



TEACHER TALK & CLASSROOM LANGUAGE

Teacher education /Communicative
English

Yu Mon Kyaw
31st Friday 2026



Lesson at a glance

Learning outcomes

By the end, students can:

1. identify effective teacher talk
2. simplify classroom language
3. use wait time strategically
4. design comprehensible input
5. practise online-class teacher language

Lesson flow

0:00 Warm-up and diagnostic
0:15 Features of teacher talk
0:50 Simplifying language
1:25 Break
1:35 Wait time and questioning
2:05 Comprehensible input
2:30 Online practice + production
2:55 Quiz and reflection

Assessment

- micro-teaching performance
- peer feedback checklist
- exam-style quiz
- reflection exit ticket



Warm – up

Instruction A:

“Okay, everyone, what I would like you to do now, before we move on to the next part of today’s lesson, is to work together with the person who is sitting near you, or perhaps someone else if you do not have a partner, and you should look at the sentences that I am going to show you on the screen. Then, after you have read all of them carefully, I want you to talk about which sentences you think are examples of effective teacher talk and which ones are not very effective. You should also try to explain your reasons, and perhaps write some ideas somewhere because later I may ask some of you to share what you discussed with the whole class. You have around five or maybe six minutes, depending on how quickly everyone finishes.”





Warm – up

Instruction B:

“Work with a partner.

Read the four sentences on the screen.

Choose two examples of effective
teacher talk.

Discuss why they are effective.

Write one reason for each example.

You have five minutes.

After five minutes, one person from each
pair will share an answer.”





Warm – up

1. Which instruction is easier to understand: Instruction A or Instruction B?
2. What makes Instruction A confusing? It gives one instruction at a time and it is very long.
3. What makes Instruction B clear? The steps are presented short, clear and in a logical order.
4. What exactly do students need to do? work, read, choose, discuss, write, and share.
5. How much time do students have? Five minutes.
6. What will students do after the discussion? Write one reason for each example share the answer.
7. Which instruction helps students begin the activity more quickly? Instruction B. Lower-level learners may understand individual words but fail to understand the complete task.
8. How might unclear instructions affect student confidence?
9. How might clear instructions increase student participation?

learners may understand what to do without needing repeated explanations. Clear instructions also reduce anxiety, save classroom time, and create more opportunities for student participation.

Part 1: What is Teacher Talk?



Teacher talk is the language a teacher uses to:

give instructions

explain ideas

ask questions

manage the classroom

give feedback

model English



What is Teacher Talk?

Teacher talk is not “talking too much”. It is the language teachers use to organize learning, explain meaning, manage interaction, ask questions, and give feedback.

Key message: teacher talk is not only “talking”; it is a teaching tool.

Teacher Talk Time (TTT)

The amount of time the teacher speaks.

High TTT is useful when it gives clear input, models language, or supports learners.

Student Talk Time (STT)

The amount of time learners speak.

STT is essential for fluency, confidence, interaction, and output.

Good balance

Aim for purposeful teacher talk and frequent learner responses. The right balance changes by level, activity, and lesson stage.

Effective teacher talk

- Clear and short
- Level-appropriate
- Interactive
- Uses examples and checking questions
- Gives thinking time
- Encourages learner output

Ineffective teacher talk

- Too fast or too long
- Over-explains everything
- Uses unknown vocabulary without support
- Answers own questions too quickly
- Asks: “Do you understand?” only
- Blocks student participation

Features of effective teacher talk

Clear

simple words, short sentences

Purposeful

each sentence helps learning

Interactive

students respond, not only listen

Supportive

positive tone and feedback

Balanced

enough teacher talk, more student talk

Checked

teacher confirms understanding

Classroom test: “Can students understand what to do and feel safe to try?”

Clarity

simple
wording

Appropriacy

right level

Interaction

questions +
responses

Support

gestures /
examples

Purpose

linked to
task

Input

Students hear language they can understand and learn from.

Interaction

Students negotiate meaning, ask for help, and respond.

Output

Students use language to explain, ask, solve, and reflect.

Opening

Good morning.
Today we will...
By the end, you can...

Instructions

Work in pairs.
You have 3 minutes.
Choose one answer.

Checking

What do we do first?
How much time?
Can you give an example?

Feedback

Good idea.
Try again with...
Can you say that
more clearly?

Transition

Now move to task two.
Let's come back together.
Please turn on your mic.

Online language

Type in chat.
Use reactions.
Go to breakout room 2.
Share your screen.

Closing

What did you learn?
Submit your exit ticket.
Thank you for today.



Part 2: Simplifying Language

Simple teacher language is not childish language. It is precise, short, supported, and matched to learner level.

Simplifying language

**Simplifying does not mean “making the lesson easy.”
It means making the language easier to understand and
presenting the language in a clearer and more understandable way. .**

1. Use short sentences

Teachers should use short and direct sentences. Each sentence should contain one main idea.

2. Use familiar words

- Choose words that students are likely to know

- Avoid technical language, idioms, and unnecessary jargon unless these expressions are part of the lesson.

Simplifying language

3. Give one step at a time

Long instructions often contain many actions. Students may understand the first action but forget the later ones. Teachers should divide instructions into numbered or clearly ordered steps.

Example:

1. Read the paragraph.
2. Underline three important words.
3. Compare your answers with a partner.
4. Prepare to share one answer.

Expressions such as **first**, **next**, **then**, and **finally** also help students follow the sequence.

4. Show, do not only tell

Students do not always understand spoken instructions immediately.

support meaning through:

- gestures
- pictures
- examples
- demonstrations
- written instructions
- teacher modelling

For example, instead of only saying,

“Match the words with the pictures,” the teacher can match the first word as an example. This makes the instruction more concrete and provides comprehensible input.

Simplifying language

5. Repeat key words

repeat important words consistently instead of changing the wording too quickly

For example, the teacher may first say: “Choose the correct answer.”

The teacher should continue using the word **choose**, rather than immediately changing it to:

“Select the appropriate response.”

Using too many synonyms may confuse students, especially at lower proficiency levels.

6. Check understanding

After giving instructions, teachers should check whether students know what to do.

Avoid only asking:

“Do you understand?”

Students may say “yes” even when they are unsure.

Use **instruction-checking questions** instead:

- What do you do first?
- Are you working alone or with a partner?
- How many answers do you need?
- Where will you write your answer?
- How much time do you have?

These questions show whether students genuinely understand the task.

1. Shorten

Use one main idea per sentence.
Avoid long explanations.

2. Sequence

Use first, next, then, finally.
Make steps visible.

3. Support

Add examples, gestures, pictures, models, and written keywords.

4. Check

Ask instruction-checking questions, not only “Understand?”

A1-A2

Use concrete words, models, gestures, short commands, and visible examples.

B1-B2

Use natural classroom phrases, clear examples, and occasional academic words with support.

C1+

Use authentic explanations, metalanguage, and extended discussion while checking precision.

Task

Work in pairs. Write three examples in the chat. You have five minutes.

Weak check

Do you understand?
Any questions?

Strong ICQs

Are you working alone or in pairs?
How many examples?
Where do you write them?
How much time?

Target phrase

“I used to play football.”

Weak CCQ

What does used to mean?

Strong CCQs

Did I play football in the past?

Do I play now?

Was it regular or one time?

Before: overloaded

Could you possibly proceed to complete the exercise individually and then engage in collaborative peer checking?
Any questions?

After: clear

First, do Exercise 1 alone.
You have 4 minutes.
Then compare answers with a partner.
What do you do first?

Activity 1: Improve the teacher talk

Unclear teacher talk

“Okay everyone, before we sort of start this activity, maybe you can open the paper and try to do it with a partner or maybe in groups, and then tell me something later.”

Clear teacher talk

“Work in pairs.
Read Question 1.
Discuss for two minutes.
Then share one answer.”

Group task: Rewrite the unclear instructions to clear and effective instruction. Make them clear, short, ordered, and student-friendly.

Product

Each group gives a 45-second instruction for an online activity.

Rules

Use: aim + steps + time + ICQ.
Use simple, natural language.

Peer feedback

Peers check: clear? short? sequenced? checked?

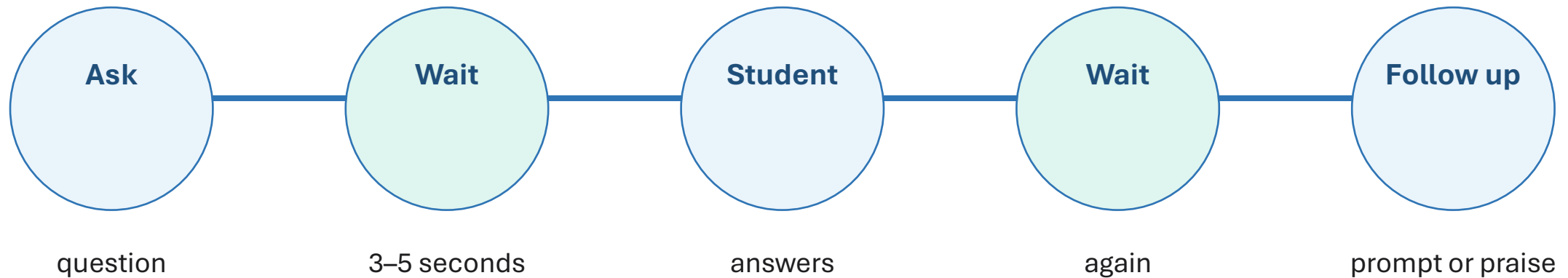


Part 3: Wait Time

Wait time is the pause after a teacher question and after a student response. It improves thinking, participation, and response quality.

Wait time: silence that helps thinking

Wait time is the short pause after a teacher asks a question and after a student answers.



Teacher phrase: “Think quietly first. I’ll give you a few seconds.”

Common pattern

Teachers often wait about 1 second after a question, then repeat, answer, or choose another student.

Improved pattern

When wait time is extended to around 3–5 seconds, student responses can become longer and more thoughtful.

Classroom rule

Ask → pause → scan → invite response → pause again before evaluating.

Wait Time 1

Teacher asks a question.
Teacher pauses before calling or
accepting an answer.

Wait Time 2

Student answers.
Teacher pauses before feedback,
correction, or follow-up.

Signal the pause

“I’ll give you 10 seconds to think.”

Use chat first

“Type one keyword, but don’t press Enter yet.”

Use reactions

“Thumbs up when you are ready.”

Display question

Teacher knows answer.

Example: What is the past tense of go?

Wait: 3 seconds

Referential question

Teacher genuinely wants ideas.

Example: Why might students stay silent?

Wait: 5–10 seconds

Higher-order question

Analyze, evaluate, design.

Wait: give individual thinking + pair talk.

Less effective

T: What is the answer? No? Anyone? It's B. Next question.

More effective

T: Read the options silently. You have 10 seconds. Show one finger for A, two for B. Why did you choose it?

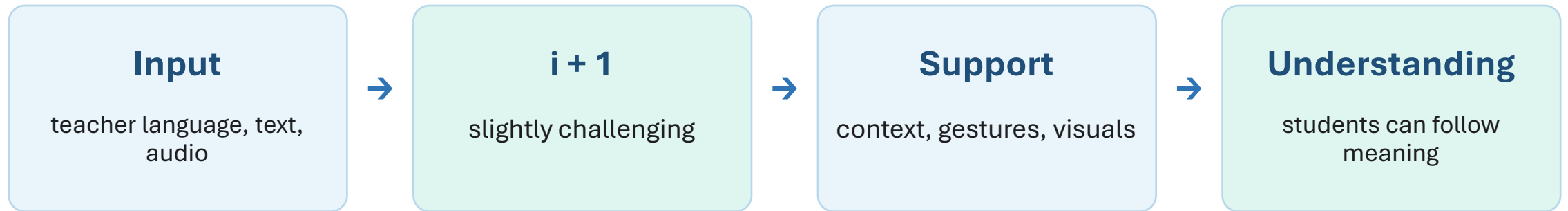


Part 4: Comprehensible Input

Learners acquire language when they receive meaningful language they can mostly understand, with enough support to notice new language.

Comprehensible input

Learners acquire language when they understand messages that are slightly above their current level, with support.



Practical supports: pictures, examples, demonstrations, repetition, slower pace, key words on board.

i

What students can already understand.

+ 1

New language slightly above current level.

Support

Context, pictures, examples, repetition, gestures, interaction.

Simplified

Reduce linguistic complexity. Useful at low levels, but may remove natural language.

Elaborated

Keep richer language but add explanation, examples, and redundancy.

Modified-elaborated

Adjust language and add support. Often stronger for learning than simplification alone.

Rephrase

Say it another way without changing the meaning.

Model

Give one full example before students begin.

Chunk

Break information into short parts.

Check

Ask CCQs/ICQs and use student examples.

Rephrase

“Identify the main reason the character was reluctant to participate.”

Rephrased version:

“Why did the character not want to join the activity?”

Model

“Write one sentence using *used to*.”

the teacher gives a complete example:

“I used to play football every weekend, but I do not play now.”

Chunk

Long instruction:

“Read the passage, underline the important information, discuss your answers with a partner, and prepare one idea to share with the class.”

Chunked instruction:

First, read the passage.

Next, underline three important ideas.

Then, compare your answers with a partner.

Finally, choose one idea to share.

The teacher gives the information in short, ordered steps

Check

Ask CCQs/ICQs and use student examples.

These questions help the teacher confirm that students understand both the task and the language.

Scenario

A teacher explains grammar for 25 minutes. Students listen quietly. At the practice stage, many cannot start.

Analysis

The teacher talk was long, not interactive, and did not check understanding. Input was available, but not processed.

Plan

1. Give a 3-minute explanation
2. Show 2 examples
3. Ask CCQs
4. Let pairs sort examples
5. Give feedback and reteach only what is needed

Grammar example

- Target: “used to”
- 3-minute explanation
- Show 2 examples
- Ask CCQs
- Pairs sort sentences
- Feedback + reteach only what is needed

Vocabulary example

- Target: “reluctant”
- 3-minute explanation
- Show 2 examples
- Ask CCQs
- Pairs sort situations
- Feedback + reteach only what is needed

Goal: move from long explanation to guided, interactive input.

Give a three-minute explanation

“Today we will learn **used to**.

We use **used to + base verb** to talk about a past habit or situation that is no longer true now.

For example:

I **used to play football every weekend**.

This means I played football regularly in the past, but I do not play regularly now.

The form is:

Subject + used to + base verb

For negatives, we use:

Subject + didn't use to + base verb

For questions:

Did + subject + use to + base verb?"

2. Show two examples

Example 1

Mali used to walk to school, but now she takes the bus.

Example 2

My father didn't use to drink coffee, but now he drinks it every morning.

Highlight the time contrast:

Past: walked to school

Now: takes the bus

Past: did not drink coffee

Now: drinks coffee

3. Ask concept-checking questions

For the sentence:

Mali used to walk to school.

Ask:

Did Mali walk to school in the past?

Yes.

Did she do it regularly?

Yes.

Does she walk to school now?

Probably not.

Do we say *used to walked*?

No.

What form comes after *used to*?

The base verb.

4. Let pairs sort examples

Give each pair these sentences:

1. I used to live in Chiang Mai.
2. She used to studies English every evening.
3. We didn't use to have online classes.
4. Did you used to play basketball?
5. My brother used to be very shy.
6. They use to visit us every weekend.

Ask students to sort them into:

- **Correct**
- **Incorrect**

5. Give feedback and reteach only what is needed

Ask pairs to explain their choices.

Then focus only on the common problems:

After **used to**, use the base verb:

used to study, not **used to studies**.

After **did** or **didn't**, use **use to**:

Did you use to...?

I didn't use to...

Finish with a short **production task**:

Tell your partner two things you used to do when you were younger and one thing you did not use to do.

Example 2: Teaching Vocabulary — Reluctant

1. Give a three-minute explanation

“Today’s word is **reluctant**.

Reluctant means that someone does not really want to do something or feels unsure about doing it.

The word is an adjective.

We often use this pattern:

be reluctant to + verb”

2. Show two examples

- Tina was reluctant to speak in front of the class because she felt nervous.
- The student was reluctant to join the activity, but his friend encouraged him.

You can also show a facial expression or gesture that suggests hesitation.

3. Ask concept-checking questions

Does a reluctant person feel completely confident?

Does the person strongly want to do the activity?

Might the person still do it?

Is *reluctant* a noun or an adjective?

Which is correct: *reluctant speak* or *reluctant to speak*?

4. Let pairs sort examples

Ask students to sort the situations into:

- **Reluctant**
- **Not reluctant**

1. Nida quickly volunteers to give the first presentation.
2. Mark agrees to sing, but he looks nervous and says, “I’m not sure.”
3. Pim happily joins the competition.
4. Arun does not want to ask a question because he is afraid of making a mistake.
5. Jane is excited to speak in front of the class.
6. Tom slowly raises his hand after the teacher encourages him.

5. Give feedback and reteach only what is needed

Ask students to explain why each person is or is not reluctant.

Correct only the main misunderstandings.

For example:

Reluctant does not mean that a person completely refuses. It means the person feels unwilling, hesitant, or unsure.

Finish with a production question:

What classroom activity are some students reluctant to do?
Why?



Part 5: Online practice and production

Students first practise a controlled teacher-talk skill, then produce a short teaching performance.

Aim

Students use teacher talk in a real online teaching moment.

Task

Teach classmates how to complete a 2-minute activity. Include input, instructions, wait time, and checking.

Feedback

Peers use checklist: clear, short, supportive, interactive, wait time.

Clear language

Did the teacher use short, direct phrases?

Support

Did the teacher model or show examples?

Wait time

Did the teacher give thinking time?

Interaction

Did learners respond, type, speak, or choose?

Checking

Did the teacher use ICQs or CCQs?

Remember

Effective teacher talk is clear, level-appropriate, interactive, supportive, and purposeful.

Apply

Use simple language, ICQs/CCQs, wait time, examples, and online participation tools.

Exit ticket

Write: 1 phrase I will use, 1 mistake I will avoid, 1 question I still have.

Core theory

Krashen: comprehensible input
Long: input and interaction
Vygotsky: scaffolding/ZPD
Swain: output hypothesis

Classroom discourse

Rowe: wait time
Walsh: classroom interaction / SETT
Sinclair & Coulthard: IRF
Richards & Lockhart: reflective teaching

Exam preparation

Cambridge TKT Module 3
TESOL classroom management
Instruction-giving, eliciting, checking, feedback

Cambridge English TKT: <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/teaching-english/teaching-qualifications/tkt/>

ERIC Rowe wait-time: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED061103>

Long (2020) Optimal input: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/language-teaching/article/optimal-input-for-language-learning-genuine-simplified-elaborated-or-modified-elaborated/FDA2F787BFB75161F5D851C62BBFA7C9>

Krashen SLA PDF: https://sdkrashen.com/content/articles/krashen_sla.pdf

Walsh classroom discourse / SETT: search “Walsh SETT framework classroom discourse”

Bui (2024), Vietnamese university EFL speaking lessons

Purpose: examine how teacher talk constructs or obstructs students' voluntary speaking participation.

Context: five experienced EFL teachers and up to 89 university students aged 19–22.

Analysis focus: teacher talking time, language choice, interactional features, and learning opportunities.

Teacher talk is not only classroom management—it is also a major source of comprehensible target-language input.

The key question is not simply “How much does the teacher talk?” but “What does the talk help learners do?”

Quality teacher talk creates space for learners to formulate, clarify, extend, and repair their own speech.

Poorly timed talk can reduce participation even when the teacher intends to help.

Main Finding: Quality Before Quantity

51

Teacher talking time must serve the pedagogical goal

Useful Teacher Talk

- Gives concise instructions
- Models useful language
- Checks understanding
- Scaffolds a response
- Invites elaboration
- Creates thinking time

Unproductive Teacher Talk

- Long explanations without checking
- Repeats every student answer
- Answers the teacher's own question
- Interrupts mid-response
- Completes students' turns
- Uses L1 automatically

Direct error correction — useful when brief, timely, and not constantly interrupting fluency.

Content feedback — responds to the meaning of a learner's contribution, not only its form.

Confirmation checks — verifies meaning and encourages negotiation for meaning.

Extended wait time — allows more learners to respond and supports longer, more complex answers.

Scaffolding — supplies prompts or missing language while keeping the learner responsible for the message.

Turn completion: the teacher finishes a learner's sentence before the learner has enough processing time.

Teacher interruption: the teacher breaks into a developing response and disrupts fluency or confidence.

Teacher echo: unnecessary repetition can slow interaction and keep the teacher at the center.

Turn competition: the teacher or stronger students dominate before others can enter the interaction.

Extended teacher turns: explanations become lectures and leave little room for student-generated language.

Use the first language strategically, not automatically

The study observed both English and Vietnamese in teacher talk.

More consistent L2 use supported language flow and gave learners more target-language input.

L1 helped with difficult management, translation, or grammar explanations, but overuse reduced opportunities to process and respond in English.

Practical principle: maximize meaningful L2 use; use L1 briefly when it clearly improves access, safety, or efficiency.

What should the teacher do next?

Scenario: A student begins, “I think online learning is...” and pauses for three seconds. The teacher immediately says, “more flexible,” repeats the complete sentence, and asks another student.

Problem: the teacher completes the turn and removes the learner’s opportunity to retrieve language.

Better response: maintain eye contact, wait 3–5 more seconds, then prompt: “Take your time. Flexible because...?”

Discussion question: Which part is wait time, and which part is scaffolding?

Research-Informed Observation Checklist

58

Use during microteaching or lesson observation

Constructs Learning

- Instructions are short and sequenced
- Teacher waits after questions
- Prompts extend learner responses
- Feedback addresses meaning
- L2 input is understandable
- Students complete their own turns

May Obstruct Learning

- Teacher answers own questions
- Teacher interrupts or finishes sentences
- Every answer is echoed
- Explanations are too long
- L1 replaces achievable L2
- Only confident students respond

Check understanding

1. Why is “reduce TTT” an incomplete recommendation?
2. Name two teacher-talk features that construct learning opportunities.
3. Explain the difference between scaffolding and completing a learner’s turn.
4. When might limited L1 use be justified?
5. Rewrite: “No, that is wrong. The answer is...” as content feedback plus a prompt.

Research source

Bui, K. D. (2024). Teacher Talk in EFL Speaking Lessons and the Implications for Learner Volunteering: A Case Study at a Vietnamese University. In M. Shelley & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2024* (pp. 2240–2250). ISTES.

Key theoretical connection: Walsh’s Self-Evaluation of Teacher Talk (SETT) framework—teacher language can construct or obstruct learning opportunities depending on the pedagogical goal.

Suggested follow-up reading: Walsh (2002), “Construction or obstruction: teacher talk and learner involvement in the EFL classroom.”