

TEACHER TALK: LINGUISTIC CHARACTERISTICS AND  
ADJUSTMENTS

by

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the  
American University of Sharjah  
College of Arts and Sciences  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Arts in  
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

May 2013

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## **Acknowledgements**

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Prof. Betty Lanteigne for the continuous support of my study and research, for her patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. Her guidance helped me in writing this thesis. Thanks also to Prof. David Prescott who paved the path that led me to finish my thesis.

I would also like to thank Prof. Tyson and Prof. Crompton for their encouragement and insightful comments.

My sincere thanks also go to the BC teachers for offering me an opportunity to observe and interview them. Without their willingness to provide their uncompensated hours, this thesis would not have been possible.

I owe my loving thanks to my family. During the inevitable ups and downs of conducting my research, they often encouraged me. Last but not least, I would like to thank my mum for supporting me spiritually throughout the study.

## **Dedication**

To all EL teachers.

## Abstract

This study describes linguistic characteristics of English language (EL) teachers' spoken input to second language learners in classrooms in the UAE, and compares them to the results of researchers who have investigated patterns of conversational talk. Various linguistic adjustments, modifications and simplifications that distinguish Teacher Talk (TT) from discourse outside of the classroom, have been found in previous studies conducted in this field. The current study discusses the TT used by EL teachers in four EL classrooms to ensure comprehensible input, and at the same time expose students to natural and authentic language input. The purpose of this study is to examine linguistic characteristics and adjustments in TT in a particular context and to explore the teachers' reasons for these modifications. The answers to the research questions were pursued by using qualitative analysis with descriptive statistics. Data was collected by observing four English teachers at an institution in the UAE offering English courses. This research was designed to raise teachers' and educators' awareness, through analysis of transcriptions, of the type, frequency, and similarities or differences between linguistic characteristics of TT in these EL classrooms. Overall, the TT of the observed teachers can be described as having low frequencies of self-repetition, contracted form and disfluencies, and a low type-token ratio, yet a high frequency of questions, with a prevalence of yes/no questions over other types of questions. These teachers consider that linguistic modifications in TT ensure comprehensibility of input, expose students to authentic language, help them to avoid confusion, and encourage students' participation. The findings of this research might encourage teachers of English to rethink the use of linguistic adjustments and modifications in their classroom language.

**Search Terms:** teacher talk, classroom talk, initiation-response-feedback, linguistic adjustments.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It is commonly observed that people tend to simplify their language and adapt it as per changes in settings and circumstances. This simplification of language can be noted in various circumstances, for example, while talking to a baby, communicating with disabled people and foreigners. The reason behind such adjustments in language is the belief that the interlocutor might have trouble in understanding the normal pace of speech, or on account of prosodic or grammatical complexities. The quality of speech thus depends on the communicative context in which the particular speech is produced. Humans unconsciously make adjustments to their speech in order to cater to different audiences, as in talking to foreigners or language learners. These linguistic adjustments can be due to the influence of different social factors.

The linguistic variations produced in the language can be seen at different levels, such as phonology, morphology, vocabulary, syntax, and discourse. However, it is to be noted that such inconsistency in language results in great variations which might lead to confusion. These adjustments in language need to be accounted for, especially when the language is used as a means of instruction in the teaching-learning process. As much language learning occurs through formal instruction, the notion of “foreigner talk” gave rise to a similar notion called “teacher talk” (TT).

TT that results from attempts to teach a target language is necessarily different from the talk that occurs naturally outside the classroom. Researchers have called for more attention to the specificity of the language of instruction that second language teachers employ to speak to their students in the classroom (see Nussbaum, 1992;

Higgins, 1994; Rodgers & Renard, 1999). Research in this field generally seeks to determine how speech addressed to second language learners in the classroom differs from other “talks” or other “simple codes” of various kinds, such as foreigner talk (Ferguson, 1971), child language, pidgins, early second language, and telegraphese.

Teaching is a social context where communication is very important. The dialogue that takes place between a teacher and pupils in a class forms the basis of the educational process and serves as a foundation for teaching-learning in society. In spite of the established importance of TT and its impact on the educational process, there has not been much educational research on the subject based on direct observation and recording of the teaching process as it takes place in the classroom. This research is an endeavour in this direction. It observes actual discourse in the classroom and examines the characteristics of the language used and the adjustments made in classroom interaction in English classes at one institution in the UAE, which from now on will be referred to as BC.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The process of language teaching is a complex phenomenon as it involves many inter-related factors. Research on classroom discourse methodology has thus been a topic that has gained considerable attention from educators, instructors, learners, scholars, and researchers. According to Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991), the process of teaching language can be grouped into three categories: language learner/learning (how to learn), language/culture (what to learn) and teacher/teaching (how to teach).

Since the 1960s, research on the subject of classroom teaching has grown rapidly.

Considering the domain of language teaching in education, it is evident that TT plays a crucial role in the classroom discourse process. However, as Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) mentioned, until then TT had received little attention. Moreover, TT is not a simple phenomenon to study. Rowe (2004) states that TT is “often the most habitual and least examined aspect of classroom practice” (p. 10). Rowe (2004) asserts that teacher language is difficult to study, “not only because it is habitual, but also because it is inextricably linked to other aspects of classroom events” (p. 12). Despite the difficulties of examining TT, Edwards and Westgate (1994) called for more research on the important issue of classroom talk, saying, “while talk is certainly complex, subtle, allusive, and often ambiguous, it is about time educational research adopted appropriately complex and sensitive forms of inquiry and explanation” (p. 17). The study and examination of the instructor’s classroom speech has captured the attention of research scholars for various reasons. The first and foremost factor which guides the different research studies on the topic is the fact that TT plays a very important role, not only in the organization of the classroom, but also in the process of language acquisition, as TT forms the major source of comprehensible target language input that the learner is exposed to (Nunan, 1991).

The second reason that guides research studies (for example, Chaudron, 1988; Cook, 2000) is that according to the data obtained from different EFL classroom settings, the dominance of TT in classroom speech is evident. In foreign language classrooms the amount of TT that occurs generally accounts for one-half to three-quarters of the entire talk that occurs. The domination of TT in the classroom is observed in most parts of the language lesson. Teachers dominate the classroom using the “I-R-F” structure which

implies a “teachers initiate - the students respond - teachers feedback” structure (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). As identified by this framework, teachers’ utterances are often twice as many as utterances made by students (Allwright & Bailey, 1991).

Using TT, the teacher passes on knowledge and skills, organizes the activities, and helps the students practice. In the ESL classroom, TT does not just present the subject of the course but is also a means to accomplish the teaching objectives and learning outcomes. Thus TT is important both for the organization of the classroom and as a means to achieve the teaching objectives.

It is important to further investigate linguistic characteristics of TT that are concerned with the use of linguistic adjustments, and to search for helpful insights into this practice, for several reasons. One reason for such investigation is that identification and evaluation of specific features in TT would help to clarify whether or not second language learners are being instructed via language which may help them to understand and process input more effectively. The second reason is related to teachers’ lack of clear-cut awareness of precise gradations of linguistic complexities, which often results in reliance on a general intuitive feel for what makes input simple or complex. The third reason is that with the widespread use of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, the use of authentic language materials in natural spoken and written input contexts is important. Cazden (1998), who investigated classroom discourse, and Johnson (1995), who analyzed salient features in the classroom discourse of effective teachers, show that TT is often rather different from the discourse that occurs naturally outside the classroom. The issue is whether or not TT characterized by utterances that are shorter, syntactically less complex, and more repetitious than authentic real world

language is a feature of TT in English language classrooms.

It is to be noted that most students in the UAE at some point study a second language in the classroom. Classroom language teaching is thus a major source of language learning in this region. Moreover, in some cases it is the only tool of language learning through which a foreign language is taught. As noted, the role of TT in language learning is very significant, and thus research which offers a better understanding of the use of teachers' language could be of tremendous help to the language learning process. It could provide insight to facilitate the process of classroom discourse enhancing the process of teaching-learning.

TT is of great importance in language learning. However, TT can be viewed not only from a language learning perspective, but also as an unwritten prerequisite for the teacher as a leader. Providing accessible information to students is an important competency requirement for a teacher. In cases where a teacher cannot communicate effectively and comprehensibly, no other leadership skill can compensate for this lack. Using language that learners understand is essential to the effectiveness of TT.

Thus this thesis focuses its attention on 16 linguistic characteristics in TT of four teachers in the UAE while instructing second language learners. These linguistic characteristics are *rate of delivery, use of contractions, disfluencies, self-repetitions, adverbial, adjectival, and noun clauses, frequency of nouns, verbs, present tense verbs, linking and "to be" auxiliary verbs, questions including general, tag, and wh-questions, and type-token ratio*. This research investigates what linguistic characteristics teachers use in their TT when teaching intermediate level English language (EL) learners. For that

purpose, four experienced EL teachers at BC were observed, recorded, and interviewed.

The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

- 1) Which of the 16 TT characteristics selected for study do the participant teachers use in their classrooms?
- 2) To what extent do 15 of the selected TT characteristics differ in the stages of the lessons observed?
- 3) To what extent is the observed frequency of seven of the selected TT characteristics similar to/different from the language descriptions of conversational talk by Long (1980)?
- 4) What reasons do the teachers themselves identify for any linguistic adjustments they make?

### **Delimitations**

The scope of this study was an in-depth look at the TT of four BC teachers in 12 EL classes at the program's intermediate level (which makes reference to the Common European Framework Reference). Although research has identified many linguistic characteristics of TT, this study focused on only 16 linguistic characteristics. Also, this study compared descriptions of TT characteristics with characteristics of conversational talk in Long's (1980) landmark study.

## **Significance of the Research**

It is to be noted that at present there are no descriptive studies of TT linguistic characteristics and/or adjustments carried out in a Middle Eastern context. Partially, the reason for this lack lies in the reality that more emphasis is given to analysis of classroom discourse or error treatment than accurate description of teacher's linguistic input. Another reason for this lack is that TT seems to be regarded as something obvious, not warranting attention, and thus it is frequently neglected by researchers.

In accordance with this attitude there is little said about TT in the numerous textbooks on English language teaching, except for some brief descriptions of general characteristics of the amount of TT and its role and importance for listeners. For instance, Celce-Marcia's (2001) textbook on English language teaching, does not mention TT. Harmer (2007) includes a whole chapter describing the teacher, and even identifies the teacher as a "language model and provider of a comprehensible input" (p. 57), but provides no elaboration to clarify the concept of TT. In other textbooks on teaching EL (e.g., Flood et al, 2003; Ur, 1996), it seems to be assumed that a teacher should understand what modifications, simplifications, or elaborations might be used in TT and the effects these elements might have on learners.

In a global market, where English gives the user a competitive advantage, the significance of English is clear. Throughout the world, English is taught in a wide variety of situations. In many countries it first appears in the primary curriculum, though many universities in such countries continue to find that their entrants are insufficiently competent in English use. This circumstance is despite the fact, as Graddol (2006) points out, that good English is an entry requirement for much tertiary education

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), English is a compulsory subject throughout post-elementary schooling, and the many students who continue in post-secondary education in the UAE typically continue taking English classes. The linguistic environment of English as a language in the UAE, however, has certain deficiencies. For instance, due to factors in the socio-educational environment, such as teacher-centered classrooms, students are often not encouraged to speak. This state of affairs can be seen as the result of the hierarchical relationship between students and teachers in which teachers are considered as authorities and in possession of the canon of knowledge, and students are seen as pliant recipients. Despite the amount of English education in the UAE, students often end up as non-fluent speakers. Thus, a question comes to mind: Does simplification or modification of teacher input in second language classroom occur in EL classes in the UAE, and do teachers believe it to be beneficial for the learners?

The second language proficiency of listeners can affect characteristics of TT, both in terms of linguistic and conversational adjustments. With reference to linguistic adjustments research has shown that teachers will often modify their speech by speaking slowly, using pauses, changing pronunciation, and modifying vocabulary, grammar, and discourse (Richards & Lockhard, 1994). These adjustments are often regarded as useful devices for all levels of learners or as important parts of the early stages of learning which should be phased out gradually as the learner progresses. A benefit of the current investigation is that it may help promote an understanding of how different linguistic characteristics of TT are used by English language teachers in the UAE context and how they view adjustments to enhance language teaching.

## **Overview of the Chapters and Appendices**

This thesis consists of five chapters. Besides the current chapter, there are four other chapters, and a short overview of each follows:

Chapter 1: This chapter introduced the concept of TT, and discussed the rationale, the significance and purpose of the present study.

Chapter 2: This chapter presents a review of the theoretical and conceptual framework that guided the present research. It describes the role of TT in language teaching and learning, along with the different features of TT. It also discusses Long's research into characteristics of conversational talk.

Chapter 3: This chapter presents the methodology of this research, including observation and investigation of the BC teachers' talk when teaching intermediate level EL learners. The research questions, methods, instruments, data collection, and analysis are discussed.

Chapter 4: This chapter tabulates and discusses the linguistic characteristics made by the four teachers recorded in the BC when teaching intermediate level EL learners.

Chapter 5: This chapter summarizes the findings obtained from the present research. It also puts forward some implications of this research and recommendations for future research on TT.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter, first, focuses on the concept and nature of foreigner talk and its relationship with TT. Further, it discusses TT features and the importance and significance of TT in foreign language learning through investigations conducted in this field. Finally, linguistic characteristics and linguistic adjustments that have been used in classroom studies are reviewed.

### **Insights from Foreigner Talk into Teacher Talk**

Scholarly studies on TT began approximately in the early to mid-1980s. They were inspired by various findings from *caretaker speech* studies in first language development (Snow, 1972, 1994) and *foreigner talk* research in natural second language acquisition (Ferguson, 1971, 1975). TT research evolved partly because of the theory of instructed second language acquisition proposed by Krashen and Terrell (1983). They underscored the point that TT may be regarded, in a sense, as caretaker speech or foreigner talk in the second language classroom. These three speech phenomena all share similar characteristics: 1) they are motivated by the speaker's desire to communicate to the listener; 2) similar linguistic adjustments/modifications (such as slower rate, repetitions, and restatements) exist; and 3) the level of complexity of speech is attuned to the level of the listener's language proficiency. Krashen and Terrell argued, most importantly, that TT is a vital source of comprehensible input in the second language classroom.

The term *foreigner talk* was introduced by Ferguson (1968), though the

phenomenon of foreigner talk was addressed in scholarly studies before that time.

According to Ferguson, foreigner talk (FT) is one of the varieties of simplified form of speech that is used by native speakers while talking to foreigners. Ferguson (1975) identified two major types of adjustments in foreigner talk. The first are *linguistic adjustments* and the second, *conversational adjustments*. Linguistic adjustments are those modifications that appear on the level of phonology, lexicon, morphology, and syntax of utterances made by the speaker. In contrast, conversational adjustments are the modifications that are made in terms of the interaction and content of the utterance (Ferguson, 1975).

Ferguson (1975) pointed out that there are three major adjustments in FT on the level of grammar. These features include omission, expansion, and replacement. Table 1 below lists detailed examples and explanations for the grammatical features of FT, as described by Ferguson (1975).

**Table 1: Grammatical Features of FT.**

Omissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ of definite articles</li> <li>✓ of “to be” verbs</li> <li>✓ of “ing” or other grammatical items like case, person, tense, plural or possessive markers</li> <li>✓ of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions</li> </ul>
Expansions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ of extra subjects like “you” in the imperative sentences</li> </ul>
Replacements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ of complex words with synonyms of simpler origin and frequency</li> <li>✓ of negative construction with adding “no” before the negated item</li> <li>✓ of the subject pronoun with an accusative form</li> </ul>

These characteristics pointed out by Ferguson (1975) are not an end in themselves, and cannot be regarded as complete, but are quite easily identified in linguistic analysis. It is due to their ease of recognition that they have been widely utilized by other researchers. Henzl (1983) categorized the linguistic adjustments of FT according to lexicon, syntax, and phonology. In terms of lexicon adjustments, he found that when speaking to NNSs, NSs tend to adopt a slower rate of delivery, clearer enunciation, and more careful articulation. There are more stressed words, more pauses, repetitions, and hesitations between the utterances, more full forms, and fewer contractions. While observing syntax and lexicon, Henzl notes that canonical word order is generally preferred, grammatical relationships are overtly marked, usage of high frequency words is present, a lower type-token ratio exists, and idiomatic expressions are fewer in number. If we put together the results of Ferguson (1975) and Henzl (1979), the different linguistic adjustments in FT can be categorized as given in Table 2.

There have been subsequent studies (e.g., Chaudron, 1983; Griffiths, 1990) examining FT in different contexts; however, all these studies point towards the same features of the foreigner talk observed as put forth in Table 2.

Conversational adjustments indicate the functional intent of the utterance. These modifications are also important to consider, as the causal link between the utterances of FT within the communicative context cannot be indicated and interpreted in the light of linguistic adjustments alone. The conversational adjustments in FT thus include both modifications at the level of content as well as at the level of interactional structure of communication. At the level of content, conversation with NNSs generally have a narrower range of topics with fewer and shorter bits of information than conversation

with NSs (Long, 1985). At the level of interactional structure, FT is characterized by having more abrupt shifts of topic, more questions interspersed than declaratives for the purpose of topic-initiation, more repetition, more clarification, and more confirmation checks (Long, 1985).

**Table 2: Linguistic Adjustments in FT According Ferguson (1975) and Henzl (1979)**

<p>Phonology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Enunciations are careful and clearer</li> <li>✓ Rate of delivery is slower</li> <li>✓ Words are stressed more</li> <li>✓ More number of pauses between the utterances</li> <li>✓ Pitch is loud</li> </ul>
<p>Lexicon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Use of more high frequency words</li> <li>✓ Vocabulary is basic</li> <li>✓ More use of generic terms than specific terms</li> <li>✓ Complex words are paraphrased to sound simpler</li> <li>✓ More use of foreign vocabularies</li> <li>✓ Type-token ratio is low</li> </ul>
<p>Syntax:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Short sentences used</li> <li>✓ Preference for canonical word order</li> <li>✓ Simplified negation</li> <li>✓ Lack of subordinate clause</li> <li>✓ No copula, pronoun words or function words</li> <li>✓ More use of stereotyped expressions like “yeah” and “well”</li> <li>✓ Fewer idiomatic expressions</li> </ul>
<p>Morphology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Lack of inflections</li> <li>✓ Infinitive verb forms</li> <li>✓ Full forms used rather than contractions</li> </ul>

Studies conducted on FT in the classroom setting have revealed relationships among the linguistic input of non-native-English-speaking teachers, the interactional structure between the teachers and the students, and the system of second language acquisition. Studies conducted by researchers like Freed (1980), Long (1981), Ferguson (1982), and Chaudron (1983) have examined the effects of FT on the acquisition of syntactic and morphological construction by the learner. Long (1981) discovered that the frequency at which the forms occurred in the linguistic input provided to NNSs was dependent on the correct supply of the order of appearance of the forms in obligatory contexts by second language acquirers. The influence of FT on second language acquisition has been widely studied by many scholars (Wenk, 1978; Hinnenkamp, 1984; Arends, Muysken, & Smith, 1995), and there are contradicting views about it. According to studies by Ferguson (1971) and Freed (1980), FT modifications influence second language acquisition in a positive manner as they enhance the perception and comprehension process for the learner, making it easier for him/her to understand the input and making the input simpler and more orderly in arrangement facilitates second language acquisition (Ferguson, 1982).

On the other hand, Chaudron (1983) pointed out the negative impact of FT on learners' acquisition. According to him, teachers who instruct foreigners face numerous problems in the teaching process on account of conflicting demands. There is a demand for clear and coherent presentation of ideas and teaching materials. At the same time, there is also a demand for explanation which is comprehensible, even to learners with low linguistic proficiency. Therefore, Chaudron says that while addressing the demands and needs for linguistic competency, the teacher needs to be extremely careful. There can

be instances where, in order to ensure comprehension, there is ambiguous oversimplification leading to sentences that are ungrammatical, confusing, and redundant on account of over-elaboration.

Thus, there are two ways in which simplified speech can be produced. The first way is *simplification* and the second, *elaboration*. In the case of simplification, there is an attempt to make the sentences short. According to Chaudron (1983), this approach can lead to subsequent complexities on account of too much information being condensed into a short sentence. In such case the simplification can result in linguistic simplicity but might burden the cognitive aspect of understanding. In the case of elaboration, in contrast, Chaudron (1983) indicates that, one might use a complete sentence instead of a complex word, or add information to provide contextual background to certain linguistic items. In such a case, while the elaboration can lead to linguistic complexities, the units will be cognitively simpler for the learners. Therefore, when FT is being discussed as a simplified register of language, it can be simple on one level but complex on the other.

As evident from some researchers' work, for example, Long and Sato (1983), FT in some cases becomes the source of incorrect input to learners, which can be detrimental to second language acquisition. If teachers are seen to use over-simplified input in the language classroom, it can prove to be a great obstacle in the process of acquisition of communication skills that are essential for the real world. Over-simplification of input might tamper with the authenticity of the language, and authenticity forms a crucial element in real life communicative proficiency (Chaudron, 1983).

## **Teacher Talk and Its Importance**

TT plays an important role in the process of foreign language learning. It acts as a tool of delivering and implementing teaching plans and meeting teaching objectives. This relationship between TT and the process of language learning has been widely studied and established by different researchers.

### **TT and Language Acquisition**

Nunan (1991) observes that TT plays a crucial role in the classroom, not just as a tool for the organization and monitoring of the classroom but also as an inherent process of second language acquisition. The organization and the management of the classroom depend greatly on TT as it is through language that a teacher either succeeds or fails to communicate the intended messages. Nunan says that success and failure in implementation of lesson plans depend a great deal on TT. It also facilitates the acquisition of language because the teacher's input is the major source of target language exposure for most of the students.

The quality and quantity of teacher's input thus play an essential role in the success of the language learning process. Stern (1983) contends that if a foreign language is learned in a class in a non-supportive language environment, then the instructions given by the teachers are the only source of comprehensible target language input for students.

It is to be noted that, like the learner, the teacher brings with his/her language some characteristics which shape the teacher's persona in terms of attributes such as educational treatment, environmental features, personality traits, sex, or previous

education experience (Stern, 1983). Therefore, with the language that a teacher brings to TT comes a language background, experience or professional training as a linguist, theoretical presuppositions, more or less formulated language concepts, prior language teaching experience, and language learning and teaching. According to Stern (1983), these characteristics of the language teacher are reflected in the different forms of TT, which thus plays a very crucial role in the language teaching- learning process.

Similarly, Ellis (1985) points out that TT plays an important role in both language lessons and subject lessons. The type of interaction that occurs in the classroom and the kind of language used by the teacher greatly impact the success of teaching-learning outcomes. Ellis says that TT serves two important functions. Firstly, it serves as an input of the target language, and secondly, it is used for the process of interaction which facilitates understanding of the input and helps learning occur in class.

### **TT Research Approaches**

There have been different types of research conducted on TT: descriptive, correlational, experimental, and qualitative. Discussions of TT during the 1980s emphasized identification and description of the linguistics characteristics that were witnessed in TT of second language classrooms. Most of the studies that were conducted on TT until the late 1980s were descriptive in nature. For example, Wesche and Ready (1985) conducted a study on classroom discourse in the University of Ottawa. In this study, comparisons were drawn between the class lectures that were presented in English and French to first language speakers and class lectures presented to second language speakers. They observed that whether the lectures were given in English or French, the

classes that were composed of first language speakers and the classes that were composed of the second language speakers varied considerably. The variations were observed in the following five areas: a) rate of speech, b) pauses and their duration, c) frequency of the tensed verbs, d) number of self-repetition, and imperative statements, and e) amount of non-verbal information used.

Wesche and Ready (1985) noticed that the lectures given to second language speakers had longer durations of pauses with more frequency, and the enunciation was also found to be clearer. There were more tensed verbs, and the auxiliaries and infinitives were few. Significantly, more imperatives (i.e., “Imagine that...” and “Suppose that...”) were used, and there was evidence of self-repetition (the use of redundant language forms and semantic content). Also, the use of hand gestures with contextual support was found to be more frequent (Wesche & Ready, 1985).

By the end of the 1980s, TT studies began to implement more quantitative research methods which were based on statistical analysis. Out of all these quantitative research methods, one method that was much in vogue was the correlational studies method (Matsumoto, 2006). As the name implies, correlational studies are based on the examination of correlational relations among the different variables (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Such examination helps the researcher in making predictions. If a strong correlation exists between the variables, then the likelihood of the presence of certain variables can be predicted. However, correlational studies are not designed to establish a causal relationship between the variables. According to Mackey and Gass (2005), the advent of such a form of study is a clear indication of the evolution of TT research.

A study conducted by Tollefson (1988) is an example of a correlational study. He

explored the intensity of associations between the types of questions that are asked by teachers and the response patterns exhibited by students in ESL/EFL classes. In his study, the questions asked by the teachers could be divided into two types: (a) display questions, i.e., questions that assess the target knowledge and skills of the students, and (b) referential questions, i.e., questions that aim to draw some real information from the students not pertaining to the target topic as such. The study indicated that referential questions served to trigger the creative stimulus of the students, thereby bringing in more interaction between the teachers and the students. However, display questions tended to stimulate imitative responses from the students which did not usually lead to more interactions between the students and teachers. According to Tollefson (1988), the inclusion of referential questions is important in TT as it promotes communicative learning in the classroom, making the session more interactive as well as more interesting.

It is certainly true that correlational studies can help predict the likelihood of the presence of one variable by another. However, a strong correlation/association does not necessarily signify that a causal relationship can be established between the two variables. One example often cited to show this is the correlation between the amount of cola consumption and crime rate. When it gets hot, more people may be likely to purchase cola. As the temperature goes up, crime rate may also increase. Consequently, these two factors tend to be associated to each other to some extent. This association does not denote at all, however, that the consumption of cola causes crimes. In contrast, experimental studies are capable of examining/establishing causal relationships between/among variables. Nonetheless, in the early 1980s, they were relatively rare in

teacher talk research. Gradually, more experimental teacher talk studies emerged in second language acquisition journals and publications in the late 1980s. Through the 1990s, they became more widespread and flourished. Finally, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, they became a well-established mainstream research method for teacher talk studies.

Griffiths (1990) examined the effects of the different speech rates in TT on the listening comprehension of students. The study examined elementary school teachers who were to present three different passages at different rates of delivery. The comprehension of the students in each case was measured with a comprehension test. It was found that if the speech rate was moderately fast, around 200 wpm, the comprehension of the students was less than at the average speech rate of 150 wpm and slow speech rate of 100 wpm. Griffiths also found that comprehension did not vary to a great degree between the lessons read at a slow speech rate and an average speech rate. The concept of “critical speech rate” (p. 320), which indicated the level of speech rate above which the comprehension begins to decline significantly, was propounded by the study.

Sueyoshi and Hardison (2005) examined the impact of the usage of gestures and facial clues on listening comprehension. Some other experimental studies that are noteworthy in TT are those of Derwing (1996) and Matsumoto (1998). According to Derwing (1996), there are three types of elaborations that are used in TT. The first one is marked paraphrasing, the second one is unmarked paraphrasing, and the third one is unnecessary details. All these elaborations proved to have significant effects on the listening comprehension of NNSs. Derwing’s research found that unnecessary details do

not necessarily obstruct the listening comprehension of NNS students.

Matsumoto (1998) conducted an experimental study on the investigation on TT in a Japanese-as-a-second language classroom. The study examined the impact of global linguistic adjustment, a series of contextual pictures, and the usage of students' first language (English) for explaining new grammar rules, on the listening comprehension of American university students studying Japanese. The research indicated that the global linguistic adjustments and L1 usage for explaining the rules of grammar had a positive impact on the listening comprehension of the students.

Over the years, TT studies have undergone many innovations and evolutions. In the early 2000s, TT studies entered a new zone of thought. Studies on the subject began to explore the affective domain of NS and NNS during classroom discourse. Affective factors like perceptions, feelings, and attitudes which are experienced by students when they are addressed using different types of TT were examined by these types of studies. These affective factors are considered to be learner variables or individual learner factors or the causes for differences in individuals (Matsumoto, 2006). The affective domain is wide and includes many other features apart from perceptions, feelings and attitudes. These factors are (a) encouragement and confidence, (b) traits of personality (like sensitivity to rejection, patience of ambiguity, introversion/extroversion, self-esteem and empathy/compassion), (c) style of learning ( field dependence/independence, kinaesthetic, visual/auditory), (d) aptitude and skills, (e), age and (f) experience with language learning in the past (Matsumoto, 2006). The perception, attitudes, and feelings of students are considered to impact the process of language learning in a considerable way. These affective factors are studied widely, not only quantitatively, i.e., by using

experimental and correlative research methods, but also qualitatively, i.e., by using observational techniques, conducting interviews, and surveys.

Other scholars like Kawaguchi (2007) and Kozaki (2008) also conducted qualitative studies where they examined the perceptions and attitudes of students towards the use of various rates of speech and non-verbal or visual information by Japanese as second language teachers. The findings of both researchers indicated that many of students did not exhibit negative perceptions about the fast speech rates. It was also found that in the case of fast speech rates, the students began to work on learning strategies like asking questions of the teacher or paying more heed to non-verbal aspects like gestures, facial expressions, and pictures.

The number of qualitative studies conducted on affective factors in TT is much lower (Matsumoto, 2006).

The findings of the research conducted by Carpenter, Jeon, MacGregor, and Mackey (2006) show that the students exhibited accuracy in their perceptions about the phonological, lexical, and semantic levels of error correction feedback, although morpho-syntactic recasts were less accurately identified by students than phonological and lexical recasts. It was also found that the difference between problematic utterances made by students and the teacher's recast helped in the students' interpretation of the recast in TT. These researchers suggested that, in the absence of such a difference, the recast might have been perceived by the students as a semantic repetition of the student's utterance by the teacher, without recognizing it as corrective feedback.

## **Teacher Talk Features and Linguistic Adjustments**

TT has many features which have been deeply studied. According to some scholars, such as Walsh (2002), TT acts as a simplified code with two main features. These features are categorised as formal features and functional features (Xuewen, 2006). The first feature refers to the form of TT which includes the rate, speed, pause, repetition, and the related modifications of the TT. Functional features refer to the language used by the teacher for the organization and management of the classroom, including the quantity and quality of the TT, the questions that are used by the teachers, the interactional modifications and adjustments, and the teachers' feedback. There have been many studies on the influence of the amount of TT on the successful acquisition of language. Some researchers have agreed that TT comprises about 70% of the classroom talk (Chaudron, 1988; Cook, 2000). According to many researchers (Allwright, 1982; Harmer, 2000; van Lier, 2001), the classroom where student talk time is maximized is beneficial, and more successful.

The questions posed by teachers in TT have attracted a great deal of attention from scholars. According to Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeisener, and Long (2003), the questions posed by the teachers serve as a principal way in which the teachers control the classroom. They also serve as a diagnostic tool of assessment, as they help the teacher to get a glimpse of the students' learning of the subject under consideration. Questions also serve as an instructional tool (Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeisener, & Long, 2003). They help the students learn and integrate the new material with the old. The questions thus serve to review the old concepts and integrate them with the new concepts to be learned. Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeisener, and Long (2003) explain that questioning also serves

a motivational purpose. It helps the students engage in lesson learning by posing a challenge and a problem which demands their consideration. It captures the students' attention on the topic and steers the lesson learning with a sharp focus. Questions also encourage active participation by the students and bring about student involvement.

Long and Sato (1983) have made a further distinction in the questions asked by teachers. According to them the questions can be categorized as “display” questions and “referential” questions, a categorization investigated in the correlational study by Tollefson (1988). Display questions, they explain, are those questions which the teachers know the answer to, like “What comes after alphabet B?” (p. 272), while referential questions are those that the teachers do not know the answers to, like “Why don't you work hard?”(p. 272).

Classroom-centered research has given considerable focus to TT by examining the verbal behavior of teachers in the classroom. This emphasis includes investigation of different aspects of the linguistic input which is given by the teacher during the classroom discourse, including phonology, lexis, syntax, discourse, amount of TT, and the relationship between the interaction of students and teacher. Different phenomena related to TT have been studied by scholars like Gaies (1977), Henzl (1979), Long (1983), and Long and Sato (1983). They have drawn comparisons between the language that teachers use in and out of language classroom (Ellis, 1985). The findings of Gaies (1977), Henzl (1979), Long and Sato (1983) can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Adjustments occur at all language levels in and out of the classroom.
- 2) Adjustments are made in pronunciation, in lexis, and in grammar.

- 3) Ungrammatical speech modifications should not occur in teacher language in class (because TT should be the model for students to imitate).
- 4) Interactional adjustments occur.
- 5) Activities in class are for learning, so language in these activities often lacks real communicative information. (Ellis, (1985, p.145)

Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) observe that TT can be categorized on the basis of phonological, syntactical, and semantic aspects. In the syntactical category the length of utterance when dealing with children was found to be shorter. In the area of phonology, they observed that while teachers are dealing with children, intonation is more exaggerated, and the pitch range used is wide and high. Also, the articulation is clear, the speech rate is slower, and there are more pauses between the utterances. In the domain of semantics, they found that the vocabulary is more restricted and basic, the teachers are very careful, and the words used match with the level and proficiency of the students. Moreover, difficult and new words are avoided.

According to Chaudron (1985), TT in language classrooms tends to show the following modifications:

- 1) The rate of speech seems to be slow.
- 2) Pauses, which can be evidence of the speaker planning more carefully, are frequent and long.
- 3) Pronunciation is found to be close to exaggeration. It also appears simplified.
- 4) The vocabulary used is generally found to be basic.
- 5) Degree of subordination is low.
- 6) Declaratives and statements are used more often than questions.

7) Teachers self-repeat frequently (p. 220)

In China, Xuewen (2006) observed teachers' behavior in college English classrooms and arrived at the following conclusions, which are similar to Chaudron's (1985):

- 1) The speed of TT speed is obviously slower than the rate of natural talk.
- 2) Frequent and long pauses occur between utterances.
- 3) Pronunciation tends to be clear, exaggerated, and high pitched, and employs a wide pitch range.
- 4) Frequent stress is used, and speech rhythm is obvious and clear. Contracted forms are not frequently used. For example, teachers use "he will" instead of "he'll."
- 5) Basic high frequency words are often used.
- 6) Unmarked words and structures are used; there is little subordination. Frequent statements and imperatives are used.
- 7) There is evidence of self-repetition.

The study conducted by Long (1983) is a highly significant and influential study on linguistic adjustments to NNSs. His findings shed light on the aspects of linguistics adjustments that can also be found in other studies conducted by researchers like Ferguson (1971), Henzl (1979), Kelch (1985), and Xuewen (2006). All of these studies looked at these same linguistic adjustments, as summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3: Linguistic Adjustments According to Ferguson (1971), Henzl (1979), Long (1983), Kelch (1985), Xuewen (2006)**

Phonology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rate of delivery is slower</li> <li>2. More use of stress and pauses</li> <li>3. Articulate deliberate and more careful</li> <li>4. Extra stress on nouns</li> <li>5. Wider pitch range/exaggerated intonation</li> <li>6. More use of full forms/avoidance of contractions</li> <li>7. Release final stops</li> </ol>
Syntax	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Utterances are more well-formed/the disfluencies are fewer</li> <li>2. Shorter utterances with fewer words per utterance</li> <li>3. Less complex utterance with the fewer adjectival, adverbial and noun clauses, fewer relative clauses and appositives</li> <li>4. Use of canonical word order</li> <li>5. More retention of optional constituents</li> <li>6. More overt marking of grammatical relations</li> <li>7. More verbal marked for present/fewer for non-present temporal reference</li> <li>8. More questions</li> <li>9. More yes-no and intonation questions/fewer wh-questions</li> <li>10. New information at the end of the sentence</li> <li>11. Repetition or restatement (the NS repeats or reformulates the NNS's utterances)</li> </ol>
Semantics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More overt marking of semantic relations</li> <li>2. Higher average lexical frequency of nouns and verbs</li> <li>3. Higher proportion of linking verbs to total verbs</li> <li>4. Lower type-token ratio</li> <li>5. Fewer idiomatic expressions</li> <li>6. Greater preference for full noun phrase over pronouns</li> <li>7. Marked use of lexical items</li> <li>8. Use of concrete verbs over dummy verbs, like <i>do</i></li> </ol>

### Long's Study

Although the above mentioned survey of literature on TT and its features has included an account of many studies on TT, there is much less data available on TT to NNSs. Also, most of the studies lacked statistical descriptions of TT characteristics and almost none have provided data suitable for comparison. One focus of the current study was to compare linguistic characteristics of the TT of four English teachers in the UAE

with an earlier study on linguistic adjustments in conversational talk, and Long's (1980) study was chosen for comparison.

Long's (1980) study provided a thorough statistical description of linguistics adjustments in specific areas by NS in conversational talk with NNS. Long, for the first time, differentiated between adjustments that occur in NS-NNS speech and the adjustments that occur in NS-NS interaction. Specifically, his study described and quantified various features of the conversational interaction between NS of English and NNS students of English as a second language. It also attempted to determine whether a relationship exists between these conversational features and various characteristics of the speech addressed to second language learners, the input data for SLA. In other words, Long's study sought to establish relationships between process and product, and among input, interaction, and acquisition. The participants for Long's study consisted of 57 NS and 19 NNS. To contrast NS-NS conversational talk with NS-NNS conversational talk, Long (1980) had 19 NS-NS pairs and 19 NS-NNS pairs perform the same conversational tasks. The tasks were the same in both conditions and were carried out in the predetermined order. The tasks presented to the participants are as follows:

Task1: Spontaneous conversation (Spend 3 minutes getting to know your partner and letting him or her get to know you).

Task 2: Vicarious narrative (Describe 2 movies you have seen and liked – one movie (3 minutes) for each person).

Task 3: Instructions for the tasks.

Task 4: Play the first game ("Odd Man Out").

Task 5: Play the second game (“Spot the Differences”).

Task 6: Discussion of the research (Discuss with your partner your and his or her ideas as to what their research is about (3 minutes)).

These six tasks were of slightly different duration, as the instructions for tasks 3 and 4 were combined.

It was found that the NSs generally used shorter utterances while addressing NNSs. It was also found that NS speech to NNS, in comparison to when they would interact with other NS, contained the following features:

- a greater orientation towards the “here and now”
- more questions than the imperatives or statements used
- more WH questions
- more clarification requests
- more comprehension checks
- more confirmation checks
- more expansion
- more self- repetition
- more other repetitions

### **Summary**

Compared with the amount of work on other aspects of second language learning, there has been relatively little research on TT features, linguistic modifications and adjustments, and reasons for such adjustments. Studies of TT to NNS by Chaudron

(1985), Long (1980, 1983), Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991), Long and Sato (1983) found a linguistically simpler variety of the language being employed. In some cases TT to NNSs includes ungrammatical speech, shorter sentences, a prevalence of questions, or a slow rate of speech. In others, almost all TT is well formed, extensive, and lexically dense. It is challenging to determine which factors are related to the modifications teachers make in their TT, but it appears likely to be a combination of speaker, listener (listener's level), task, and setting variables, more than a single characteristic of the interaction.

Although research regarding teacher-student interaction is abundant, when it comes to an ESL context in the UAE, the research is sparse, as Middle Eastern researchers have just started to show interest in this particular aspect of English language teaching. Most of the studies on TT adjustments are qualitative inquiries which fail to provide a more detailed and descriptive picture of linguistic characteristics of TT in English language classrooms. With regards to contextual issues which shape teacher-student talk, most of the studies stop at a theoretical level, and there is very limited empirical evidence. Thus this thesis seeks to add more substantial evidence to the literature currently available, describing in depth the linguistic characteristics in the TT of four English language teachers in the UAE and the reasons they give for their linguistic adjustments.

## CHAPETR 3: METHODOLOGY

This study compared linguistic characteristics of TT of four BC teachers with Long's (1980) characteristics of conversational talk and identified these teachers' views of their linguistic adjustments. To investigate these issues, the following research questions were addressed:

- 1) Which of the 16 TT characteristics selected for study do the participant teachers use in their classrooms?
- 2) To what extent do 15 of the selected TT characteristics differ in the stages of the lessons observed?
- 3) To what extent is the observed frequency of seven of the selected TT characteristics similar to/different from the language descriptions of conversational talk by Long (1980)?
- 4) What reasons do the teachers themselves identify for any linguistic adjustments they make?

### **Design of the Study**

In this study, qualitative methods and descriptive statistics were chosen for data collection in order to most effectively document and analyze the characteristics of TT. In order to collect descriptive data on TT characteristics, recordings of speaking turns by teachers in 12 lessons were transcribed and analyzed. In addition, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews in which the participants had the opportunity

to express their views in detail about the adjustments and modifications they used when instructing students in the classrooms the researcher recorded.

### **Data Collection**

The director of the BC was informed about the plan of the whole study before I started the data collection procedure, and I obtained official approval to conduct observations and interviews. The two main methods of data collection that were employed in this study were digitally recorded teacher talk in 12 lessons in four BC classrooms and digitally recorded post-observation interviews.

### **Recordings of the Lessons**

I piloted observations with each of the four teachers observed in order to ensure the quality of digital recordings and adjust the recording device according to the pitch of each teacher's voice. Once the piloting was completed, each teacher was digitally recorded on three different days within a nine-week span during the autumn of 2011. Recordings of these 12 lessons represent the verbal behavior of four BC teachers providing instruction in the General English course. All teachers were teaching their regular classes at the intermediate level (a level which the BC says makes reference to the CEFR). Class sizes ranged from 10 to 13 students from different language backgrounds. Most students had been in the region more than a year. The classes were mixed in age, ability, and previous education experience. The teachers were asked not to plan unusual lessons for the observed lessons. Rather, it was explained that the focus of the research was on authentic TT in the context of their typical instruction. A letter of explanation was

given to the students explaining the researcher's presence in the classroom and assuring student safety and anonymity. Each digital recording ranged in length from 45 to 50 minutes, which equals the length of one classroom period of time instruction at BC. Every teacher was recorded three times. I was only permitted to observe either the first or the second part of two-session lessons, with a break between sessions, and so some stages were minimally present or omitted. Thus, the total time of digitally recorded material for each teacher constituted 2 hours and 30 minutes, or three class sessions.

The observations made during the classroom discourse were followed by 30-minute, semi-structured individual interviews. This was done in order to elicit data that would identify the reasons (if any) for linguistic modifications that the ESL teachers employed in their classes.

## **Interviews**

A digital voice recorder was used to record the four post-observational interviews. The data were downloaded to a computer after each interview. I assigned a login password to the computer storing the data to ensure the confidentiality of the interview information. The records were transcribed and kept in a digital data file format. Identification information of all the participants was removed at the time of the transcriptions. Pseudonyms were assigned to teachers who, to protect their confidentiality.

Before the initial interview, I prepared a list of potential questions (see Appendix A) considering issues mentioned in TT literature, the purpose of the study, and other questions based on the respondents' TT linguistic characteristics. The list of questions

was revised as data collection progressed, depending on emerging themes from earlier phases of data collection, to create a better flow of conversation.

### The Participants

The participants in this case study were four teachers of EL classes at what was described as the intermediate level. These teachers who volunteered to participate in the study are from a program offering language classes. Table 4 gives demographic information about the participants.

**Table 4: Demographic Information about Teachers**

Teachers	Nationalities (NNS/NS)	Gender	Years of EL Experience in Teaching	ELT credentials
Teacher 1	British (NS)	Male	13	CELTA*, MA TESOL**, DELTA***
Teacher 2	British (NS)	Female	20	CELTA
Teacher 3	Syrian (NNS)	Female	3	DELTA, CELTA
Teacher 4	British (NS)	Female	15	CELTA, Trinity diploma, MA TESOL

\*CELTA -- Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults

\*\*MA TESOL – Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

\*\*\*DELTA -- Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults

Three teachers were native speakers, and one was a non-native speaker of English; there were three females, and one male. The teachers' length of teaching experience ranged from 3 to 20 years. All participating teachers conduct classes at various levels. The intermediate level was chosen as appropriate for the current study, because it was expected that the amount of TT during the classroom discourse would

allow me to observe the entire range of adjustments and modifications made by the teacher. In all of the consultations and visits to the teachers' workplace to gather introductory data, it was found that the teachers were remarkably amenable to allowing a researcher into their classrooms. The participating teachers were accommodating and appeared comfortable with themselves as teachers and interested in the study and its potential for improving their teaching.

### **Development of Instruments**

The interview was divided into two sections. The first section was intended to gather personal data and general information about the participants. In this section, each participant gave information about his/her gender, teaching experience, place of teaching experience, and degrees. In addition, each participant was asked whether he/she was a native or non-native speaker of English. The second section of the interview was comprised of seven questions to investigate the teachers' attitudes about TT in general, the role of linguistic adjustments, and their incorporation in their teaching practices.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were obtained through lesson recordings and interviews. Descriptive data collected from recordings of the lessons were analyzed to find out the frequencies and percentages of 16 linguistic characteristics. Qualitative data were collected through interviews and were used to support and clarify the descriptive data. Data analysis and findings are discussed and illustrated with tables in the next chapter.

As a result of the initial pilot observation, it was decided to employ Ho's (2006)

“three-stage sequence” model. Ho’s three stages are 1) introduction/ warm up, recall of the knowledge, 2) instruction/PPP cycle, and 3) conclusion/cool down. It was important to discover these stages in the lessons in order to map the structure, content, and manner of classroom talk of the teachers in this study. The three stages common to all observed lessons varied in time. The time for Stage 1 was very short, from 5 to 10 minutes, including basic greetings, roll-call, or eliciting/reviewing information and previous knowledge. Moreover, Stage 1 was minimally present in some of the observations, since I was assigned to observe only particular lessons, and it could be the second half of a two-hour class. Stage 2 consisted of the teacher giving instructions for an activity, checking understanding, encouraging students, and correcting errors. Stage 2 lasted from 35 to 45 minutes. Stage 3 contained setting homework assignments and deadlines or ending the lesson, and lasted from 5 to 10 minutes. Similarly, due to the above-mentioned reasons, Stage 3 was minimally present or absent in some of the recorded classes which were the first half of the lesson. In order to define stages, the researcher was guided by key phrases that served as a signal of switching from one stage to another. The phrases “I’d like you to get into pairs for this activity, Can you 4 team up?” said by a teacher, served as a signal for identifying Stage 2 where the teacher gave instructions for an activity. Other examples are, “This is your homework for tomorrow,” “Don’t forget your homework,” “Have you finished yet?” and “Are you done?” which indicated the switch for Stage 3, where the teacher was ending the class. The transcripts of the observed lessons provided an account of the lessons in three stages, from introduction to conclusion.

The digital recordings of the lessons were micro-analyzed utterance by utterance.

In order to do so, I followed the definition of “utterance” as propounded by Crookes (1990):

A complete thought usually expressed in a connected grouping of words, which is separated from the other utterances on the basis of content, intonation contour and/ or pausing. 1) Content. A change in content is used as one criterion for segmenting utterances... 2) Intonation Contour. A falling intonation contour signals the end of an utterance. A rising intonation signals the end of an utterance if it is a question... 3) Pauses. Pauses are used in conjunction with the above two criteria to segment utterances (p.188).

The following rules were used to facilitate consistent transcription of the audio-recorded speech samples, as described by Hubbard (1998, pp. 248).

1. Each lesson is transcribed as a single unit.
2. In many cases, it is impossible to identify sentence units in the speech. In these cases, the transcriber has the responsibility of denoting sentence units in such fashion as to make the material most intelligible to the reader. Once the transcriber has identified a unit of meaning as a sentence, other punctuation contained within the sentence (commas, quotation marks, etc.) is made in accordance with standard rules of punctuation.
3. All numbers written out in full as "a hundred and twenty".
4. When two words are contracted and uttered as one as in "gonna" for "going to," they are transcribed as one word.
5. Contractions of the subject and predicate like "it's" and "you're" are counted as two words.

6. Contractions of the verb and the negative like "can't" are counted as one word.
7. Each part of a verbal combination is counted as a separate word. Example:  
"have been playing" would be counted as three words.
8. Each of the following is to be counted as one word: oh boy, my gosh, darn it, doggone it, all right, maybe, giddy-up, someone, lighthouse, birdhouse, high school, ain't.
9. Each of the following is to be counted as two words: oh yes, oh no, oh gee, let's see, on to, Christmas tree, kinda, oughta, hafta.

The process of measuring the specific TT characteristics by Long (1980) included their identification with subsequent counting of their number. All data were scrutinized closely to work with the following 16 linguistic characteristics: *disfluencies*, *self-repetitions*, *contractions*, *rate of delivery*, *three types of relative clauses*, *questions*, *yes-no*, *tag*, *wh-questions*, *type-token ratio*, *nouns and verbs*, *present tense verbs*, and *linking and "to be" auxiliary verbs*. How these characteristics were measured is set out in the following paragraphs:

*Disfluencies*: Disfluencies identified in the subjects' speech samples were classified according to the Williams, Silverman, and Kools (1968) scheme:

Interjections of sounds, syllables, words, or phrases. This category included extraneous sounds such as "uh, "er," and "hmmm" and extraneous words such as "well", which were distinct from sounds and words associated with the fluent text or with phenomena included in other categories. An instance of interjection included one or more units of repetition of the interjected

material; for example, "uh" and "uh uh uh" were each counted as one instance of interjection. (p.150)

*Self-repetitions:* Self-repetitions of whole words, including words of one syllable, were counted in this category. A word repeated for emphasis, as in "very, very clean", was counted as a self-repetition. Repetitions of two or more words were also included in this category. However, a part-word repetition, or an interjection, nullified a word repetition. Self-repetitions were counted out of total sentences.

*Contractions:* A contraction was considered a shortened version of the written and spoken forms of a word, syllable, or word group, created by omission of internal sounds. Proportion of contractions was counted out of total number of words.

*Rate of delivery:* The rate of delivery referred to the number of words spoken per minute (60 seconds). The total number of words produced in a given speech sample (one minute per stage) was divided by the amount of total time required to produce the speech sample, including pause time. This number was then multiplied by 60 to give a rate expressed per 60 seconds (1 minute).

*Adjectival, adverbial, and noun clauses:* An *adverb clause* was considered a dependent clause which took the place of an adverb in another clause or phrase. An adverb clause answered questions such as "when?" "where?" "why?" "with what goal/result?" and "under what conditions?" An *adjective clause* was a dependent clause which took the place of an adjective in another clause or phrase. A *noun clause* was an entire clause which took the place of a noun in another clause or phrase. Proportions of subordinate clauses were calculated out of total number of sentences.

*Questions:* A *question* was considered an expression of inquiry that invited or

called for a reply. *Wh question* was considered a question in English to which an appropriate answer was to give information, typically introduced by the words *who, which, what, where, when, why, or how*. *Yes/no question* was a question whose expected answer was either "yes" or "no." *Tag question* was a grammatical structure in which a declarative statement or an imperative was turned into a question by adding an interrogative fragment. Proportions of *wh, yes-no, and tag* questions to total number of questions were calculated.

*Type-token ratio:* Type-token ratio (or lexical density) was understood as a measure of vocabulary variation within a written text or a person's speech. Type-token ratio (TTR) was the total number of different words divided by the number of total words. A high TTR indicated a large amount of lexical variation and a low TTR indicated relatively little lexical variation.

*Verbs, nouns, and linking and "to be" auxiliary verbs:* These proportions were calculated by counting the total amount of verbs, nouns, linking and "to be" auxiliary verbs, respectively, out of total number of words.

*Present tense verbs:* This proportion was calculated by counting present tense verbs out of total number of verbs.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents analysis and discussion of the findings of the study. The results of the study are based on micro-analysis of transcriptions of 12 lessons of 4 BC teachers, and post-observation, digitally recorded and transcribed, semi-structured interviews. The study's results are divided into four sections, addressing the research questions in the following order:

- 1) Which of the 16 TT characteristics selected for study do the participant teachers use in their classrooms?
- 2) To what extent do 15 of the selected TT characteristics differ in the stages of the lessons observed?
- 3) To what extent is the observed frequency of seven of the selected TT characteristics similar to/different from the language descriptions of conversational talk by Long (1980)?
- 4) What reasons do the teachers themselves identify for any linguistic adjustments they make?

### **Results and Analysis for Question 1: “Which of the 16 selected TT characteristics do the participant teachers use in their classrooms?”**

Once the transcripts were divided into utterances, each of the utterances was closely scrutinized for the proportion of occurrence of the following 16 linguistic characteristics:

1. Rate of delivery
2. Use of contractions

3. Disfluencies
4. Noun clauses
5. Adjectival clauses
6. Adverbial clauses
7. Present tense verbs
8. Questions
9. Yes-no questions
10. Tag questions
11. Wh-questions
12. Repetitions
13. TTR
14. Nouns
15. Verbs
16. Linking and “to be” auxiliary verbs

In terms of these 16 characteristics listed in Chapter 3, the teachers varied in their TT. In the analysis below I note patterns of similarities and differences among the teachers.

All four teachers shared some common characteristics in the frequency of their input to their students, such as similar frequency of nouns (from 9.97% to 12.96%) and verbs (16.48% to 19.23%). Frequencies of the remaining linguistic characteristics differed from teacher to teacher as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Linguistic Characteristics of BC Teachers' Talk**

Linguistic characteristics	Teachers			
	T1(NS)	T2(NS)	T3(NNS)	T4(NS)
<b>Frequency of Verbs.</b> Vs/Words (%)	1,817/9,447 (19.23%)	1,744/10,570 (16.48%)	1,568/8,265 (18.97%)	1,807/9,601 (18.82%)
<b>Frequency of Nouns.</b> Ns/Words (%)	964/9,447 (10.20%)	1,054/10,570 (9.97%)	929/8,265 (11.24%)	1,245/9,601 12.96%
<b>Frequency of Present Tense Verbs.</b> PTV/Verbs (%)	1,262/1,817 (69.45%)	1,463/1,568 (93.30%)	1,414/1,744 (81.07%)	1,651/1,807 (94.55%)
<b>Frequency of Linking Verbs.</b> LV/Verbs (%)	437/1,817 (24.05%)	379/1,744 (21.73%)	205/1,568 (13.07%)	437/1,746 (25.02%)
<b>Frequency of Adjectival Clauses.</b> Adj CI/Sent-s (%)	13/1,112 (1.16%)	38/867 (4.38%)	15/798 (1.87%)	21/1,043 (2.01%)
<b>Frequency of Adverbial Clauses.</b> Adj CI/Sent-s (%)	48/1,112 (4.31%)	81/867 (9.34%)	35/798 (4.38%)	56/1,043 (5.36%)
<b>Frequency of Noun Clauses.</b> Noun CI/Sent-s (%)	31/1,112 (2.78%)	34/867 (3.92%)	26/798 (3.25%)	17/1,043 (1.62%)
<b>Frequency of Questions</b> Questions/Sent-s (%)	318/1,112 (28.59%)	281/867 (32.41%)	324/798 (40.60%)	193/1,043 (18.50%)
<b>Frequency of General Questions.</b> GQ/Sent-s (%)	173/318 (54.40%)	152/281 (54.09%)	227/324 (70.06%)	88/193 (45.60%)
<b>Frequency of Tag Questions.</b> Tag Q/Q-s (%)	13/318 (4.09%)	38/281 (13.52%)	15/324 (4.63%)	23/193 (11.92%)
<b>Frequency of Wh-questions.</b> Wh Q/Q-s (%)	132/318 (41.5%)	91/281 (32.38%)	97/324 (29.94%)	82/193 (42.49%)
<b>Proportion of Self-Repetitions.</b> Rep-s/Sent-s (%)	45/1,112 (4.05%)	72/867 (8.30%)	42/798 (5.26%)	61/1,043 (5.85%)
<b>Contractions.</b> Cont-s/Words (%)	513/9,447 (5.43%)	540/10,570 (5.10%)	322/8,265 (3.89%)	583/9,601 (6.07%)
<b>Disfluencies.</b> Dis/Words (%)	758/9,447 (8.02%)	694/10,570 (6.56%)	537/8,265 (6.49%)	358/9,601 (3.73%)
<b>Rate of Speech.</b> Words/9min (Average for Three classes)	1,344/9 (149.33wm)	1,469/9 (163.22wm)	1,324/9 (145wm)	1,290/9 (143.33wm)
<b>TTR.</b> Overall Density/Sampled Density	14.95%/59.83%	15.79%/72.38%	12.64%/67.80%	15.84%/74.53%

Three of the teachers used almost the same proportions of the following linguistic characteristics (as shown in Table 5):

- 1) linking and “to be” auxiliary verbs to total verbs number ranged from 21.73% to 25.02%, (T1, T2, T4)
- 2) adjectival subordinate clauses ranged from 1.16% up to 2.01%
- 3) adverbial subordinate clauses ranged from 4.31% to 5.36%
- 4) noun subordinate clauses ranged from 2.78% to 3.25% (T1, T3, T4)
- 5) self-repetitions ranged from 4.05% to 5.85% ( T1, T3, T4)
- 6) contractions ranged from 5.10% to 6.07% (T1, T2, T4)
- 7) rate of speech ranged from 143.33 to 149.33 wpm (T1, T3, T4)

Looking at what similarities or differences in frequencies of linguistic characteristics teachers have between each other, a two-by-two split pattern was recognized. Two groups of the teachers used a similar amount of general and tag questions (T1 and T3 low, T2 and T4 high). Also, Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 used more verbs and nouns than T2 and T4.

There were some features particular to each teacher. For example, Teacher 2 used more adjectival and adverbial clauses than the others, and more repetitions, having the fastest speech rate. Teacher 3 used more general questions, and the least amount of least contractions. Teacher 1 used the most disfluencies.

### **Analysis of Teacher 1 Teacher Talk**

Teacher 1 (T1) was found to be faster in his speech than the other teachers. His sentences were short, but the rate of delivery was maintained at a rate of 149.33wpm

from the beginning. He used some contractions (5.43%) in his speech, but he did not use them as much as T3 (6.07%). Teacher 1 showed the highest proportion of verbs (19.23%). What most distinguished the TT of Teacher 1 was the use of disfluencies – 8.02%.

### **Analysis of Teacher 2 Teacher Talk**

Teacher 2 (T2) used more expressions like “yeah” and tended to self-repeat (8.30%) more than the other teachers in their lessons. She used “OK” for much of the questioning. Her speech was also more marked with pauses than that of the other teachers. She used even more pauses in her speech in the second stage of the lesson. The following is an example (student name replaced by SN):

T2: Yeah yeah..on the sea...yeah yeah yeah, thank you SN. No, no, no, it could be experienced teacher, experienced, doctor, experienced drinker, - anything.

“Rower” is someone who rows, yeah... again the verb is “r-o-w”, OK?

Teacher 2 used more adjectival (4.38%), adverbial (9.34%), and noun (5.07%) clauses than the other teachers. Also, Teacher 2 used the most tag questions (13.52%). It was noticed that her TTR was the highest among other teachers – 15.79% - which means her diversity of words used was greater than that of the others. However, the lowest frequency of nouns for all the teachers all nouns was found in her TT (9.97%).

### **Analysis of Teacher 3 Teacher Talk**

The TT of Teacher 3 (T3) was marked with the use of “OK” with imperatives and in questioning. Linking and “to be” auxiliary verbs were omitted in some instances. She

demonstrated the least frequency of linking and “to be” auxiliary verbs (13.07%). The following is an example of a missing auxiliary and use of “OK”:

T 3: OK, Let’s start as usual. We missing the chair. SN, you can come and bring the chair with you. OK, the observer is not gonna come and watch today, remember yesterday, we had the student from AUS, she is not gonna watch, because she is recording me, so everything I say she is listening to from here. OK? So I have to be nice to you. All right. I have SN from this group, aaand SN. SN, can you sit here... All right, one two, three...go...

The least frequent use of verbs (16.48%) was noticed in the TT of Teacher 3. Nevertheless, Teacher 3 used the most general questions (70.06%), but the least wh-questions (29.94%).

#### **Analysis of Teacher 4 Teacher Talk**

The TT of Teacher 4 (T4) was marked with numerous self-repetitions (5.85%) and paraphrasing. Tag questions were also frequently used for questioning (11.92%). Her pauses between utterances were longer than those of the other teachers. The following is an example of her self-repetition, paraphrasing, tag question, and pauses:

T 4: SN. OK, SN..aha...SN...”g” yes...Did you say, isn’t it? That was perfect!!!  
That was amazing! That was amazing!! That was absolutely brilliant!!! Very few students use auxiliary verbs like that... that was

Distinguished by the highest percentage of linguistic characteristics used among the teachers, Teacher 4 used the most nouns (12.96%), present tense verbs (94.55%), linking and “to be” auxiliary verbs (25.02%), and wh-questions (42.49%). The lowest rates

among all teachers for Teacher 4 were frequency of subordinate noun clauses (1.62%) and rate of speech (143.33 wpm). The speech of T4 also contained the lowest percentage of disfluencies (4.69%) compared to the other teachers. The following is an example of disfluency (underlined):

T 4: "I've had just finished my dinner when the door bell rang," so you're going ttt...tttt..tttt... Let me put it on the board and show you. Oh...what's happened?

In this case, T4 was explaining what "intonation chunks" were. "Ttt" disfluency was an imitation of intonation required in the given sentence. So, T4 found it easier to explain about phenomena of "intonation chunks" by using non-lexical vocables.

Overall, all four teachers observed were similar only in the frequency of usage of nouns and verbs. Other linguistic characteristics ranged in proportions among the teachers. There were similarities among three teachers for some linguistic characteristics.

The variability in the teachers' input in the ESL classroom raises another question: What are the reasons for these differences in the teachers' input?

### **Results and Analysis for Question 2: "To what extent do 15 of the selected TT characteristics differ in the stages of the lessons observed?"**

It was observed that not all four teachers showed similar characteristics in their TT. This dissimilarity in linguistic characteristics may be partially attributed to the fact that different stages of the lessons. The differences and similarities between the linguistic characteristics made by the teachers could thus be better analyzed by looking at all three stages of the classroom discourse. As explained in chapter three, TTR was the only linguistic characteristic out of the above-described 16 that was omitted during analysis of the stages due to the lack of special software. As discussed before, I based my

observations on the three common stages of lessons (stage 1- introduction, stage 2 – instruction, and stage 3 – conclusion). When I deeply studied the different stages in the classroom, I found that the linguistic characteristics of each of the teachers in all three stages showed some degree of variance. All the teachers exhibited different linguistic characteristics in the different stages of the classroom discourse. The detailed account of these observations is charted in Tables 6-9 which list the linguistic modifications made by each teacher in each stage of the lessons.

Though there was no fixed pattern followed by all the teachers in the different stages of the classroom, there were common linguistic characteristics among all the teachers in the different stages of their classes. The linguistic characteristics were counted in terms of frequency and not the time of each lesson stage.

Due to its short length, Stage 1- introduction did not show high frequencies of all 15 linguistic characteristics. However, rate of delivery was an exception (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Rate of Delivery**

Teachers	Lesson 1			Lesson 2			Lesson 3		
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Teacher 1	121	110	120	213	182	160	113	140	185
Teacher 2	125	143	180	155	179	160	148	168	211
Teacher 3	110	153	117	120	127	161	210	180	146
Teacher 4	107	186	170	127	154	132	115	150	149

(Words per Minute)

The reason for this difference is that rate of delivery is calculated from words per minute, but frequency of the other linguistic characteristics is counted out of the duration in minutes per stage and thus is affected by the variations in time. For example, in Stage 1

of the first lesson, Teacher 1 had a higher rate of delivery (213 wpm) compared to other stages. Similarly, in Stage 1, Teacher 3 showed 210 wpm, while in Stage 2 she spoke more slowly – 180 wpm.

### Stage 1

Overall, as seen in Table 7, Stage 1 is distinguished by three linguistic characteristics found in all four teachers' talk:

1. Disfluencies (from 11 to 104)
2. Verbs (from 90 to 280)
3. Present Tense Verbs (from 81 to 194)

**Table 7: Stage 1 (Total frequencies for three recorded classes).**

<i>Stage 1</i>				
Linguistic Features	T1	T2	T3	T4
1. Disfluencies	104	40	11	31
2. Contractions	90	42	6	39
3. Nouns	161	77	12	73
4. Verbs	280	128	90	124
5. Linking and “to Be” Auxiliary Verbs	60	15	3	60
6. Present Tense Verbs	194	104	81	104
7. Questions	60	17	5	16
8. General Questions	41	5	3	10
9. Wh questions	17	10	2	6
10. Tag questions	2	2	0	0
11. Subordinate Adverbial Clauses	9	11	1	5
12. Subordinate Adjectival Clauses	2	8	0	3
13. Subordinate Noun Clauses	7	8	0	0
14. Self-repetitions	6	4	0	1

Contractions were also an indicative feature of TT in this stage, except for Teacher 3, who had only 6 contractions for the three classes recorded. Four linguistic characteristics had low frequency among all four teachers in this stage:

1. Tag questions (from 0 to 2)
2. Self-repetitions (from 0 to 6)
3. Subordinate clauses (from 0 to 11)
4. Wh-questions (from 2 to 17)

Among the teachers, Teacher 1 markedly differed from the other teachers in use of the selected linguistic characteristics, except for tag questions and subordinate adverbial and adjectival clauses. As can be seen in the table, the total number of questions in Stage 1 for the three lessons for that teacher is 60, while the other teachers had 17, 16, and 5, respectively. In the interview, explaining the reasons for his use of the linguistic characteristics, he said, “In Stage 1, I am always trying to remember what we did last time, which is fine, ‘cuz that’s a lot of elicitation. And if end up with no answer, I would use one word questions.”

Teacher 3 had the least frequent use of these 15 linguistic characteristics, compared to other teachers in Stage 1. She avoided tag questions and subordinate clauses. The reason for this is her intention to have concise and direct talk. She said in the interview, “On the introduction stage I would be direct and concise. This would be simplified language.”

## Stage 2

Since Stage 2 – instruction was the longest stage, it was characterized by higher frequencies overall of all linguistic characteristics other than the rate of speech. (See

Table 8.) In particular, there were seven linguistic characteristics which had higher proportions than the other features:

1. Verbs
2. Present tense verbs
3. Nouns
4. More general questions than wh-questions
5. Disfluencies
6. Contractions
7. More adverbial clauses than noun clauses

Among the teachers, Teacher 2 demonstrated the highest frequency of these linguistic characteristics in Stage 2. Her TT was marked by usage of subordinated clauses, tag questions and self-repetitions.

**Table 8: Stage 2.**

Stage 2				
Linguistic Features	T1	T2	T3	T4
1. Disfluencies	639	652	524	326
2. Contractions	408	497	311	541
3. Nouns	774	975	911	1170
4. Verbs	1461	1464	1608	1679
5. Linking and “to Be” Auxiliary Verbs	399	364	202	365
6. Present Tense Verbs	1015	1302	1368	1543
7. Questions	254	263	317	177
8. General Questions	127	147	207	77
9. Wh questions	92	81	95	76
10. Tag questions	11	30	15	23
11. Subordinate Adverbial Clauses	37	70	34	50
12. Subordinate Adjectival Clauses	11	30	15	18
13. Subordinate Noun Clauses	22	26	26	17
14. Self-repetitions	37	68	41	60

### Stage 3

Examination of the frequencies across the stages showed that the lowest frequencies of these selected linguistic features were found in Stage 3. In fact, tag questions, noun clauses and adjectival clauses were not used at all by these teachers in Stage 3. Three of the teachers did not use wh-questions in this stage as shown in Table 9.

**Table 9: Stage 3.**

<i>Stage 3</i>				
Linguistic Features	T1	T2	T3	T4
1. Disfluencies	15	2	2	1
2. Contractions	15	1	5	3
3. Nouns	29	2	6	2
4. Verbs	76	14	8	4
5. Linking and “to Be” Auxiliary Verbs	14	0	0	12
6. Present Tense Verbs	53	8	14	4
7. Questions	4	1	3	0
8. General Questions	5	1	3	0
9. Wh questions	1	0	0	0
10. Tag questions	0	0	0	0
11. Subordinate Adverbial Clauses	2	0	0	1
12. Subordinate Adjectival Clauses	0	0	0	0
13. Subordinate Noun Clauses	2	0	0	0
14. Self-repetitions	2	0	1	0

To sum it up, stage 2 was found to be the longest and had the most use of linguistic characteristics in TT of all teachers. Stage 1 had more linguistics characteristics than stage 3, although in duration they both lasted from 5 to 7 minutes. Low or zero frequencies of tag and wh- questions, as well as subordinate clauses in TT were found in stage 3.

**Result and Analysis for Question 3: “To what extent are seven of the selected TT characteristics similar to/different from the language descriptions of conversational talk by Long (1980)?”**

The domain of teacher talk and linguistic adjustments has been deeply studied by researchers, educators and scholars. As discussed, there have been many forms of categorization proposed for linguistic adjustments in TT. The features that characterize TT in ESL classrooms have been widely studied in different research, of which the investigation by Long (1980) plays an important role. The TT of the four teachers in this study is compared with the conversational talk activities in Long’s (1980) study.

Seven of the linguistic features studied by the current study were chosen to compare with results from Long’s study (1980) in order to draw parallels and investigate similarities or differences:

1. Proportions of present tense verbs to all verbs
2. Proportions of questions to all sentences
3. Proportions of wh-questions to all questions
4. Proportions of general questions to all questions
5. Proportions of tag questions to all questions
6. Proportions of self-repetitions to all sentences
7. Type-token ratio

There were six tasks in Long’s (1980) study of slightly different duration. The six tasks fell into categories: those whose completion required both speakers to exchange information (tasks 1, 4, and 5) and those which could be accomplished in this way but did not require it (tasks 2, 3, and 6). Task 1 was the spontaneous conversation: “describe 3

minutes getting to know your partner and letting him or her get to know you,” task 2 was the vicarious narrative: “describe 2 movies you have seen and liked – one movie for each person,” “task 3 was the instructions for the tasks, task 4 was the first game “Odd Man Out,” task 5 was the second game “Spot the Differences,” and task 6 was the discussion of the research.

Some proportions of these seven linguistic characteristics in the current study were found to be quite similar to the studies conducted by Long (1980). However, there were notable variations.

Proportions of present tense verbs showed a range of 69%-94% in the current study, compared to Long’s 79.96%. See Table 10.

**Table 10: Proportions of Present Tense Verbs.**

<b>Long's Study</b>	
Tasks	Proportion
Task 1* (spontaneous conversation)	79.76%

*\*Note:* Only task 1 was reported in Long’s study for present tense verbs.

<b>Current Study</b>	
Teachers	Proportion
1	69.45%
2	81.07%
3	93.30%
4	94.55%

Teacher 2’s frequency of present tense verbs (81.07%) in the current study is almost the same as in Long’s study in Task 1 (79.76%). Both studies show a tendency for the participants to relate more to present concerns of the speakers, or at least to topics which can be talked about using verbs marked temporally for the present.

Proportion of questions was high in Long’s study in Tasks 1 and 5 (47.64% and 50.25%), whereas the highest proportion of questions in the current study was only 40.60% in Teacher 3’s TT. Other teachers’ proportions were similar to the proportions in other tasks of Long’s study. The proportion of questions in Long’s Task 2 (6.23%) differed markedly from other tasks, because it was the vicarious narrative and other tasks were more interactive, more similar to classroom interaction. See Table 11.

**Table 11: Proportions of Questions.**

<b>Long's Study</b>	
Tasks	Proportion
Task 1 (spontaneous conversation)	47.64%
Task 2 (vicarious narrative)	6.23%
Task 3 (instructions for the tasks)	16.67%
Task 4 (game “Odd Man Out”)	22.49%
Task 5 (game “Spot the Differences”)	50.25%
Task 6 (discussion of the research)	30.40%

<b>Current Study</b>	
Teachers	Proportion
1	28.59%
2	32.41%
3	40.60%
4	18.50%

According to Long (1980), several possible explanations exist for the higher proportion of questioning behavior by NS in conversation with NNS in tasks 1 and 5, tasks conducive to asking questions. Long observed that questions are more likely to bring the NNS into conversation, since most questions “compel” answers in most English-speaking cultures, and are also more likely to sustain conversation once NNS participation has occurred.

Proportions of wh-questions in Long’s conversational talk radically differed from the proportions in TT in this study. Only one, Teacher 3 (NNS), who showed the highest proportion of wh-questions in her TT, approximated the percentage of wh-questions in Long’s Task 5, which was the lowest index among other tasks. Task 5 was a game that required the exchange of information between the partners and the most conversational negotiation. However, Tasks 2 and 3 did not require the exchange of information, yet had higher rates of wh-questions than Task 5. See Table 12 below.

**Table 12: Proportions of Wh-questions**

<b>Long's Study</b>	
Tasks	Proportion
Task 1 (spontaneous conversation)	29.75%
Task 2 (vicarious narrative)	20.00%
Task 3 (instructions for the tasks)	16.18%
Task 4 (game “Odd Man Out”)	37.16%
Task 5 (game “Spot the Differences”)	12.92%
Task 6 (discussion of the research)	46.38%

Current Study	
Teachers	Proportion
1	11.87%
2	10.49%
3	12.15%
4	7.86%

In the current study the proportion of wh-questions out of total number of questions is not as high as in the conversational talk in Long's study. Long predicted a higher relative frequency of general questions over other question forms in NS-NNS compared with NS-NS interaction, but this hypothesis found no support whatsoever in his study. However, general questions in TT were more frequent than wh-questions in the current study, which is in line with Long's original predictions.

Proportions of general questions out of total number of questions were found to be different between the studies, except for Task 4 in Long's study (29.05%) and Teacher 3's TT (28.44%) in the current study, which were similar in frequency. Task 4 required speakers to communicate their own systems of classification and the rationale for these to their partners, a task which would involve more explaining than questioning. Teachers in this study used fewer general questions than found in Long's study. One possible explanation is in these TT questions were used to elicit a yes/no response and general questions are more effective for this purpose. See Table 13.

**Table 13: Proportions of General Questions**

<b>Long's Study</b>	
Tasks	Proportion
Task 1 ( spontaneous conversation)	46.28%
Task 2 (vicarious narrative)	75.00%
Task 3 ( instructions for the tasks)	44.12%
Task 4 (game “Odd Man Out”)	29.05%
Task 5 (game “Spot the Differences”)	46.69%
Task 6 (discussion of the research)	40.58%

<b>Current Study</b>	
Teachers	Proportion
1	15.55%
2	17.53%
3	28.44%
4	8.43%

Long (1980) found a relatively higher frequency of questions than statements in NNS than in NS interaction. As Long (1980) explains, general questions make the form of participation linguistically undemanding in that they minimally require only an expression of confirmation in general. In the current study Teacher 3, NNS, in her TT demonstrated the highest proportion of questions of all the teachers.

Proportions of tag questions were very low in both studies. Almost the same indices were shown in Teacher 2's TT (4.38%) in the current study and in Task 1 (spontaneous conversation) of Long's study (4.13%). However, proportions of tag questions (1.45%) in conversational talk of Task 6, which was the discussion involving both parties in an exchange of opinions, demonstrated similarity with tag question proportions of Teachers 1 and 2 in the current study. A striking difference was noted in the greater use of tag questions in Task 3, which did not require the exchange of information and involved adjustments to the listener's perceived competence, and Task 4 which required speakers to communicate their own systems of classification, compared to the much lower percentage of tag questions in these teachers' talk. See Table 14.

**Table 14: Proportions of Tag Questions.**

<b>Long's Study</b>	
Tasks	Proportion
Task 1 (spontaneous conversation)	4.13%
Task 2 (vicarious narrative)	0.00%
Task 3 (instructions for the tasks)	10.29%
Task 4 (game "Odd Man Out")	13.52%
Task 5 (game "Spot the Differences")	0.99%
Task 6 (discussion of the research)	1.45%

<b>Current Study</b>	
Teachers	Proportion
1	1.16%
2	4.38%
3	1.87%
4	2.20%

Proportions of self-repetitions in TT in the current study showed higher indices, as opposed to Long’s conversational talk. This difference could be explained by the functionality and difference in structure of the talks (teacher talk versus conversational talk) in these two studies. The teachers in the current study were more oriented towards comprehension (according to their interview comments). The markedly higher total proportion of self-repetition was a reflection of TT specificity compared to framed conversational talk. See Table 15.

**Table 15: Proportions of Self-repetitions.**

<b>Long's Study</b>	
Tasks	Proportion
Task 1 (spontaneous conversation)	1.19%
Task 2 (vicarious narrative)	0.50%
Task 3 (instructions for the tasks)	1.38%
Task 4 (game “Odd Man Out”)	3.63%
Task 5 (game “Spot the Differences”)	7.33%
Task 6 (discussion of the research)	2.19%

<b>Current Study</b>	
Teachers	Proportion
1	4.05%
2	8.30%
3	5.26%
4	5.85%

Type-token ratio indicates sampled lexical density. In Long's study this density ranged from 64.25% to 66.28%, while in the current study the range was greater, from 59.83% to 74.53%. The teachers in this study were using a greater range of lexical density. See Table 16.

**Table 16: Type-Token Ratio.**

<b>Long's Study</b>	
Tasks	Proportion
Task 1 (spontaneous conversation)	66.28%
Task 2 (vicarious narrative)	64.25%
Task 1 and 2	65.25%

*\*Note:* Only these two tasks were reported in Long's study, for TTR.

Current Study	
Teachers	Proportion
1	72.38%
2	59.83%
3	67.80%
4	74.53%

To sum it up, there were some similarities and differences in proportions of seven selected TT characteristics from the language descriptions of conversational talk by Long (1980). Both studies showed a tendency for the participants to relate more to present concerns of the speakers. Proportions of questions varied in both studies. In tasks that demanded exchange of information in Long’s study, proportion of questions was higher than in the current study. The markedly higher total proportion of self-repetition was a reflection of TT specificity.

**Result and Analysis for Question 4: “What reasons do the teachers identify for any linguistic adjustments they make?”**

Most of the participant teachers in this study consciously or unconsciously adjusted the selected linguistic characteristics in their TT. Comments from the interviews indicated several reasons for these adjustments. Firstly, all four teachers said they adapt their language to the classrooms, but seek to make it as authentic as possible. Secondly, all teachers said they vary their linguistic adjustments, depending on the level of students and stages of the lesson. Thirdly, all teachers, in using linguistic adjustments in their TT,

said they want to achieve clarity and intelligibility. In addition, some of the teachers provided some other interesting reasons for linguistic modifications they make in their TT, which will be discussed further. It was reported by the teachers that they apply certain adjustments in their TT:

- Three of the teachers (Teacher 1, Teacher 3, and Teacher 4) mentioned the role of *repetitions*.
- Teacher 1 mentioned *avoidance of collocations, idiomatic expressions, contractions and elisions*.
- Teacher 2 and 3 emphasized the importance of using a lot of *questions*, both *general and wh-questions, simplification of the sentences, slow rate of delivery*.
- Teacher 4 talked about avoidance of *contractions, using full noun phrase over pronouns, paraphrasing, slowing down rate of speech, long pauses, shorter sentences*.

In an answer to the first interview question (Do you think that students learn best from a teacher who uses “special” language or when they are exposed to “authentic” language?), three of the teachers agreed that it would depend on the level of the students. Teacher 1 expressed this idea concisely, saying, “Ideally, it’s a balancing act of both. Obviously as much authentic as they can get and can understand.”

To further investigate teachers’ views about reasons for linguistic adjustments, a question was posed in the interview, which was, “Do you adjust your language to the level of students? If so, can you describe the linguistic adjustments you make?” In response to this question, the teachers mentioned several reasons for adapting their talk

with their students. Teacher 4 said, “It is not that I consciously do it. But of course, if I give an idiomatic expression, I will explain it before or after it. But lower levels, I avoid contractions. I know I do.” Teacher 2 said, “I always make sure that my language is correct. I don’t speak ungrammatical language. So I just slow down. And no, I don’t think before the class, while I am speaking, I am constantly aware of how I have to explain it. I’d slow down.” Teacher 3 said, “Probably, slow rate of delivery on low levels. I would be slower than usual. Yes, ‘yes/no’ questions, and wh-questions, again, with lower levels you do it a lot.”

During the interviews, when the teachers were asked to explain what linguistic means are best if a teacher wants to achieve clarity with material being used in a lesson, Teacher 3 said that slow rate of delivery and simplifying the sentences would help considerably. She added that using an imperative form rather than question forms would be useful as well. In addition, she reported that using shorter sentences helped the students to arrive at the meaning when setting up any activities. Teacher 4 answered that to achieve clarity she would use “Concept check questions. Even the simple things like ‘Are you working with yourself or you are working with the partner?’ However, Teacher 2 disagreed with what the other teachers said about simplifying and adjusting their TT to achieve clarity. She admitted that she “never avoided tenses because they have not studied it yet.” She said, “If difficult words or idiomatic expressions need to be used, I would explain them.” Furthermore, Teacher 2 emphasized the idea of using paraphrasing along with repetitions because she perceived that if the students did not understand the first statement, they might understand another one. She pointed out, “When the same thing is said in several different ways, it exposes the students to the different variations in

the language. Repetitions and paraphrasing are the most frequently used linguistic modifications in my teacher talk.”

The difference in the linguistic adjustments across the different stages in the classroom was also recognized by the teachers. It was reported by Teachers 2 and 3 that simplification of the language was adopted in the beginning of the session so as to enable the students to do what was expected in the session. Teacher 1 explained that there would be a lot of repetitions usually at the beginning of his lessons as the students need to know what kind of language might be frequently used by the teacher to set up the activities in the classroom. Later on, the repetitions tend to be decreased as the students get comfortable with the speech. However, the language adopted in the latter stages of the lesson was more natural as the teachers (Teachers 1, 2, and 3) felt that the exposure to authentic language was important for the students. The answer of Teacher 1 to the question “Do you think it is possible to disunite or divide your lesson roughly into three stages? If so, to your mind, what stage would have more/less linguistic modifications? Why?” reflected all teachers’ opinions:

It’s common sense, everything has the beginning, middle and end. More modifications for Stage 2, cuz that’s the most important part. I will slow down, simplify, do whatever it takes. I probably repeat myself quite a lot. I would probably repeat instructions with fewer words. I’m working on it. Stage 1, I am always trying to remember what we did last time, which is fine, cuz that’s a lot of elicitation. And if I end up with no answer, I would use one word questions. On stage 3, I would probably say “Right, ok” a lot. You know, I would never say

questions like “what have you learnt today?” because that’s so stupid; but I would try to get sort of indication from them, so that it’s not been a waste of time.

On the whole, it was accepted by all teachers that the students learn best from a teacher who uses a blend of TT and authentic language.

Having analyzed the reasons given by the teachers for their linguistic adjustments, it was evident that linguistic adjustments were used to provide comprehensible talk to the students. The next chapter summarizes the major findings of this study, provides some practical implications for teachers, lists some limitations of the study, and ends with some suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter first provides a brief summary of the study's findings. Then, based on the discussion of the results, some practical implications for teachers are suggested. Next, some limitations of this study are identified, and at the end, directions for further research are recommended.

### Findings

After data analysis and interpretation, this study has led to some important findings. It was observed that all 16 selected linguistic characteristics were found in these teachers' speech, although some teachers used specific linguistic characteristics more than others. Overall, the TT of the observed teachers can be described as having low frequency of self-repetitions, use of contracted forms and disfluencies, and a low type-token ratio, yet a high frequency of questions with a prevalence of yes/no questions over other types of questions. These findings in the current study are similar to linguistic adjustments in FT identified by Ferguson (1975) and Henzl (1979), and simplification noted by Chaudron (1983). The use of self-repetition in this study reflects Wesche and Ready's (1985) description of TT.

It was also found that though the linguistic features adopted by the teachers were similar, there were variances which could be understood better when the different stages of the classroom discourse were closely observed.

The analysis of the three stages of the classroom discourse revealed that the use of linguistic characteristics in TT was more evident in Stage 2 of the lesson due to its longer

duration. Questions of various kinds, designed to facilitate participation and to sustain the conversation in Stage 2, were frequently used in the middle stage of the lessons. It was found that the teachers used more simplified language in the beginning of the lessons. Similarly, the teachers' language was simpler in Stage 3, showing the least frequencies of all selected linguistic characteristics. Questions were used very little in Stage 3, which can be explained by the teachers' intention to discourage participation and discussion. The reason for an absence of clauses and self-repetitions can be the fact that teachers want to bring the lesson to an end and sound direct and succinct.

This study also identified similarities and differences between Long's study (1980) and the findings of the current study. Proportions of present versus non-present temporal marking of the verbs in NS-NNSs interaction in Long's study and in TT in the current study suggest that interaction was focused significantly more on speakers' immediate concerns. This focus should, in turn, tend to increase the relative frequency of grammatical morphology related to the present time (3<sup>rd</sup> person – s) and decrease the frequency of non-present morphology (regular and irregular past) in linguistic input to EL learners. Both Long's study (1980) and the current study showed a relatively higher frequency of questions than statements or imperatives. Several possible explanations exist for this high frequency of questioning behavior. First, questions are more likely to bring NNSs into the conversation, and are more likely to sustain conversation. Second, questioning behavior can be linked to the superior status of a teacher in an interaction in a classroom. Questions can affect the form of linguistic input to EL learners in that English yes/no questions mask the conjugated or tensed forms of verbs, since they are formed by auxiliary plus main verb or past participle.

Different results in proportions of self-repetition between Long's study (1980) and the current study can be explained by the intention of BC teachers to repair discourse when breakdown occurs. The higher proportion of self-repetitions in these teachers' TT is characterized partly by their function of supplying grammatical morphology.

The present study also explored the reasons for the linguistic modifications in TT as perceived by the teachers. In summary, teachers deemed linguistic modifications in TT as necessary to 1) ensure comprehensibility of input, 2) expose students to authentic language, 3) avoid confusion, 3) be informal but grammatical, and 4) elicit information or encourage students' participation.

### **Implications of the Study**

The findings of this study accentuate the importance of introducing teachers to activities that could give them awareness about the concept of TT adjustments, as some participating teachers in the current study were not aware of the linguistic characteristics of their TT. During the interview, in response to the question, "Could you explain to me what linguistic modifications you make in your Teacher Talk?" one teacher said, "We are not often aware of what modifications are." Arrangement of professional development sessions and workshops for teachers that focus on specificity of TT features could be beneficial to introduce and develop the concept of TT.

Despite the time-consuming process of observation, transcription, and analysis that involved the examination of each of the utterances in the transcription, the classroom observation conducted proved to be of value to the teachers themselves. These teachers do not use audio/video recording to reflect, adjust, or modify their TT, but they believe

that it could be useful for enhancing their performance. This classroom observation study gives an opportunity to practicing teachers to have a better understanding of the characteristics of TT. One of the interviewed teachers, having had a look at her transcripts, said, “It is horrible. I can’t believe that I was saying this. I think I talk quite a lot. Oh, God, I am really bad. I should not have said that.” This finding highlights the importance of providing teachers with audio and video facilities and minimizing their technical constraints in order to promote the use of audio/video recording in their daily teaching practices.

Recording lessons for analysis provides valuable feedback to teachers about modifications that can be adopted for better learning. Discussion with an observer or participation in a retrospective analysis of their teaching can contribute to a better understanding for teachers of their strengths and weaknesses in the teaching-learning process. It may help teachers to reconsider the linguistic adjustments and modifications of their classroom language to maximize the quality of the input to their students.

In these teachers’ opinion students have to be aware of authentic language and need to be exposed to English intonations, rate of speech, and vocabulary, although students find it very difficult in the first classes of the course. According to these teachers’ views, they should blend their TT (“special language”) and authentic language. In order to do this, teachers should clearly understand TT features and characteristics, so that they can manage this balance between their authentic language and teacher’s “special language.”

## **Limitations**

There are four basic limitations in the current study. The first limitation of the study is that I was allowed to observe only one session per day of one teacher. Second, because of time constraints and administrative limitations, I observed only intermediate level classes. Third, the study did not evaluate the effectiveness of these linguistic characteristics in TT. It described these teachers' linguistic characteristics but not how effective they are in facilitating student learning. Fourth, there was no comparison with each teacher's conversational talk outside of the classroom and thus it was not possible to document any linguistic adjustments in their TT compared to their conversational talk.

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

The findings of this study may only apply to the participants and situations involved in this research, and thus further research is required to assess the extent to which these findings are generalizable across the region. This research opens up further areas of research investigation which have not been as prominent in classroom research until now. This difference can lead to a more detailed study of the precise gradations of linguistic characteristics as applicable to and effective in the context of UAE English classrooms at different levels.

Another area of further research is TT in different lesson stages. The four teachers participating in this research exhibited varying frequencies of TT across the different stages of the lesson. This can serve as a foundation to further study that examines changes in the linguistic modifications of different teachers with the passage of time, as students develop more familiarity and proficiency of language, e.g., at the beginning and

at the end of a course. The method of analysis used in this study can be used further to study the impact of linguistic modifications on the learning of the students. Similarly, the comprehensibility of TT can be investigated in the relation to the students' output.

Moreover, investigation might yield different results if students of the classes observed had been surveyed and interviewed as well. This inclusion would allow for a comparison of what teachers and students think are the most effective teachers' linguistic modifications.

Future studies might well consider other TT adjustments, such as careful articulation, exaggerated intonation, stressed words, pauses, and/or idiomatic expressions. Further manipulation of tasks or activities and setting linguistic adjustments could help distinguish features related to teachers' instructional language in classrooms. Finally, through true experimental designs, researchers might address the crucial issue of necessity and efficiency of TT in language learning.

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## Appendix A: Teachers' Interview Questions

1. Do you think that students learn best from a teacher who uses “special” language or when they are exposed to “authentic” language?
2. In planning an educational activity, can you tell me what attention do you pay to the language you are going to use during the lesson with your students?
3. Do you adjust your language to the level of students? If so, can you describe the linguistic adjustments you make?
4. Can you explain what linguistic means you think are best if a teacher wants to achieve clarity with material being used in a lesson?
5. How would you define your teacher talk: “concrete”, “concise”, “grammatical”, “ungrammatical,” “extensive,” “clear,” “specific,” “informal,” or “simplified”?
6. Do you think it is possible to disunite or divide your lesson roughly into three stages (See the stages below)? If so, to you mind, what stage would have more/less linguistic modifications? Why?

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Introduction /recall of knowledge	Instruction/ transmission of information	Conclusion/ assignment feedback

7. Could you explain to me what linguistic modifications make your Teacher Talk more effective?
8. Can you tell me, was the topic of investigation “Linguistics characteristics and adjustments in TT” interesting for you?

## Appendix B: Teachers' Profile Sample

Please provide the following information

Gender: Male ( ) Female ( )

Nationality \_\_\_\_\_

Educational background and qualifications

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been working as an English Teacher?

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you worked in other careers? Please give brief details

\_\_\_\_\_

Class levels you teach at the British Council

\_\_\_\_\_

Duration of one class (session)

\_\_\_\_\_ minutes

Write in a number on average how many students do you have in your classes? Write in a number

\_\_\_\_\_ students

Students' first language backgrounds: Write in a number

Arabic \_\_\_\_ Hindi \_\_\_\_ Iranian \_\_\_\_ Russian \_\_\_\_ Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of the course taught

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you follow any particular approaches or methods in your teaching? Could you briefly explain?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR RESPONDING

**Appendix C: Transcribed Digitally Recorded Observation Sample**  
**(given example is an analysis of one single turn (out of total number of turns))**

*Observation Setting*

Date: November 17, 2011

Place: BC, Dubai

Length: 45 min

*Teacher's Profile*

Gender: F

Nationality: British

<b>Transcription</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<p>T: Ok, stop, stop, stop, they got because.....they because. The main story...what is the main story?... what's the man story of this? Someone died, yes... ok ...so anything happened? ... before that...is "HAD", but at this point it says "instead they got the real shock", because this is after she died. So we can't use the past perfect here.</p>	<p>Number of Utterances= 11            Rate of delivery = 60 words per 40 sec            Total length of Pauses =12 sec            Repetition frequency= 1            Number of verbs = 13            Number of linking and "to be" auxiliary verbs=4            Number of Questions = 3            Wh-q = 2</p>

## **Vita**

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