Classroom Discourse & Teacher Talk

1. The Role of Teacher Talk

Teacher talk is a strategic tool for learning, not just giving instructions. Effective teacher talk should:

- Explain concepts clearly and accurately
- Organize lesson flow and tasks
- Illustrate authentic language use through modeling

Quantity matters less than quality and purpose. Teachers must also create space for learners to communicate, especially since English is both the subject and medium of instruction.

2. Why Learner Communication Matters

- Clarify understanding through questions and peer interaction
- Practice the target language from receptive to productive skills
- Develop critical thinking by negotiating meaning
- Enhance social interaction and collaboration
- Manage turn-taking and topic shifts for real-world fluency

3. Classroom Discourse: TTT vs. LTT

TTT (Teacher Talk Time)	LTT (Learner Talk Time)
Modeling, explaining, managing	Practicing, negotiating, expressing ideas

4. Types of Classroom Discourse (Kramsch, 1998)

Pedagogic Discourse	Natural Discourse
Formal, structured, teacher-led	Informal, spontaneous, collaborative
Teacher = knowledge source	Meaning co-constructed with learners
Accuracy & curriculum-focused	Fluency & authentic communication
Known-answer questions	Learners initiate and express opinions

5. Classroom Interactional Competence (Walsh, 2011)

The ability to use interaction to mediate and assist learning.

- Questioning
- Turn-taking
- Feedback
- Clarification requests

Teacher Interactional Strategies:
1. Control of interaction (manage flow and turn-taking)
2. Speech modification (simplify, repeat, slow down)
3. Elicitation techniques (draw out learner talk via questions)

Display Questions	Referential Questions
Teacher knows the answer	Teacher does not know the answer
Focus: accuracy check	Focus: genuine communication

Common in pedagogic discourse	Common in natural discourse

Quick Summary

- Maximize meaningful LTT—not just reduce TTT
- Blend pedagogic and natural discourse
- Develop Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC)
- Use more referential questions and share communicative space

References

Kramsch, C. (1998). Language and Culture. Oxford University Press.
Walsh, S. (2011). Exploring Classroom Discourse: Language in Action. Routledge.