedback move to extend and encourage further contributions. However, in an activity like this one, when learners are oriented to listening to see if they have the correct answer, then ‘right’ as part of the Feedback move is appropriate. What is clearly not helpful and which hinders interaction is that the trainee combines the learner’s Response move with her Feedback move to answer the question herself with the word ‘Massachusetts’.

## Leanne

In extract 2 below Leanne is working in Skills and Systems mode when she explains the difference in meaning of ‘complimenting’ and ‘complaining’. This extract is taken from towards the end of a 50 minute class involving 16 Hungarian pupils at Pre-Intermediate level of proficiency in English.

Extract 2. Leanne

<p>A Lesson extract</p> <p>5. T: = excellent optimistic and pessimistic (<b>writing on board</b>) (3) so one word is POSITIVE and one word</p>	<p>B Stimulated Recall</p> <p><i>why did you ask them about their favourite food at this point?</i></p>
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<p>NEGATIVE (<b>writing on board</b>) (2) so we are going to use these words today ... so who can tell me what is their favourite type of food ... what is your favourite type of food ...</p> <p>6. L2: =spaghetti bolognese</p> <p>7. T: =spaghetti bolognese ... so Adam likes home cooked food?</p> <p>8. L2: [yes yes]</p> <p>9. T: [your mum's cooking]... good ... Benza what kind of food do you like? =</p> <p>10. L3: = chicken with pineapple =</p> <p>11.T: =chicken with...</p> <p>12. L3: [pineapples]</p> <p>13.T: [pineapple?] ... where do you USually eat chicken with pineapple =</p> <p>14. L3: =at home[made by my mother]</p> <p>15. T: [at home...your mother cooks it] ... yes Willie what kind of food do you like?</p> <p>16. L4: = fast food</p> <p>17. T: =fast food ... good (<b>writing on board</b>) (2 secs) and there is one more type I'm thinking of ... can you get food in another place? at a REStaurant (<b>writing on board</b>) I went to a restaurant last night and my dinner was DELICIOUS my chicken was TENDER and my chips were very TASTY ... do you know what I am doing about the food? I am describing the food in a certain way (<b>writing on board</b>) (10) who can tell me what this word is? does anyone recognise this word? can you open your vocabularly books for me please please ... these words are COMPLiments so I am telling you something POSITIVE about the food ... I am being OPTIMISTIC ... so I am telling you something positive ... my food was DELICIOUS ... the food was very nice ... do you understand a compliment?... Atela can you please (4) can you please find me the Hungarian translation please ... so if we are not complimenting the food there is another word? ... if we are not happy with the food what might we do? comPLAIN ... make a COMPLAINT</p>	<p><i>to lead into the topic of different types of food –home cooked, fast food, restaurant food and so why do you repeat their answers about the food they like? just to help them hear the word again and to acknowledge their contribution</i></p> <p><i>have a look at lines 8 and 9 and 12 and 13 and 14 and 15 what do you think is happening here yes well I copy what they are saying or say it differently to scaffold do you say it at the same time or after at the same time why? well sometimes they take a long time to say what they want to say and I needed to get on to the part about the restaurant food so I start before as soon as I can</i></p> <p><i>what happens when you ask questions at this point? well I am just asking them to get answers and to keep their attention but then I give the answers myself why do you give the answers? to get the class to move on why do you need to move on? otherwise everything will take too long and it is simpler to do it this way</i></p>
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In extract 2 the interactional organisation is determined by the teacher. The sequence in the first half of the episode focuses on eliciting what sort of food the learners like as a lead in to the explanation of the words ‘compliment’ and ‘complaint’. A classic IRF pattern is used to do this. In lines 5 – 9 teacher turns function as both an evaluation of a learner’s contribution and initiation of another one. For example, in line 5, the teacher initiates with I: what is your favourite food? R: Spaghetti Bolognese F: Spaghetti Bolognese? I: So Adam likes home cooked food? R: Yes yes F: your mum’s cooking. Although these are referential questions there is little interactional space or choice of topics since the interaction is focused exclusively on getting learners’ interest in the topic of food so as to move on to the language focus of compliment and complaint, as such the IRF pattern fulfils its function at this point, which as Leanne explains in stimulated recall is ‘to help them hear

the word again and acknowledge their contribution'. Leanne asks a string of display questions as part of her long turn in line 17 and these have the effect of reinforcing the lack of interactional space, especially as she does not pause after each and instead moves on immediately: 'can you get food in another place?', 'do you know what I am doing with the food?' and 'does anyone recognise the word?'

Leanne also overlaps her learner's contributions in this part of the extract, for example, lines 8 and 9 [yes, yes], [your mum's cooking] and lines 14 and 15 [at home, made by my mother], [at home ... your mother cooks it]. This means the learners' contributions are not heard and they do not get space to expand their contributions. The latching symbol '=' is used frequently in this part of the extract and is evidence for a lack of interactional space. The use of this symbol marks the quickness of the exchanges – for example, in line 6, L2 says 'spaghetti bolognese' and Leanne immediately echoes with 'spaghetti bolognese' leaving no space for any more potential learner language. This also occurs in lines 9 and 10 and 13 and 14. In stimulated recall, Leanne's comments, 'get on to the next part...' 'as soon as I can' show that she uses teacher talk to move the learners on through the episode as quickly as she can as she is worried about this part of the lesson taking too much time.

There are two examples of moving between phases without the use of transitional markers when Leanne takes a long teacher turn to elicit the words 'compliment' and 'complaint'. First, she switches from a focus on the vocabulary - 'does anyone recognise this word?' - then immediately moves into managing the activity - 'can you open your vocabulary books please?' - then immediately back into a focus on the vocabulary - 'these words are COMpliments'. Another example takes the same pattern: she asks 'do you understand a compliment?' then quickly switches into classroom management mode with 'Atela can you please find me the translation please?' then back to the language, by answering her own question with 'so if we are not complimenting the food there is another word ... we might complain'. The quickness of these switches, lack of pauses after the questions and lack of signals to mark the switch to another focus mean that learner interaction is discouraged rather than encouraged. In stimulated recall, Leanne rationalises that a good strategy to keep the class moving on is to ask questions and not wait for answers. Her 'but then ...' is significant here as it may mean she is admitting that her 'strategy' of asking questions to 'keep attention' did not really work because she gave the answers herself.

## **Petra**

In extract 3 below Petra is working in Managerial mode when she sets up a card game to consolidate adjectives used to describe the weather. This extract is taken from the end of a 50 minute class involving 12 Hungarian pupils of elementary level of proficiency in English.

A Lesson extract	B Stimulated Recall
<p>39. T: ok lift it up SHUSH and simply SAY what is on the card if you say it immediately quickly fast...Penny...you get FOUR points FOUR points if you say it fast...if you pause you get TWO points...and if you pick one of these you just get ONE point because it is EASY do you know what you are doing? does everyone know what they're doing?</p> <p>40. L1: yes, which group ... [can I sit here]</p> <p>41. T: [off you go then] (2 secs) OFF you go...you are all looking so you don't really know what you're doing let's try this again I'm sitting with you I am just going to sit down playing cards with the boys...ME first...it's wild...so how many points do I get?</p> <p>42. L1: = two [four]</p> <p>43. T: [four]...it's that easy...now you</p> <p>44. L1: ... not two? four [and ...why four]?</p> <p>45. T: [off you go] =</p> <p>46. L1: = eh? eh? it's ... it's ... it's freezing</p> <p>47. T:= two points...that wasn't fast enough and now you</p> <p>48. L2: it is freezing</p> <p>49. T:=ah you get FOUR points that was fast...good good excellent...and now YOU</p> <p>50. LL: ... it is sunny/it's sunny/it's sunny/it is sunny</p> <p>51.T:= no YOU</p> <p>52: L3: ...it is [sunny]</p> <p>53:T:[excellent]...do you know what you are doing...OFF you go...put them all in the middle like this guys all in the MIDDLE like this</p> <p>54. LL: [yeah/yes/yeah]</p> <p>55. T: [yeah...you put them in the middle like that]</p> <p>56. LL: [((4 secs))]</p> <p>57.T: [put the cards together all the cards together]...right off you go...quickly quickly QUICKLY =</p>	<p><i>what is going on with your teacher talk here?</i></p> <p><i>this class was an elementary class and the problem with it was that I was taking it last class of the day so it was quite hard to keep their attention for them to understand the rules of the game but I use a long turn to explain</i></p> <p><i>what happens in lines 40 and 41?</i></p> <p><i>Bences says he understands what to do but then he doesn't</i></p> <p><i>why don't you explain?</i></p> <p><i>because they have got the hang of it and it's better to just get them going with it</i></p> <p><i>what are the consequences of this in terms of the Bences' interaction with you?</i></p> <p><i>well I don't answer his question properly so he can't be clear about what to do</i></p> <p><i>in line 44 Bences doesn't understand again, what happens next?</i></p> <p><i>I just get him to keep going and in line 46 he shows he does understand because he can answer</i></p> <p><i>how do you feel about what is going on in lines 54 - 57?</i></p> <p><i>it's quite difficult to hear what I'm saying or what the students are saying so it's all a bit messy lots of teacher echo</i></p> <p><i>and what's the impact of this on the aim of this part of the lesson?</i></p> <p><i>It takes ages to get them doing what I want them to do because I need to get them to listen to clear instructions</i></p>

It is clear in extract 3 that the trainee made an effort to set up the game in order that the learners understood what to do. She uses teacher talk features which are appropriate for the pedagogic aim of setting up an activity in managerial mode; for example, she transmits information about the rules of the game and refers learners to the materials, the cards, by using long teacher turns in lines 39 and 41. She also checks comprehension of

instructions in lines 39, 41 and 53 (does everyone know what they are doing? So how many points do I get? Do you know what you are doing?). Although these features are present they do not mean that the aim of this episode, to set up the activity, is successful. One way in which it is ineffective, is that Petra does not respond to a request for clarification of the instructions for the game. When L1 interrupts in line 40 with ‘yes which group? can I sit here?’ and again in line 44 with ‘not two? four and ...why four?’, Leeane, rather than answering, overlaps L1’s questions with ‘off you go then’ in line 41, and ‘off you go’ in line 45. This occurs again in lines 54 and 55, where Petra overlaps the learners’ contributions, [yeah/yes/yeah], with repetition of the instructions for part of the game, [yeah you put them in the middle like that] and in lines 56 and 57 when she overlaps learners’ contributions with [put the cards together all the cards together].

Although Petra is working in managerial mode which is not a suitable phase of the lesson to spend ‘negotiating meaning’ (Long, 1996: 451), the learners’ queries are missed opportunities for Petra to pause and to interact with them. According to previous research (Musumeci, 1996) requests for clarification are to be encouraged not only from teacher to learners, but more importantly, from learners to teacher. This observation is clearly very much in line with the well-established findings concerning the need for meaning to be negotiated in the L2 classroom (Long, 1983, 1985; Pica, 1991). In Garton’s (2012: 29) study learners take the initiative even in teacher-fronted lesson phases. In a class where the advantages and disadvantages of different types of transport are being discussed, the teacher moves on to a new form of transport, ‘now then, what about the bike, my favourite form of transport’ but one of the learners takes the initiative to reopen the discussion about train travel ‘there another disadvantage about trains ... strikes’. Garton (ibid.) concludes that ‘learner initiative in teacher-fronted interaction may constitute a significant opportunity for learning and that teachers should find ways of encouraging such interaction patterns’

Petra rationalises ignoring the learner’s contributions in her SR interview by explaining, ‘better to get them going with it’ and ‘get him to keep going’ and ‘it takes ages to get them doing what I want them to do because I need to get them to listen to clear instructions’. What happens is that her concern with moving on through the lesson means she uses features of teacher talk that close down opportunities for learners to ask for clarification, and the likelihood of comprehension of instructions is then reduced.

Transitional markers such as ‘right’, ‘now’, ‘OK then’ are suitable for managerial mode because they would act to break up the instructions and therefore support organising an activity; however, they are lacking in extract 3. Line 39 is delivered without markers and with little pause, meaning the instructions are delivered in a sharp burst with little room for learner questions. There is also evidence of latching by Petra, indicated by the ‘=’ symbol. In lines 47, 49 and 51 the trainee starts speaking as soon as the learner has finished leaving no interactional space and this adds to the sense that the instructions are rushed.

## Discussion

The above three extracts present evidence of how features of trainee teacher talk can constrain learner participation ultimately closing down opportunities for interaction and therefore impacting on acquisition. Findings show that use of overlapping, latching, IRF, display questions and a lack of use of transitional markers and pause may be chosen by trainees, albeit subconsciously, due to their concern with getting through the lesson, as expressed in the SR interview comments. The impact of each of these features is that learner turns are closed down or taken back prematurely meaning there is not enough space or time for interaction to occur. Indeed; trainee teachers frequently opt not to ‘recipient design’ (Nakamura 2008: 280) their talk in order to give learners the opportunities to use the language, but instead to design turns which allow them to keep hold of the interaction in order to move on. Subconsciously, trainees may be asking ‘am I OK? what am I doing next?’ and simultaneously choosing talk to support moving through the lesson rather than talk which supports learning.

One feature which can be discussed in more depth is the Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) IRF exchange which is commonly seen as the identifying feature of classroom discourse. Although research suggests that IRF is appropriate for particular pedagogical functions (Mercer and Littleton, 2007); the IRF pattern is also seen as an exchange which minimizes meaningful learner participation (Nystrand, 1997). In the current study it is evident that when trainee and learner talk fall into typical IRF exchanges, as in extract 1, participation is discouraged. It is therefore suggested that trainee teachers, when appropriate, use the F move as a Follow up (Cullen, 2002) rather than as a Feedback move. Often this means that referential questions take the place of display questions in the F move; Li Li (2011:152) refers to this as ‘a spiral IRF exchange’ when the teacher’s follow-up question, creates new participation and a new learning cycle. As Li Li suggests, ‘referential questions have the potential to lead to more complete learner turns and possibly several turn-taking and turn-giving among participants so that negotiation, co-construction, interaction and problem-solving can be possible while display questions very often seek brief answers, like yes or no, so that conversation is ultimately ‘closed down’ ( ibid.).

Latching, when one turn immediately follows another, is indicated with the ‘=’ symbol, and overlapping, when the teacher overlaps a learner contribution with one of her own, indicated by the ‘[ ...]’ symbols, are common features of trainees’ talk in the above three extracts. Their frequency of use show that trainees are filling gaps and smoothing over awkward contributions in an effort to move the lesson forward, but by so doing, are closing down opportunities for learner interaction. There is a sense that the learners’ contributions are being high-jacked instead of them being allowed time and space to formulate their contribution. Walsh (2002:16)suggests that teachers who latch too frequently, may be ‘doing the learner a disservice as there is no negotiation of meaning, no need for clarification, no confirmation checks’ . Interestingly, Amelia, in extract 1 and Leanne, in extract 2 believe that by completing their learners’ turns they are ‘scaffolding’ their learners.



Although their use of this word shows an ability to use the SETT metalanguage to describe their teacher talk, they have misinterpreted what they are doing as linguistic support, when really latching limits the quality and frequency of learner contributions. Latching and overlapping also mean there is little room for pause in the extracts. Walsh suggests that ‘silence, to many teachers, may be threatening, a sign of weakness, perhaps, or an indication that they are simply ‘not doing their job’ (2002:12) however, by ‘smoothing over’ and ‘filling pauses’ trainees may be creating a less messy sense of discourse and, in their own minds, moving the lesson forward but in fact they are reducing opportunities for negotiation and output and therefore reducing potential for language acquisition.

Although trainees are able to identify and use some of the SETT metalanguage (Amelia: ‘scaffold’ Leanne: ‘scaffold’ and Petra: ‘long turn’) to explain their use of teacher talk, SR comments also show that they are not sufficiently aware of the effects their adjustments or non-adjustments of teacher talk have on learner involvement and ultimately the success of the learning. What seems to be the problem is that trainees are not able to adapt their talk so it is ‘competent’, indeed they have trouble being the one who uses the language as effectively as possible to make sure that negotiation is managed and interaction takes place, i.e. a ‘competent interlocuter’ (Long, 1996). A possible reason for this may be that teacher talk is not given enough attention in TESOL curricula. An examination of two of the main UK TESOL teacher training curricula shows that although teacher language is mentioned, teacher language *which is appropriate for learning* is not made explicit. In the ‘Developing teaching skills’ component of the Cambridge English Celta syllabus, students are expected ‘to adjust their own use of language to the level of the class, give clear instructions and choose appropriate moments, and appropriate strategies for correcting learners’ language’ (2015: 11) whilst in the ‘Developing professional practice’ component of the Cambridge English Delta syllabus, students are expected ‘to acquire fluency and confidence in using the language appropriately’ (2015: 4-6). In the current study’s MA TESOL curriculum, student teachers are expected to ‘adapt own language to meet learners’ needs’. This lack of specific attention to effective teacher talk for varying pedagogical purposes in TESOL teacher education programmes might be due to teacher educators/curricula writers assuming that trainees understand why and how teacher talk is important and so not making this explicit. This means appropriate teacher talk has the potential to become a ‘hidden’ skill, one that real teachers can practise but not a skill that trainees automatically have access to.

## **Conclusion**

Given that meaningful interaction is considered an important factor in second language learning (Van Lier 1996) the purpose of this paper has been to explore what features of second language trainee teachers’ classroom language impacts on opportunities for learner interaction and to find out what underpins the decisions trainees make around their choices of teacher talk. Taking a sociocultural perspective, findings from the three extracts show how trainee teachers’ concern over getting through the lesson played out in their use

of IRF, display questions, latching, overlapping and lack of pause and transitional markers, features of their talk which ultimately confined learners' opportunities for interaction.

A central proposal of this study, is that trainees can only begin to make changes to their teacher talk if they are encouraged to notice and explain it by focusing up-close on self-generated teacher talk data. For this reason it is important that teacher educators make explicit the notion of teacher talk and its impact on learning. There are various ways in which this can be done. Firstly, the SETT framework provides a clear springboard to learn about teacher talk features, this knowledge can be used to explore which features might hinder interaction e.g. the difference in impact between display and referential questions. Secondly, a close-up examination of transcripts of trainee teacher talk data can raise trainees' awareness of interactional features in context and the impact on participation. In the case of this data, learners became aware that learning potential would have been increased by reducing IRF, display questions and latching and overlapping and by resisting the urge to fill the gaps and to avoid pausing. Setting particular tasks may be useful here, i.e. note examples of 'normal' IRF pattern and the IRF pattern where F is the follow-up move rather than the feedback move and explore the difference each has on the resulting student interaction. Thirdly, it is crucial that trainees are aware that their concern over getting through the lesson plays out in terms of their choice of language and ultimately has a negative impact on learning; so discussing reasons for this concern in teaching practice review sessions would be a useful starting point. Finally, it is hoped that findings from this research will add to the body of knowledge on teacher talk, which will lead to improvement of education for ESL trainees and by so doing contribute to improvement of learners' English language development.

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## **Appendix A            Transcription system**

Walsh's (2002) adaptation of the transcription systems of Van Lier (1988) and Johnson (1995) has been used.

T:	-	teacher
L:	-	learner (not identified)
L1: L2: etc	-	identified learner
LL:	-	several learners speaking at once or the whole class
/ok/ok/ok/	-	overlapping or simultaneous utterances by more than one learner
[do you understand?]		
[I see]	-	overlap between teacher and learner
=	-	latching: a turn continues, or one turn follows another without any pause
...	-	pause of one second or less marked by three dots
(4 sec)	-	silence; length given in seconds
((4 sec))	-	a stretch of unintelligible speech with the length given in seconds
Paul, Peter, Mary	-	capitals are only used for proper nouns
?	-	rising intonation, not necessarily a question

acCUSED - indicates that a syllable or word is given extra stress

**T organises groups** - editor's comments (in bold type)