

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The current study is about the "Teacher Talk (TT)" focusing on the types of the teacher's questions, their frequency, and the purpose of using them and the effectiveness of the teacher's feedback to the class. This chapter deals with definitions of teacher talk, impact of TT in language learning , features of teacher talk; formal and functional aspects of TT. It also deals with the amount of teacher talk along with teacher's questions and feedback. Further, the chapter includes the review of related literature, objectives of the study and finally, the significance of the study.

### **1.1 General Background**

Teacher talk is the language used by the teacher in the classroom to facilitate language learning. It is the language input. TT has different features like pauses, repetition, stress, simpler syntactic structures and usual vocabularies which make it distinct from other talk. These features help a language teacher to make his/her talk comprehensible. Generally speaking, the language that teachers use in classrooms determines, to a larger degree, the extent to which a class will succeed or not. Teachers perform different activities like passing on information and skills, organizing teaching activities and helping students practice through TT. Teachers' language is the medium to achieve the teaching objectives appropriate to the teaching item.

#### **1.1.1 The Definition of Teacher Talk**

English is studied as a foreign language in Nepal and classroom is the centre where learners are frequently exposed to the target language. In most of the places, teacher is the main source of the target language. The language that a teacher uses for instruction in the classroom is known as teacher talk. Some of the definitions of teacher talk would be helpful in clearing the concept of the term here.

Bolitho (N.D) talks about the real talk, overall quality and quantity of teacher's talk. Making distinction between real talk and teacher's talk, he requests teacher to make teacher talk effective.

Ellis (1985) defines teacher talk as "the language that teachers address to L2 learners in the classroom. It is treated as a register, with its own specific formal and linguistic properties." (p. 145). Teachers use language to facilitate language learners in the classroom. It can be considered as a register as it has its own features such as repetition, pause and stress on each and every word, restricted vocabularies and other pedagogical terminologies.

Richards (1992) defines teacher talk as

That variety of language sometimes used by teachers when they are in the process of teaching. In trying to communicate with learners, teachers often simplify their speech, giving it many of the characteristics of foreigner talk and other simplified styles of speech addressed to language learners ( p.471).

According to Borton (N.D) teacher talk is "something which is deep- rooted and difficult to avoid. It is highly repetitive, clear, highly explicit and reassuring to most listeners." He further adds that teachers use questions as chefs use Olive Oil. Chefs use olive oil to cook vegetables moreover to make vegetables tasty. Likewise teachers use questions to clarify or justify the subject matter and make teaching more effective and fruitful. Teacher Talk is difficult to avoid because without teacher talk teaching is impossible.

From the above definitions, we can conclude that teacher talk is inevitable, repetitive, vivid, modified and simpler in syntactic structure. Restricted vocabulary, IRF (Initiation, Response, Feedback) exchanges, drills, well tuned, more frequent language adjustments with the beginners, are some of the features of teacher talk. In my consideration, teacher talk is that form of teacher's language which helps them to conduct teaching learning activities, manage classroom, instruct and provide feedback. Any speech that a teacher makes is not teacher talk. With the beginners, teachers are

found using repetition of the sentences, more questions, restricted or common vocabularies and giving more emphasis on each and every word. It is also the important input in context of classroom. In contrary to foreigner talk, it occurs in one-to-many interactions where the learners may vary in their level of proficiency and where there is likely to be only limited feedback, from a few students. Teacher talk is a special communicative activity. Its goal is to communicate with students to develop their language proficiency. It is used in class to conduct instructions, cultivate intellectual ability and managing classroom activities.

### **1.1.2 The Impact of Teacher Talk in Foreign Language Learning**

There is no learning without teaching in the case of formal learning. It is also said that there is no real teaching if there is no learning. So, as a tool of implementing teaching plans and achieving teaching goals, teacher talk plays a vital role in language learning. Classroom is the main place for learning the language and teacher talk is the main initiator in case of English as foreign language in our country.

Bolitho (N.D.) talks about the ‘real’ talk in his article. In his opinion, the purposes of talk are as follows:

- i. talk as a means of learning
- ii. talk as a means of transferring meaning.
- iii. talk as a tool for reflection and making sense.
- iv. talk for social purposes.
- v. self talk and inner talk. (pp. 4-7)

Talking about the purposes of teacher talk, he raises questions on the teacher talk and teacher about and asks to make a more effective contribution to language teaching. Teachers initiate dialogue or conversation in the classroom. The learners respond to the teachers and teachers provide feedback.

Two exchanges quoted below clarify the same:

i. Teacher Talk

Teacher: What did you do last weekend, Carla?

Carla: We went to the beach and then we drove to London again.

Teacher: Drove', Carla, 'drove'. It's an irregular verb, remember.

ii. Motherese

Girl: Look Mum, the sea!

Mother: That's not the sea, darling - it's a lake

Girl: Why isn't it the sea?

Mother: Because it isn't big enough. The sea is really big.

Girl: So a lake is like a little sea . . . .

Mother: Yes, I suppose it is really (Bolitho, n.d., p. 4).

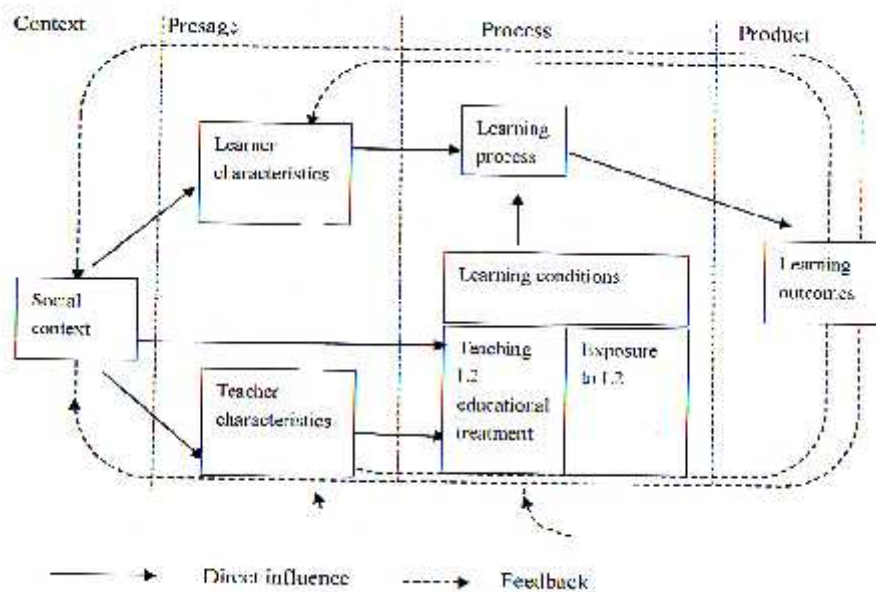
The first exchange is the talk between teacher and learner whereas the second one between a mother and her child. The second one is less easy for a teacher. He has no obvious interest in the learner's answers. But in the second one, the mother is interested to the thought of her child. Teacher is expected to focus on the message as well as the input which enforces learners to play with the language and fosters language learning too. Classroom interaction distinguishes from real talk which seeks information. If teachers help students with the language needed to explore meaning or clear up misconceptions, teacher talk would be equally important to successful communication beyond the classroom confinement.

According to SLA theory, plenty of high quality input is the necessary element for successful language learning. “If the second language is learnt as a foreign language in a language class in a non – supportive environment, instruction is likely to be the major or even the only source of target language input” (Stern, 1983, p.400).

Here, ‘instruction’ refers to teachers’ instruction and ‘talk’ to teacher talk. In Nepal, classroom is the chief source for language learner in some places and the only source in rural areas. TT serves as the major target language input for the language learners. Stern (ibid, p.500) proposed teaching- learning model identified in two principal actors- the language teacher and the language learner.

The teacher, like the learner, brings to language teaching certain characteristics which may have bearing on educational treatment: age, sex, previous education and personal qualities. Above all, the language teacher brings to it a language background and experience, professional training as a linguists and teacher, previous language teaching experience, and more or less formulated theoretical presuppositions about language, language learning and teaching (Stern, ibid, p. 500).

The language teachers and students help each other in language learning. Their geographical, social, economical, linguistic and religious background either facilitates or hinders learning. Among these linguistic background is an important aspect. For example, Nepalese speakers learn Hindi easily and earlier and vice-versa because of the similarities between these languages.



**Figure 1:** A Teaching Learning Model (Source: Stern, 1983, p.500)

These characteristics of language teacher are reflected in different characteristics and forms of TT. Stern's teaching –learning model reveals the important role of the language teacher and teacher talk during the process of language learning. Teacher talk facilitates language learning. Teacher talk is such input which is believed to convert into intake easily because of its modified structure, reception, stress and intonation etc.

The types of question that the teachers use play a vital role in teaching learning activity. The cognitive level of the question has a dramatic impact on students' response. If a teacher asks display question it focuses on the memory and rote learning. On the other hand, reasoning (Why? and How?) questions focused on the critical thinking which encourage them to answer in their own way. The demands placed on teachers to understand the role of questions is especially important. Teachers not only ask questions but also allow some time to learners to answer and provide feedback as well. Sufficient and appropriate time limit helps students find answers. They encourage responding the questions being based on the feedback. 'How

much does a teacher talk?' is also important as it specifies the optimum time for students talk. The amount of teacher talk also plays an important role because it provides optimum environment for successful language learning. Nowadays special attention has been given to teacher talk because of its potential effect on learners' comprehension which has been hypothesized to be important for L2 acquisition (Ellis, 1994, p.583).

Ellis (1985) further points out:

Whether it is a subject lesson or language lesson, successful outcomes may depend on the types of language used by the teacher and the type of interactions occurring in the classroom. It can be concluded that TT in the EFL classroom serves as a valuable input of language exposure and is used to generate the interaction, to make the input comprehensible and consequently make the learning take place (p.143).

In my consideration, TT is the influencing factor in foreign language classroom. I agree with Bolitho because if students are late to discuss on a topic they go on talking but they miss the gist or the objective. They may use their mother tongue instead of the TL. So, three minutes quality TT is more effective than group discussion but it is also true that language is learnt only when learners engage to use the target language. If the learners are involved in group discussion the teacher must be careful about 'What are the learners doing?'. For the proper utilization of student talking time, teacher talk is important because it helps learners clarify the concept, pass on knowledge, instruct and control the learners as well.

### **1.1.3 The Features of Teacher Talk**

Most of the researches on teacher talk mainly focus on its features. Gaies (1977, as cited in All right and Baily, 1991, p.139) studied the language of the teacher in two different situations:

- i. with their peers and

- ii. with their own students.

He found that in classroom speech with learners the teacher modified their speech considerably.

Allwright and Bailey (ibid.,p.139) present the study in which Long and Sato (1983) compared the teacher's speech to the learners with baseline data collected in an experimental study of NSs (Native Speakers) and NNSs (Non-Native Speakers) interacting in pairs called dyads . The focus of research was on teachers' use of display and referential questions, teachers' and native speakers' use of comprehension checks, classification checks and confirmation checks (pp.140-141). Chaudron (1988) provides a comprehensive survey of studies of TT. He summarizes many features of TT. Like amount of talk, pauses, rate of speech, functional distribution, phonology, intonation, articulation, stress, modifications in vocabulary, syntax and discourse.

Teacher talk is regarded as a special, simplified code with double features. The first one refers to the form of TT, such as speed, pause, repetition, modification. The second one refers to the features of the language that teachers use to organize and control classes which includes the quality and quantity of TT, teachers' questions, interactional modifications and teachers' feedback. The first one is often called as the formal features and the second one as the functional features of TT.

### **1.1.3.1 The Formal Features of Teacher Talk**

As mentioned by Ellis (1985,p. 145),Gaies (1977, 1979), Henzl (1979), Long (1983b), Long and Sato (1983) observed all kinds of phenomena about TT, and made some comparison between the language that teachers use in and out of language classrooms. Their main findings are as follows:

1. Formal adjustments occur at all language levels.
2. In general, ungrammatical speech modifications do not occur.
3. Interactional adjustments occur.



Henzl (1973), Dahl (1981), Wesche and Ready (1985), Griffiths (1990 and 1991a) as mentioned in Ellis (1994, p.582) studied TT and the finding is that teachers, like NSs in general slow down their rate of speech when talking to learners (L2) and to a greater extent with less proficient learners.

Pica and Long (1986) , Gaies (1977), Kleifgen (1985), Early (1985), Wesche and Ready (1985) observed syntax of TT and their conclusions are as follows:

1. Use of shorter utterances with less proficient learners.
2. Use of fewer marked structures.
3. Use of more declaratives and statements than questions in comparison to natural discourse (Ellis, 1994, p. 582).

Teachers use more self- repetitions with L2 learners of low level of proficiency as revealed from the study of Ellis (1985d)

Bialystok et al. (1978) concludes that the amount of talk is about two- thirds of the total talking time (Ellis, 1994, p. 582).

From the findings above, we can summarize that:

- a. Formal adjustments occur at all language levels in and out of the classroom.
- b. Teachers choose different words (simpler and common) to meet the need of the classroom- teaching.
- c. Ungrammatical speech modifications should not occur in teacher's language in class.
- d. Teacher's language should be the model for class to imitate.
- e. Interactional adjustments occur.
- f. Teachers repeat the utterances and their pronunciation tend to be clearer, exaggerated.

Teachers conduct different activities in class to foster their students learning, the language in these activities lacks real communicative information.

### **1.1.3.2 The Functional Features of TT**

#### **a. The Amount of TT**

Teachers use language in different ways. In the name of communicative language teaching to reduce TT is not good at all. It is because TT plays the role of exposure in the class. Generally, teachers are found allowing more time in different communicative activities such as pair work, group work to those learners who are not the good users of the target language. Whether they utilize the time properly is not measured. Who knows whether the teachers monitor their classes?

The teacher plays the role of provider of comprehensible input to foster the language learning. They organize different activities to involve their students. According to second language acquisition theories, both teachers and students should participate in language classes actively.

Teachers have to face two tasks in language classrooms:

1. offer enough high quality English language input.
2. offer more opportunities for students to use the target language.

So, the distribution of teacher talk time, as an important factors that affect language learning, has been the concern of many scholars. Harmer (2006, p.117) arouses the issue that confronts many teachers in classroom is how much they themselves should talk, and what kind of talk this should be. Of course, there are times when teachers have to take the register, ask for quite, to suggest that students should get into pairs and groups. But there are also times when teachers simply talk to groups, engage in conversation with them, discuss the topic under consideration or ask them about their weekend. In Bolitho's experiences of observing classes in recent years, this has led to a great deal of what he can only describe as low quality and relatively meaningless

talk. Language teachers supported by many recent and current textbooks have been encouraged to foster speaking through techniques such as role play , project work and dialogue practice and to vary practice and interaction patterns in the classroom by making extensive use of pair work and group work as well as whole class sessions. But the question is the appropriateness of teacher talk and students talk.

On most training, the distinction is made between Student Talking Time and Teacher Talking Time. Trainers frequently point out to their student teachers, 'You don't need the language practice, they do!' (Harmer, 2007, p.118). It is widely accepted that a vital ingredient in language learning is the exposure to it. The more comprehensible input, the better it is. Half an hour of good quality talk about a topic which genuinely interests learners may have far more impact than a couple of hours of 'jumping through the hoops' (Bolitho, N.D.,p .2). Researches in language classrooms have established that teachers tend to do most of the classroom talk. Teacher talk makes up two- thirds of the total talk (Legarreta, 1977 and Chaudran, 1988). It is evident that if teachers devote large amounts of time to explanations or management instructions students talk will be indeed severely restricted. Teacher- initiated talk will dominate the classroom, allowing little opportunity for extended students talk and to develop the language proficiency.

Thus, right amount of teacher talk with good quality serves as an important factor to influence language learning.

### **b. The Teacher's Question**

Questioning is one of the most common techniques used by teachers and serves as the principal way in which teachers control the classroom interaction (Richards and Lockhart, 2000, p.100 )

Long and Sato (1983)found that teachers ask more display questions, which request information that the questioner already knows, than referential questions, which request new information (Kral,1994, p.224).

Brock (1986) examined the effects of display and referential questions and found that referential questions elicit longer and more syntactically complex responses, and that these responses contain significantly more connectives, which play an important role in helping NNSs to communicate successfully (Kral, *ibid*).

Zamel (1981) described classroom interactions as a circular loop of information and feedback, classroom communication depends upon a constant flow of information in which teacher's questions play a crucial role (Kral, *ibid*).

### **i. Functions of Teacher's Question**

Teachers' question is that tool which facilitates language learning by giving opportunity to respond. It helps language learners to play with the language. Teachers, whether in content classrooms or language classrooms, typically ask a lot of questions. Teachers' questions perform different functions. They be can grouped into three broad areas: diagnostic, instructional, and motivational.

As a diagnostic tool, teachers' questions allow them to glimpse into the minds of students to find out not only what they know or do not know but also how they think about a topic. The structure of students' existing knowledge is a powerful determinant of how new information will be learnt. Students' misconception and prior beliefs interfere with the learning of new materials. Through questioning, the teacher can assess the current state of student thinking, identifying not only what students know but also gaps and misconceptions. For example:

1. A teacher asks to give the meaning of new words they encounter while learning new lesson.
2. A teacher asks different questions related to previous class or lessons etc.

As an instructional tool, questions focus on the role that they play in helping students to learn new materials and integrate it with the old one. Questions provide sufficient practice and feedback which is essential for the language development Teachers alert

students to the information in a lesson by questioning. Pilot questions in reading comprehension direct the way for reading and help to get the theme. Questions can be used to clarify relationships within the content being discussed and review previously learnt material to establish a knowledge base for the new material to be learnt.

As a motivational tool, teachers can use questions to engage students actively in the lesson at hand challenging their thinking and posing problems for them to consider. A question at the beginning can be used to capture students' attention and provide a focus for the lesson. Frequent and periodic questions can encourage active participation and provide opportunities in the lesson for continued students' involvement.

### **b. Types of Teacher's Questions**

Ellis (1994, pp.587-588) presents taxonomy of questions developed by many scholars. The taxonomies of questions from different scholars are as follows:

Barnes (1969; 1976) distinguished four types of questions that he observed in secondary school classrooms in Britain:

1. Factual questions (what?)
2. Reasoning questions (how? And why?)
3. Open questions (that do not require any reasoning)
4. Social questions (influence students' behaviour by means of control or appeal).

He made much of the distinction between 'open' and 'closed' reasoning questions. He also points out that many questions have the appearance of being open, but, in fact, when the teachers' response to a student's answer is examined turn out to be closed; he calls these 'pseudo-questions' (as mentioned in Ellis, 1994, p. 587).

Koivukari (1987) is concerned with depth of cognitive processing. Rote questions (those calling for the reproduction of content) are considered to operate at the surface

level, while two kinds of comprehension questions ( for reproduction of content and the generation of new content) operate at progressively deeper levels (as cited in Ellis, *ibid*).

At the cognitive level, questions are distinguished according to the nature:

1. that require some kind of reproduction of information i.e. cognitive memory .
2. that require the analysis and integration of given or remembered data within a tightly structured framework. i.e. convergent thinking and
3. that require data to be generated freely and independently i.e. divergent/ evaluative thinking.

The categories relating to communicative value reflect the referential and display distinction, while those relating to communicative orientation concern on the language itself ( the medium) or on real life topics ( the message) . The latter distinction is viewed as continuous rather than dichotomous. And this is probably the most comprehensive taxonomy of questions for the language classroom (as mentioned in Ellis, 1994, p. 588).

Long and Sato (1983) made a further distinction between 'display' and 'referential' questions. Display questions are designed to elicit or display particular structures. Referential questions are designed to gain various subjective information (Ellis, *ibid*).

Teachers design questions to engage students in the content of the lesson, to facilitate their comprehension, and to promote classroom interaction so that the learners get more opportunities to play with the language to promote their language learning.

### **c. Teacher's Feedback**

'Feedback' serves as a general cover term for the information provided by listeners on the reception and comprehension of the messages (Ellis, 1994,p.583). Providing feedback to learners on their performance is another important aspect of teaching.

Feedback is teachers' evaluation of the students' response. It can be either positive or

negative and may serve not only to let learners know how well they have performed but also to increase motivation and build a supportive classroom climate. Black and William (1998, as mentioned in Ellis, *ibid*) found that feedback on students' work probably has more effect on achievement than any other single factor. Cullen (2002, as cited in Harmer, 2008, p.137) agrees, showing how the teacher's follow-up moves' when a student has said something 'play a crucial part in clarifying and building on the ideas that they express'). The feedback that teachers give must be appropriate to the students concerned and to the activity they are involved in, and that feedback is recognized as a crucial part of the learning process. Though feedback can be very helpful during oral and written work, teachers should not necessarily deal with all production in the same way. Teachers' decision about how to react to performance will depend upon the stage of the lesson, the activity, the type of mistake made and the particular student who is making that mistake (Harmer, 2007, p.142). Feedback is given because teachers want to affect their students' language use in the future as well as comment upon its use in the past. When teachers respond to first and second (written drafts or oral productions), they expect a new version to be produced which will show how the students have responded to their comments. In this way, feedback is part of learning process, and they will not have wasted their time. The reason for using codes and symbols is the same', if students can identify the mistakes they have made, they are then in a position to correct them. The feedback process is only really finished once they have made those changes. If, on the contrary, the students put the corrected work straight in to a file or lose it, than the time teachers spent responding or correcting has been completely wasted.

Teachers provide feedback in a number of ways viz. showing incorrectness, getting it right, gentle correction, recording mistakes and after the event during fluency work (Harmer, 2007, pp.144-147).

In language classrooms, feedback on a student's spoken language may be a response either to the content of what a student has produced or to the form of an utterance. It can be given by means of praise, by any relevant comment or action or by silence. In

the language classrooms, high achievers are seen as receiving more positive feedback from the teacher as well as being given more opportunities to perform, to serve as leaders. By contrast low achievers are reported to receive more negative feedback, more direction and help as well.

Most theorists and practitioners agree that favourable feedback about performance has a positive effect on subsequent performance. Teachers should avoid the fallacy of trying to pretend that a child's performance is good when it is not because this only leads to low personal standards. Teachers try to strike at the right level with each child ensures high success rates because poor results could be devastating for some children.

Therefore, teachers' feedback plays a significant part in an individual's motivation.

Feedback has two main distinguishable components: Correction and Assessment (Ur, 2009, p. 110)

### **i. Teacher's Correction**

Second language learning is a process that is clearly not unlike L1 learning in its trial-and-error nature. Inevitably learners will make mistakes in the process of language learning and indeed will even impede that process if they do not commit errors and then benefit in turn from various forms of feedback on those errors (Brown, 2001, p.205). As Corder (1967, p.167) noted learners' errors as "a learner's errors . . . are significant in [that] they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language" ( Brown, 2001,p.205).

It is a vital part of the teacher's role to point out students' mistakes and provide correction. In correction, some specific information is provided on aspects of the learners' performance, through explanation, or provision of better or other alternatives, or through elicitation of these from the learner (Ur, *ibid*). Correction helps students to clarify their understanding of meaning and construction of the language.



One of the crucial issues is how correction is expressed:

- i. gently or assertively
- ii. supportively or as a condemnation
- iii. tactfully or rudely

Teachers should go for encouraging, and tactful correction. The learner has reliable intuitive knowledge about what kind of correction helps most, that is, learner performances are on the whole a reliable guide. So, teachers have to be careful when correcting. If teachers do it in an insensitive way the students will feel upset and lose their confidence. What kind of correction teachers think is best and learners find most useful? A good deal of teacher sensitivity is needed here.

Generally, the teachers always adopt the following techniques to correct students' oral errors (Ur, 2009, p. 114).

1. Teacher does not react at all.
2. Teacher indicates there is a mistake, but does not provide any further information about what is wrong.
3. Teacher says what was wrong and provides a model of the acceptable version that is explicit correction.
4. Teacher indicates something was wrong, elicits acceptable version from the learner who made the mistake (self- repair).
5. Teacher indicates something was wrong, elicits acceptable version from another member of the class.
6. Teacher asks the learners who made the mistake to reproduce the corrected version.
7. Teachers provide or elicit an explanation of why the mistake was made and how to avoid it.

It is worth pointing out that it is just as important to praise students for their success, as it is to correct them when they fail. Teachers can show their praise through the use of encouraging words and noises ('good', 'well done', 'fantastic', 'mmm', 'Yeah', 'ok') when students are doing really well (Harmer, 2006, p. 64).

## **ii. Teacher's Assessment**

Assessment refers to the tools, techniques and procedures for collecting and interpreting information about what learners can and cannot do. Assessment of performance can be explicit when teachers say that was really good or implicit when, during language drills, for example teachers pass on to the next students without making any comment or correction. Students are likely to receive teachers' assessment in terms of praise or blame. Praise encourages students to do well and is a vital component in a student's motivation and progress. Petty sees teacher's assessment as "an element of a two part response ( Medals and missions) to students work, the former one what teachers give for doing something well and the later is the direction teachers give them to improve" ( as cited in Harmer, 2008, p .138). In assessment, the learners are simply informed how well or badly they have performed. A percentage grade on an exam would be one example; or the response 'No' to an incorrect answer to a question in EFL (English as Foreign Language) classroom; or a comment such as 'excellent' at the end of a written assignment. Teachers nowadays use different stickers and drawings as well to encourage them like-



Whenever teachers give assessment on the students, they should not forget that the purpose is to help and promote learning. Teachers can use a no of ways to assess their students' work for example, giving comments, marking or grading and writing reports at the end. One of the functions of teacher talk is to promote language learning by encouraging students therefore, teacher's talk should be full of approval and

encouragement besides confirmation. Teachers should not use that language which harass or discourage the students.

If the teachers have to show that something is wrong they should acknowledge the students' efforts first.

Teachers can use the following words and phrases to evaluate their students' performance:

## **A. Confirmation**

### **1. Good**

Alright; Yes; Fine; you are right; that's correct; you have got it, okay.

### **2. Excellent**

Very good; terrific; fantastic; well done; good work; marvellous; you did a very good job.

### **3. That is Perfectly Correct**

There is nothing wrong with your answer; what you said is right; that is exactly the point; I could not have given a better answer myself; your answer is correct.

### **4. No, that's Wrong**

Not really; unfortunately not; I am afraid that is not quite right; you cannot say that; I'm afraid; you cannot use that; not quite right.

## **B. Encouragement**

### **1. That is Better**

That's much better, that's more like it; you've improved a little, you have very good pronunciation; you read fluently; you have made lot of progress; you are getting better; you're doing well.

## **2. Try it Again**

Try again, having another try; you were almost right that time; almost right not exactly; taking it easy! Go on, well err . . . , you've almost go it; have a guess if you don't know

## **3. Don't Worry**

Don't worry about . . . ; I'll help you; maybe this will help you.

The teachers should avoid the following as much as possible in the EFL classroom.

1. That wasn't very good
2. You fool
3. You can't do better than that

While assessing students' performance, it is important to achieve a judicious balance between positive and negative expressions where this is possible. Students have a right to know not only their weaknesses but also the strengths they have been able to demonstrate. While giving comments teachers should be careful. Over complimenting and negative comments should be avoided by the teachers. It is because over praise and compliments may create "praise junkies" (i.e. seeking for praise) and negative strong comments may discourage students to learn new or difficult items.

It is clearly up to teachers to decide what kind of phrases or expressions are appropriate Expressions of joy, sympathy; surprise, interest etc. may also be equally effective: Good gracious, you are right, that's a very interesting suggestion, and it must be my lucky day. Teachers should employ as much approval and encouragement as possible in foreign language classrooms which will be conducive to the development of the students' positive affect and the foreign language learning.

## 1.2 Review of the Related Literature

Various researches related to teacher talk have been carried out outside the country.

Some of the prominent ones are as follows:

Pica and Long (1986, as cited in Ellis, 1994, pp. 582-584 ) carried out research to find out whether the teachers modify language syntactically. The findings were:

1. Shorter utterances were used with less proficient learners.
2. The degree of subordination tends to be lower, but again results have been mixed.
3. Teachers use fewer marked structures.
4. More declaratives and statements than questions are used in comparison to natural discourse.

Chaudron (1988) explained about second language classrooms research related to teaching and learning focusing classroom interaction along with learning outcomes. He has also mentioned about teacher and student roles in second language classrooms. Similarly, he incorporates description in teacher talk and interaction between learners.

Griffiths (1990 and 1991a, as mentioned in Ellis, 1994, p. 583) studied teacher talk. The study area was rate of speech and concluded that teachers, like NSs in general slow down their rate of speech when talking to learners in comparison to other NSs and also do so to a greater extent with less proficient learners. However they noticed considerable variability among teachers.

Gass and Varonis (1994) carried out a research to explore whether:

- modified input yields better NNS (Non-native speaker) comprehension and better production;
- interaction results in better NNS comprehension and better L<sub>2</sub> production; and

- interaction yields better NS (native speaker) comprehension.

The results of their study showed that modified input led to better NNS comprehension than unmodified input. But modified input did not yield better L<sub>2</sub> production. Interaction yielded better NNS comprehension and L<sub>2</sub> production as well. Interaction did not yield better NS comprehension.

In Nepal, several research studies have been carried out on various subject and areas like classroom discourse, role of input and interaction, conversational analysis etc under the Department of English Education, T.U, which are indirectly related to TT because TT is the input it involves interaction between teachers and learners etc.

Shah (2003) carried out a research on classroom discourse to classify the different types of acts, moves and exchanges used in a classroom. He found 26 acts: acknowledging, agreeing checking etc. There were three types of exchanges; beginning, developing and closing.

Rawal (2006) conducted a research to find out the role of input and interaction in learning the English language. The conclusion was that the modified input and interaction are more effective than the textbook input and interaction in learning the communicative functions of English in the content of Nepal.

Irrespective of various researches in classroom interaction, discourse analysis and teaching learning activities , none of the (theses) has dealt about crucial topic like 'teacher talk'. Hence, it is a new topic on which the researcher carried out her research focusing on the amount of teacher talk and nature of teachers' questionnaire.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The following were the objectives of the study:

- i. to find out the type of teachers questions and purpose of using them in the class.
- ii. to find out the effectiveness of teachers' feedback.
- iii. to suggest some pedagogical implications.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study mainly focuses on the various activities and specifically (teachers' words) teacher talk which is the main source of learning to all the students. So, all the students must be tactful to find out the appropriate amount of teachers talk' inside the classroom. 'Teacher talk', is taken as the backbone of the classroom teaching and learning activities. Appropriate amount is being sleeked by through this study. In future it will pave the way to diagnose the nature of teacher's questions.

Although the study is based on (secondary level only), its findings are equally beneficial to all levels and various people concerned with language teaching and learning like English language experts, textbook writers, language trainees, curriculum designers, (subject experts), English language experts and to those students who are directly or indirectly engaged in English language teaching and training English as foreign language. Hence, its very crucial topic which is important as the main part of teaching/learning acts. Above all, the research will be applicable to all personnel who are related to English language teaching and learning.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter briefly describes the methods and procedures adopted to carry out this study. The sources of data, population of the study, sampling procedures, research tools and other procedures are described below.

#### **2.1 Sources of Data**

Both the primary and secondary sources were used to collect data.

##### **2.1.1 Primary Sources of Data**

The primary sources of the data were secondary level students and their English teachers from SOS Hermann Gmeiner School, Bhaktapur.

##### **2.1.2 Secondary Sources of Data**

The Secondary sources of data were various books like, Huber and Snider (1964), Murcia and MacIntosh (1979), Kothari (1985), Wardhaugh (1986), Allwright and Bailey (1991), Ellis (1985 and 1994) , Spratt (1994), Karl (1994), Brown (1994) , Kyriacou (1996), Freeman (2000), Harmer (2006 and 2007) , Kumar (2006) Tough (n.d.), Journals. The internet TESEL Journal, TOT manual etc. were used as the secondary sources of data. Also, various articles, reports and the websites related to teacher talk were used.

#### **2.2 Population of the Study**

The population of the study were the secondary level students and their English teachers of SOS Hermann Gmeiner School, Bhaktapur.



## **2.3 Sampling Procedures**

Kumar (2006) states that

Sampling is the process of selecting a few a sample) from a bigger group (the sampling population) to become the basis for estimating or predicting the prevalence of an unknown piece of information, situation or autocue regarding the bigger group. A sample is a subgroup of the population you are interested in (p. 164).

In this study, the selection of the sample were done as follows:

The researcher purposively selected SOS Hermann Gmeiner School, Bhaktapur. One hundred sixty students of class 9 and 10 were selected purposively in the same way four English teachers teaching in secondary level were selected purposively. Ten different classes of each teacher were recorded and analyzed.

## **2.4 Tools for Data Collection**

Recording device was the tool for the data collection in this study.

## **2.5 Process of Data Collection**

The following process was used for the collection of primary data.

The researcher went to the field and established rapport with the concerned authority. Then the researcher met the students and teachers; and explained about the study and its purposes and the required key terms. After that, the researcher recorded the selected classes of 9 and 10 using the camera. The researcher recorded ten classes of each teacher i.e. in total forty classes in secondary level; twenty classes from class nine and twenty from class ten.

## **2.6 Limitations of the Study**

This study had the following limitations:

- a. It was limited to SOS Hermann Gmeiner School, Bhaktapur.
- b. It was limited to the regular teachers teaching regular classes in the secondary level.
- c. It was limited to the nature of questions teachers use in class.
- d. It was limited to the study of the purpose of using them for purely an academic purpose.
- e. It was limited to the study of the teachers' feedback and its effectiveness.
- f. It was limited to the recording of the classes.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This study primarily aims at finding out the types of teachers' questions their frequency and purpose of using them in secondary level classes. This chapter is devoted to the analysis and interpretation of collected data from primary sources. The information is tabulated after studying the data recorded in the classes. Data were analyzed under the heading: analysis of teachers' questions. Tabulation of information and then its analysis is followed by interpretation using tables and percentage. All these statistical tools have been made in order to render the analysis and interpretation more and more comprehensive.

#### 3.1 Analysis of Teachers' Questions

**Table No. 1**

**The Number of Long and Short Questions Used by Teachers**

	Long questions	Short questions
Teacher 'A'	18	129
Teacher 'B'	20	139
Teacher 'C'	22	135
Teacher 'D'	25	150

After observing the data collected from the class room teaching of teacher 'A', it was found that students were asked 129 short questions and 18 long questions. Likewise students were asked 139 short questions and 20 long questions by teacher 'B'. Teacher 'C' asked 135 short questions and 22 long questions. Teacher 'D' asked 150 short questions and 25 long questions.

**Table No. 2**

**Analysis of Short Questions Used by Teachers**

	I <sup>st</sup> attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> attempt	3 <sup>rd</sup> attempt	4 <sup>th</sup> attempt
Teacher A	80	35	14(with teacher's help)	
Teacher B	83	41	13	2(with teacher's help)
Teacher C	77	40	5	13 (with teacher's+friends' help)
Teacher D	95	42	10(with friend's help)	3 (teacher's help)

The students were highly motivated in teacher's questions. They were found highly interactive as well. Among 129 short questions asked by teacher 'A' 20 questions were performed correctly by the students in the first attempts, 35 questions were answered correctly by the students in the second attempt whereas 14 questions were answered by the help of the teachers. Among 139 short questions asked by teacher 'B', 83 questions were answered by the students in the first attempt, 41 questions were answered by the students in the second attempt, 13 questions were answered by them in the third attempt whereas remaining 2 questions were answered correctly with the help of the teacher. Among 135 short questions asked by teacher 'C', 77 questions were attempted successfully in the first attempt, 40 questions were answered correctly in the second attempt, 5 questions were answered correctly in the third attempt and remaining 13 questions were answered with the help of their friends and teachers. Out of 150 short questions asked by teacher 'D' students replied correctly 95 questions in the first attempt 42 questions in the second attempt 10 questions were replied correctly with the help of their friends where as remaining 3 questions were solved with the help of the teacher.

The students were highly motivated to answer the questions. Teachers were found encouraging students to solve the questions. They provided feedback to reform the answers but to provide equal opportunities mostly other students were given the chance. To encourage and give positive response to students' response teachers were found using different facial and verbal expressions.

A sample of the conversation from grammar class between teacher and students is quoted below:

Teacher D: "Sandra cleaned the offices and the galleries."

Translate this sentence into passive voice. The question goes to Roll no. umm..... 32.

Student (32): The offices are cleaned by Sandra.

Teacher D: ***Good try. But..... you need some corrections.*** Who'll try?

(Students raise their hands)

OK. Pravesh, tell your answer.

Pravesh: The offices and the galleries are cleaned by Sandra.

Teacher D: ***You've tried good. You were almost right but.....***

***anyway sit down.*** Anybody else. Umm.....Vinita, can you try?

Vinita: Ok, sir. I think, "The offices and galleries were cleaned by Sandra."

Teacher D: ***That is perfectly correct.***

(The feedback given by the Teacher D in his class are written in bold and italic letters to make distinct.)

After analysing the collected data it was found that teachers were giving positive feedback. They were not found giving the chance to the same student to reform their answers

**Table No. 3****Analysis of Long Questions**

	Total questions	Individual	Performed in group			
			Class work	Group + Friends	Group+ Teacher	Teacher's help
Teacher A	18	5(homework)	5	5	1	2
Teacher B	20	7(homework) +4	5			4
Teacher C	22	9	5+ 5			5
Teacher D	25	8(3 questions attempted twice)	7		6	4

Out of 18 long questions asked by teacher 'A', 5 questions were answered in written form as their homework. Remaining 13 questions were discussed in the class. These long questions include reason giving questions, diary writing, Imagine and essay writing. Students were found quite comfortable with the questions like reason giving and imagine themselves as the character of the story. Out of 13 long questions they replied 5 questions properly at first attempt. They replied 5 questions after discussing with their group member. Teacher helped them in 2 questions and remaining 1 question was attempted by other different students.

Similarly, out of 20 long questions asked by teacher 'B' students replied 7 questions in written form as their homework. Remaining 13 questions were discussed in the class. Students participated very enthusiastically. The students of teacher 'A' were found comfortable with the questions like imagine and summary writing. They

attempted varieties of long questions. At first attempt individual students were asked to answer the questions. They successfully answered 4 questions. They were also involved in group discussion. They answered 5 questions in the attempt. Teacher helped them to answer 4 questions.

Out of 22 long questions asked by teacher 'C' students replied 5 questions in written form in group. They replied imagine, summary writing and diary writing quite comfortably. They attempted variables of long questions. Teacher asked text based long questions to individual students. They answered such questions nearly correct at first attempt, but some of the students answered correctly and comfortably at their first attempt. They answered 9 questions at first attempt. They were given opportunities to discuss with friends. They answered 5 questions in this attempt. They got help from their teachers to solve 5 questions.

Teacher D asked 25 long questions. He involved his students in individual work and group work. He was also found asking text-based questions to individual students. Whereas other questions were based on interaction. They answered and questioned individually. They attempted three questions twice. Even the students were asking for some notes. They were given equal chance for group work facilitation. The students replied 4 questions with the help of their teacher. In the same way remaining 6 questions were answered in written form on the following day. They got some hints from the teachers and also discussed in the class.

The teacher provided feedback to their students after listening their answers. They were found always ready to help their students. After the feedback is provided students corrected their answers. Regarding short questions they corrected themselves. In long answer they reformed the answers based on feedback. Generally teachers were found providing feedback to the students after they answered but they did not let the same students to reform their answers. Students were found making notes of their teachers' feedback to reform their answers.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **4.1 Findings**

After the close inspection of all the collected data, the researcher has come up with the following findings on the amount and type of teacher talk and its purpose as well as role of feedback in secondary level classes.

- a. All the teachers were found mainly using short questions in their classes. But short questions were used more than long questions.
- b. Regarding the use of short questions, most of the teachers were found using yes/no question and wh- question whereas long questions starting with how...,describe...,agree or disagree...,elaborate...,etc.
- c. It was found that short questions were used six times more than long questions in the classes.
- d. Out of total number of short questions asked, 60.52% were answered promptly by the students themselves on the first attempt, whereas 28.57% of short questions were attempted on the second attempt, 7.06% and 3.85% of short questions on the third and fourth attempt respectively.
- e. While answering the short questions, 89.09% were answered on the first and second attempt by the students themselves, on the third attempt students took the help from friends and teacher provided help only on the third and fourth attempt.
- f. In the classroom, it was found that mostly short questions were used by the teacher to be confirmed about pupils' whereas some of the teachers were found using short questions because of their habit and also to get chance to think about the alternative answer.
- g. It was found that simple questions were answered on the first and second attempt by the students and a bit challenging and confusing



types were answered on the third and fourth attempt taking the help from the teachers and friends.

- h. In case of long questions, 38.92% were answered by the students individually, 43.62 in group work, within group work as well students were facilitated at first by another group and finally by teachers and 17.46% of long questions were answered taking the help from the teachers.
- i. It was found that mostly simple long questions were answered by the students initially themselves, on the other hand for challenging questions, they took the help from group and finally from the teachers.
- j. It was found that most of the long questions were meant for checking students' descriptive, analytical, reasoning, creative capabilities.
- k. It was found that short questions were focused mostly on listening, speaking, reading and grammar related classes whereas long questions on writing classes. Hence objective questions were found to strengthen listening, speaking, reading and grammar and subjective/long questions to build up mostly writing and partially reading as well.
- l. Teacher's feedback for reforming students' answers was found to be more effective than the help or feedback from other students.
- m. Prompt and more feedback was provided in case of short questions whereas it was found time consuming and less in amount in case of long questions/subjective questions.

## 4.2 Recommendations

Teacher talk which also incorporates learners' talk is the key factor for language learning in the classroom. So teacher talk must be taken into consideration for effective language teaching and learning. On the basis of the findings mentioned in the preceding section, researcher has come up with the following suggestions:

- a. Teachers should frequently use short questions in language classrooms to check students' comprehension and understanding.
- b. In a language classroom, both subjective as well as objective questions should be used.
- c. Pupils must be allowed to answer the questions individually at first by themselves then only friends' and teachers' help should be given.
- d. The principle of learning should be brought into practice only when teacher's help or external help is required; students need to be helped out.
- e. Questions are the main tool for checking students' understanding so students answer simple questions on their first and second attempt whereas challenging questions are answered on the third and fourth attempt.
- f. Subjective questions must be used for describing, analysing, reasoning and so on.
- g. Objective questions need to be used for grammar, listening, speaking and reading whereas subjective especially for writing.
- h. In case of feedback, teachers' feedback is essential to reform students' answers.
- i. Prompt and enough feedback is essential not only for objective/short questions but also for subjective/long questions.

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## Appendix I

(A written transcript of third class recorded on Teacher Talk)

Teacher: Good morning everybody. How are you all?

Students: Good morning sir. We are fine and you sir?

T: I'm fine. Do you have your homework? Keep it on the table. Ok show me yours Utsah. Good, and yours Vivek? All right. (Teacher goes round the class)

Do you know what are we going to learn today? Anyone can guess?

Ss: Yes, sir. Listening.

T: Good. Now all of you see unit fifteen, exercises 8 and 9. Is here anyone who smokes?

Ss: No, sir.

T: Oh is that so? Are there anyone in your family who smokes or in your neighbourhood? Rasa, can you tell me the effects of smoking?

Rasa: Smoking causes various problems hum....like respiratory diseases, loss of sleep and memory umm... this much sir.

T: Good. Respiratory diseases, loss of sleep and memory are some problems of smoking. There are many other problems as well. Before listening to those problems, lets have a look at the picture given in your book. What is the boy doing?

Ss: Smoking.

T: Correct. Do you think it's a good habit?

Ss: No, sir.

T: Yes, You've studied in your HPE and Social Studies the harmful effects of smoking, haven't you?

Ss: Yes, sir.

T: Today's listening is about the effects of smoking. Here in your listening you'll find an interview of a doctor regarding the effects of smoking and measures to controls.

Now read the questions in 8( A and B)

(The teacher waits till the students complete reading the questions.)...Do you have any confusions or queries? Please, ask. (Teacher waits for the students queries.)

Ss: No, sir.

T: If so, are you ready for listening? Okay. Here goes your recording. (Teacher plays the tape and moves around the class.)...Have you completed A and B both? Write those answers which you are sure about. If you are confused don't write now. You'll get two more chances to listen.

Ss: Okay, sir.

Anamika: Please sir, play it again.

T: Okay, Now read the questions given in 9(A and B). This time, you people be attentive and try to focus your listening on required answers only. (The teacher waits till the students complete reading the questions.)...Do you have any confusions or queries? Please, ask. (Teacher waits for the students queries.)... No questions. Good. Now listen the tape again and answer these questions. (Teacher plays the tape again and moves around the class.)...Now it's the last time. You people, listen and complete your missed answers or check your answers. (Teacher plays the tape again and moves around the class.) ... Now exchange your answer sheets with your table partners. (The teacher writes the answers on the board. The students correct their partners' answers.) ...Now, return the sheets to your partners. You people whose all answers are correct stand up. And remaining people give them big hands. (Sound of clapping.)

(The bell rings and the teacher gives homework.)

T: You people, Write an essay on "Smoking and its effects". Ba - bye class

Ss: Bye sir.

## Appendix II

(A written transcript of seventh class recorded on Teacher Talk)

Teacher: Good afternoon everybody. How are you all?

Students: Good afternoon sir. We are fine and you sir?

T: I'm fine. Do you have your homework? Keep it on the table. Ok show me yours Utsab. Good, and yours Mahima? All right. (Teacher goes round the class)

Do you know what are we going to learn today? Any guesses?

Ss: Yes, sir. Writing.

T: Good. Now, those who are from village area stand up. (Students from village area of Bhaktapur stand and those from different village students also stand up.) Ok you, choose your leader. Oh yes, you sitting people choose your leader too. Ummm... now list different facilities available in your village/town individually. You have five minutes to complete your task. (Teacher goes round the class.)...dear students now share your answers with your group and the leaders from each team jot down all the shared points without any repetition.(sound of noise)...let me see who will be the first to answer.

Group A leader: I will say sir.

T: ok, proceed.

GL A: ummm.. In village we find fresh air, no pollution, people are helpful, clean drinking water supply, and... green and fresh vegetables. This much sir.

T: Oh is that so? Well done. Now group B. Are you ready?

GL B: Yes. As we know we are in 21<sup>st</sup> century in town most of the facility are available such as transportation, good health services, electricity, higher education, entertainment facilities and... and... and... sir ok.

T: Good. You told about most of the facilities available in town. Listen I will divide you all in four groups out of each group. It means there will be eight groups; four for town life and four for village life. Do you get it?

Ss: Yes, sir.

T: Now group A, you introduce about town/village life and group B write what we have discussed i.e. advantages of village/town life. And group C, talk about village life and town life lacking i.e. disadvantages, focusing on your opponents views as well. (You have five minutes only. Got it?)

Ss: Sir completed.

T: Ok fine. Now submit your sheets. C'mon give me. Give me quick quick .

Ss: Sir, take it. (The teacher corrects the written works promptly and return sheets back to the students)

T: Yes, Now all of you rewrite these fairly and leaders add your best conclusions after reading the three paragraphs and display it on your display board outside. Your homework is to write the same essay at home. I have some tasks in office to complete so I am going now. Bye. Monitor, take your responsibility. See you tomorrow.

Ss: Bye sir.