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# *Increasing Oral Participation in ESL/EFL Conversation Classrooms*

Michael WEI
*University of Missouri, Kansas City, USA*

*Students' reticence in the ESL/EFL classrooms is a serious problem. Without students' oral participation, it is very difficult to improve their spoken English. This study reviewed the reasons why some students had low oral participation and methods used to alleviate this problem in the classroom. The study also examined ways to increase students' oral participation by different types of activities and different questioning techniques. Results showed that students' oral participation is increased if application and presentation activities are used; the right vocabulary is offered when students need it to continue; questions related to students' prior experiences are asked; and an informal and friendly classroom atmosphere is present. To achieve these results, teachers should employ multiple methods such as modifying questioning techniques, inviting colleagues to observe, as well as analyzing and reflecting on the effectiveness of the strategies adopted.*

## Introduction

I taught Oral English Practice to university students in Thailand for more than 6 years, hoping to help my students to acquire better English accents and increased fluency. But, in order for this to occur, students need to talk. I always tried to provide a lot of materials and topics for discussion, and hoped that students would talk at least 5 minutes, but my efforts were not rewarding. Most of the students would only speak for less than 1 minute and commented that they felt they did not know what to say. Even after one semester, students' participation in oral discussion and oral presentation was low. For the most part, they would ask, "How should I say it? What should I say?" and they would pose these questions in their native Thai.

At that time I thought maybe the teaching materials were not relevant to them, thus they could only say a little. So I decided to provide materials about things related to their university, or I asked them to talk about choices they had to make in their daily lives. The results were at first quite good. Specifically, students' oral participation increased. I believed I had found a good solution. But before long, the students returned to their old ways of participating in oral discussions, and oral presentations were still less than 5 minutes in length.

Recently, I had the opportunity to make observations of student oral participation during a 4-week course taught during four 20-minute sessions. The course content included teaching American idioms to international language students. In this paper, I would like to report on ways of increasing ESL students' oral participation in English conversation classroom on the basis of my past EFL teaching experience and previous studies in related areas, beginning with a review of the pertinent literature.

## Literature Review

Many second language researchers have documented the reticence in ESL classrooms (Hwang, 1993; Lucas, 1984; Pica, Young, & Doughty, 1987; Rankis & Beebe, 1983; Sato, 1982; Tickoo & Tsui, 1996; Tomizawa, 1990; Wu, 1991), emphasizing that reticence is a big obstacle that must be overcome. When oral participation is not present, students lose opportunities to develop academically and linguistically (Fennema & Peterson, 1985; Swann, 1989); however, when students participate actively in class, their academic achievement seems to be higher than that of those who are passive in class (Lim, 1992; Tsou, 2005; Zhou, 1991).

There is some evidence that more production and more correct production are associated with target language proficiency (Naiman & Schein, 1978; Strong, 1983). ESL/EFL students need to have more opportunities to talk and interact in class in order to improve and increase their oral production. According to Adrian (1997), within certain spheres of international English language education, active student participation is seen as central and critical to the "good" lesson. Without students' active oral participation, a class is not considered successful. Many previous studies (Ely, 1986; Naiman & Schein, 1978; Pica, Young, & Doughty, 1987) have reported a positive relationship between second

language acquisition and the amount and nature of interactions. The role of interaction through negotiation of meaning is to make input comprehensible (Baetens Beardsmore & Swain, 1985).

In order to make the research review clearer, I would like to arrange all the research into two headings: reasons for verbal reticence in class and methods for increasing oral participation in class.

## Reasons for Verbal Reticence in Class

One of the most relevant investigations regarding reasons for verbal reticence in class is Lee's (1998) study exploring a teacher's role in students' oral participation. According to Lee, Asian students' verbal reticence is due to limited interaction opportunities. The behaviors that inhibit Asian students' oral participation are (a) passive learning styles which may be derived from traditional educational patterns in Asia; (b) Asian students' affective factors such as anxiety, low self-esteem, communicative apprehension, and introversion; (c) three major categories of factors (socio-cultural, psychological and linguistic factors) discovered by Tomizawa (1990); and (d) a fear of negative self-image due to using poor English. Lee noted that the teacher plays a role in students' oral nonparticipation because some teachers fail to elicit the oral participation of Asian students.

Sato (1982) examined speaking opportunities and patterns of turn-taking behavior among Asian and non-Asian students in two university ESL classes in California. The qualitative research investigated the relationship between ethnicity and patterns of student classroom participation, finding that Asians took significantly fewer self-selected turns than non-Asians. The researcher noted learners' perceptions of teachers' speaking rights may play a role in these findings and suggested that teachers provide explicit guidelines for the conduct of classroom discourse.

Tsui (1996) observed students in two ESL classrooms in Hong Kong to investigate the relationship between reticence and anxiety. She did not find a single instance in which a student initiated a question, reporting that not one student volunteered to answer the teacher's question in any of the classrooms studied. Even when the teacher repeated the questions eight times, there was no response from the students. It is reported that the students' anxiety played a role in the nonparticipation. Moreover, quite a few EFL/ESL students suffer from mother-tongue interference.

This interference seems deeply rooted, making them translate in their minds what they want to say. The result is a speech variety that does not sound like English and leads to frustration on the part of the speakers. This is why some students choose to give up and remain silent.

In a more recent study, Pinheiro (2001) noted that African, Asian, and Latin American students perceived classroom discussions as "a matter of students reading articles and saying disconnected things in class" (p. 7). The overall belief of the majority of the participants was that teachers should exert a more active leadership/expert role in the classroom.

Tatar (2005) explored four Turkish students' perceptions of participation in graduate courses at an American university. The findings showed that although cultural background and academic learning styles were influential, their participation behavior in the classroom was influenced by context-dependent factors as well as cultural and academic perceptions. Students also felt that they did not find oral participation a major contributor to their own academic learning experience. The students participated more for affective reasons such as building self-confidence rather than for building knowledge.

According to the previous research, then, the reasons for students' verbal reticence in class are diverse. There are (a) passive learning styles; (b) Asian students' affective factors; (c) socio-cultural, psychological and linguistic factors; (d) a fear of negative self image; (e) learners' perceptions of teachers' speaking rights; and (f) context-dependent factors as well as academic perceptions.

## Methods for Increasing Oral Participation in Class

After reviewing reasons why students do not want to participate orally in class, I will review articles regarding methods for increasing oral participation in class.

Weck (1998) conducted research in Istanbul, trying to motivate students to talk. He limited his speaking to the bare minimum and allowed the students to do most of the talking. The students had to take control of the class while the author acted only as a discussion moderator and conversation facilitator. In doing so, the students' oral participation was greatly improved. Similarly, Carrasquillo (1994) pointed out that the main aspect of speaking was communication and communication took place when there was sharing of experience and decision-making.

According to Bresnihan and Stoops (1996), one of the most difficult challenges in teaching a foreign language was finding ways for students to improve their oral fluency, especially in countries where students share a common mother tongue and have little or no exposure to English outside the classroom. When students were asked to perform an activity, they often just read aloud mechanically from their textbooks or chat in their native language. Although they may truly want to practice expressing their ideas in English, it is hard for them and it is hard for teachers to convince them to try.

An article prepared by The University of Washington (2000) focused on class participation. It said that class participation did not necessarily require that all students participate for the same amount of time or in the same way. Rather, the goal was to make sure that students were able to participate in class in ways that would help them achieve the learning goals. Before the teacher starts to teach s/he should: plan ahead (i.e., consider what students will learn as a result of taking part in discussion, responding to questions, or raising questions of their own); use the first day of class to set expectations; and review strategies for encouraging class participation.

Duncan and Southon (2000) categorized six ways teachers inhibit interaction and discourage learning. Particularly harmful were non-specific feedback questions. For example, "Does anyone have any questions? This question should be changed to, "Who wants me to go over this explanation again?" Wiethoff (1999) had 12 very good suggestions for how to improve students' oral participation. Three of them are most valuable for teaching: set class rules; keep it light—"heavy" topics or self-disclosure; and explain the purpose of the exercise up front so that students understand why they should participate and what they should expect to learn (pp. 4–5).

Brown (1975) believed that giving students reinforcement could increase student participation. Using students' own ideas is a special form of reinforcement which appears to be related to student achievement and positive attitude. Students' ideas may also be used as a springboard to develop further discussion. Another method is to vary interaction between students. This technique has the potential to change the teacher-dominated classroom into a student-centered classroom, and thereby increase students' oral participation.

Daoud (1994) presented four strategies (i.e., involving the message, reflections, dilemma, and mystery package) for increasing oral

production in the EFL classroom. These strategies were most useful when considering two students factors. The first factor was that students are incompetent in their oral skills. The second was a positive factor in that the students had a real desire to speak English more effectively, not only in the language classroom but also in out-of-class situations.

Cogan (1998) also mentioned problems that EFL/ESL teachers face in language teaching classrooms. When teachers tested students' oral ability, they always ended up talking the most no matter how hard they tried not to. Cogan even provided his transcriptions to show the real interactions. In his second semester, a solution was found. Students were given a list of topics that they could prepare in advance. The test was divided into three parts. In part 1, students were tested on two dialogues that they performed in pairs. This proved a very quick and effective procedure. Part 2 involved students giving a 1-minute talk based on a prescribed set of topics. Part 3 required students to give an opinion on an issue prepared by the teacher. The teacher of this Japanese classroom concluded that these procedures were quite successful no matter how big or small the class.

Ho (2005) explored the issue of teacher questions in the ESL language classroom by first looking at the categorization of questions, particularly in the question-answer sequence between teachers and students. The author argued that the labeling of queries into closed/open categories was problematic. She challenged that, the traditionally accepted concept that closed questions seek to elicit short, restricted student responses was purposeless. She believed that her first and third levels consist of questions similar to the closed and open types. She added level 2:

Level 2: Questions that:

- Ask for answers related to, though not found in the topic
- Gauge students' proficiency, e.g., vocabulary and general knowledge
- Have two or more possible answers
- Ask for answers students may not have acquired within the classroom context
- Stimulate more thoughtful responses, though not necessarily linguistically lengthy or complex. (p. 304)

Generally speaking, these studies introduced problems and challenges language teachers are facing (e.g., Carrasquillo, 1994; Bresnihan

& Stoops, 1996). They provided efficient and non-efficient methods for the teachers to improve students' participation in oral English class. The methods for increasing oral participation in class give students reinforcement; use the four strategies (message, reflections, dilemma, and mystery package) in class Daoud (1994); group students in pairs; give students a 1-minute talk based on a prescribed set of topics; have students give an opinion on an issue; and require a well-prepared teacher. None of the studies mentioned the use of colleague observations and teacher's self reflective journals, which are the focus of the present study.

While these good methods discussed are insightful, two discouraging learning manners mentioned by Duncan and Southon (2000) warrant special attention: insufficient wait-time and non-specific feedback questions. In this study, I will examine the effects of avoiding these discouraging learning manners and in adopting new ways such as peer feedback and self-reflection to increase oral participation of the students in conversation classrooms.

## Methodology

Based on past experience and literature review, I have attempted to find ways to address the following question: How can I increase my students' oral participation in my ESL/EFL classrooms? In the following part, I will examine student reticence and English language teaching in a class I taught.

### The Research Context

#### *The Course*

This course I taught was offered to international students who were studying in a language program at a major university in the U.S. east coast. Their English was not good enough to cope with their daily lives, thus they were enrolled in the class. After they became familiar with the teacher (me), they were less shy, but still needed to try hard to express themselves. Even though they had a basic knowledge of vocabulary, their knowledge of American English idioms was very limited. The goal of this course was to teach some frequently-used idioms, two-word verbs, and expressions in a meaningful context. The textbook I used in the classroom was *Can you believe it? Stories and idioms from real life*,

Book II (Huizenga, 2000). It was an idiom book which provided a story for each unit, with ten new idioms for students to learn.

### *Participants*

The participants in this study were three student volunteers in a non-credit language program. They were very cooperative and patient, attending the late-afternoon class (i.e., after 4 p.m.) every Monday. The students were from countries other than the United States, and English was their foreign language. S1 was from the United Arab Emirates; he was talkative, brave and confident about his English. S2, a female Korean, was less brave and less talkative; S3, male, was also a Korean and was quiet.

### *Observers*

During the course, I invited three professors from a local community college to observe my class, focusing on teacher-student interactions and student activities. Their major responsibility was to fill out an observation form. Based on the feedback, I kept a journal to analyze my teaching after each class.

## Research Instruments

### *Observation Forms*

The first research instrument chosen was an observation form to be filled out by each of three teachers invited to observe my class. The observation form used was BIAS: Brown's Interaction Analysis System, devised by George Brown (see Richards & Lockhart, 1999, p. 159). The researcher classified all interactions in the classrooms into seven categories.

TL = Teacher describes, explains, narrates, directs
TQ = Teacher questions
TR = Teacher responds to pupil's response
PR = Pupil's response to teacher's questions
PV = Pupil volunteers information, comments or questions
S = Silence
X = Unclassifiable

The time that I spent was *TL* + *TQ* + *TR*. The time that my students spent was *PR* + *PV*.

I asked the observers to record the minutes of *TL, TQ, TR, PR,* and *PV*. The sum of *TL, TQ,* and *TR* was the time I spent, and the sum of *PR* and *PV* was the time the students spent. The calculation of time spent indicates the control time of the teacher and the students in each class. I agreed with the notion that the students had to take control of the class while the teacher acted only as a discussion moderator and conversation facilitator (Weck, 1998).

A point worth noting is that Brown's BIAS focuses on teacher-student interaction rather than student-student interaction. When student-student interaction is captured, it goes to *X* (Unclassifiable). This is consistent with my research question: how the teacher can increase students' oral participation in the classroom. This doesn't mean that student-student interaction is not important, but basically it is not the focus of this study and not the focus of Brown's BIAS.

### *Transcriptions*

I recorded every class session and transcribed all communication myself. These transcriptions allowed me to look into the details of classroom interactions which I reflected on in the journal. Transcriptions like teacher and/or student questions and responses showed the transitions or dominance of turn taking, which I thought necessary to analyze wait-time and specific feedback (Duncan & Southon, 2000).

### *Activity Forms*

Clark and Yinger (1979) suggested that activity was critical to an understanding of teaching. It affects how teachers teach, how students learn, and how teachers organize their classes. According to Richards and Lockhart (1999), classroom activities can be classified into the following nine categories: Presentation, Practice, Memorization, Comprehension, Application, Strategy, Affective, Feedback, and Assessment activities. Among these nine categories, I only used Presentation and Application activities:

- **Presentation activities:** These activities were used when new materials were introduced for the first time. I used this category to organize my classes for Time 1 and Time 4.

- **Application activities:** These activities were used when students were required to apply what they have learned in the classroom. I used the activities in this category for Times 1, 2, and 3.

I designed an activity form as the third instrument to guide my lessons. I filled out an activity form starting with the first class, so I could get an idea of what I did, what type of activity I and/or students used in the classroom, what purpose was intended, and how long an activity lasted. If I needed to change to another type of activity, I could do that in the next class. If I felt a type of activity was effective, I could include more activities of that type. The Presentation activities went in line with Brown's *TL* (Richards & Lockhart, 1999), and Application activities provided opportunities for reinforcement which employed students' ideas as a springboard to develop further discussion (Brown, 1975).

### *Reflective Teaching Journal*

I kept a reflective teaching journal from the very beginning of my teaching. The journal contained my thoughts about each of my classes. After I received observation forms from the three teachers, transcribed tapes from the class, and filled out the type of activities that I used in the classroom, I would reflect on my teaching including how I limited speaking, how I moderated discussion, or how I facilitated conversation. I tried to reflect on students' control time (Weck, 1998) and wait-time (Duncan & Southon, 2000). The reflection also allowed me to review the effectiveness of strategies for encouraging class participation (University of Washington, 2000).

Among the four research instruments, the first three were all objective in nature, the fourth instrument (my reflective journal) was subjective. I will elaborate both the subjective and objective views in my data analysis.

## Data Collection Procedures

I taught from 4:00–4:20 every Monday afternoon. For each class, I distributed a copy of the observation form to the three teachers and asked them to record what they had seen in the classroom. Before I asked the teachers to fill out the observation form, I provided directions

from the textbook *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms* (Richards & Lockhart, 1999, p. 159), and then we discussed the recording method until every teacher understood it. In the meantime, I used a tape recorder to record the classes as a backup in case there was a discrepancy in the observational teacher's recordings. After obtaining the data, I studied the observation forms, transcriptions, activity forms, and journal entries carefully. All these built up the foundations for my next lesson.

## Data Analyses and Results

### *Time 1*

During the first teaching session, I had two activities. The first was a Presentation activity: to fill in the blanks with idioms that students previously learned, and the second was an Application activity during which the other teachers read a dialogue written by me to show how to use these idioms in spoken English. The first activity took 2 minutes and the second took 10 minutes.

During the instruction, I noticed two things: first, I should keep on asking questions, not lecturing. I felt that asking specific questions would motivate the students to talk more (Sato, 1982). Second, I should increase the wait-time for students to think (Duncan & Southon, 2000). "When I was in Thailand, I usually only asked a few questions. I would feel embarrassed if no one could answer the questions, and I gave a very short wait-time. If a student could not answer my question within 10 seconds, I would answer the question myself. As such, students got to know if they just waited a bit, I would answer the questions myself. I even tested students' oral English by giving a wait-time of 10 seconds. After 10 seconds, I would deduct grades if there was no response. With the two techniques mentioned above, I found students' oral participation would rapidly increase" (Reflective teaching journal, Time 1).

### *Time 2*

I had one activity for Time 2. I asked students to answer questions "About Yourself" in Unit 3. It was an application activity and I used 4 minutes for it. The purpose was to test what students had learned. The results were reflected through the observation:

| | *TL* + *TQ* + *TR* (minutes) | *PR* + *PV* (minutes) |
|---|---|---|
| Observer 1 | 8 | 12 |
| Observer 2 | 9 | 9 |
| Observer 3 | 10 | 12 |

Results from Time 2 showed that the students spoke as much as I did or more. The reflective teaching journal of that day indicated that, "First I distributed a worksheet from the textbook to the students and explained to them how to fill in the blanks. I emphasized this exercise was to write something about yourself." I gave students a very clear goal for this exercise as they were going to orally share their responses later with the class (Wiethoff, 1999), and then, "Everyone did the exercise very carefully. Within 4 minutes, they all filled in the blanks with the idioms that they had learned today." These 4 minutes were very important to the students. They could use these 4 minutes to write down what they were going to say. So after they finished, "in order to increase the oral participation from the students, I asked students to answer my questions orally. There were 5 questions and I wanted everyone to answer them. They did a great job" (Reflective teaching journal, Time 2).

The transcription from the classroom shows what Ho (2005) argued, namely that closed questions may have a purpose to the class objective and may elicit more than restricted student responses. The following example supports Ho's (2005) observation:

T : Can only men watch men and women watch women?

S1: No. The men can watch women, but women cannot watch men. We have another kind of dance. A young girl whose age is less than 14 years old standing in the middle, she cannot dance. How should I say? She cannot join with us. After a woman gets married, she has to avoid men.

The teacher's question would obviously fall into a closed question category, but it elicited a lengthy response from the student. The question is not purposeless, either. The teacher would like to give the student a chance to introduce dance in his culture, which is related to the topic for that class period (i.e., "Do you like to dance?").

For ESL/EFL students, questions are not the only way to elicit responses. Teachers could keep students talking by offering a word that the students need since the students might lack the vocabulary to express

themselves. I adopted this technique in addition to asking questions. The following example supports that claim:

S1: Caribbean Sea. There are many ships. They do not allow us to go near there. But we …

T : Sneak.

S1: We sneak. But they say: Come on, Come on. Do not go there. One day my friend told me I could not go there to swim. I challenge him. I sneak. When I want to jump, I saw Manta Ray. It seems like a white ghost, but I cannot go back.

***Time 3***

During this session, I asked students to answer my questions orally, based on the text. The purpose of the activity was to see if students could apply the idioms in making sentences. The results from Time 3 showed that I talked a little more than the students talked:

| | *TL* + *TQ* + *TR* (minutes) | *PR* + *PV* (minutes) |
|---|---|---|
| Observer 1 | 12 | 8 |
| Observer 2 | 13 | 8 |
| Observer 3 | 12 | 7 |

The transcription indicates that the students talked 32 times and I talked 29 times. Among the 32 times, there were 7 times that students spoke more than 1 sentence. One time, a student spoke 7 sentences. For the questioning technique, I assigned *TQ-O* as Teacher questioning—Open-ended questions; *TQ-Y* as Teacher questioning—Yes/No questions; *TQ-C* as Teacher questioning—Clarification and put the codes on each line of transcriptions which meet the codes.

Results showed there were 12 *TQ-O*, suggesting that students needed to use more words to express themselves. In contrast, there were 22 *TQ-Y*, which could be answered by yes or no; however, students answered this type of question with many words. I was puzzled when I first read the transcription, but it made sense when I found actually all questions asked were related to their prior experience or their prior knowledge. They were very "personal." Last, there were 9 *TQ-C*. In cases when students had to explain their answers, the students were motivated to talk more. *TQ-C* could be questions categorized into open-

ended questions or closed questions. Using Ho's (2005) categorization, *TQ-C* questions could be categorized into level 1, level 2 or level 3. The first and third levels consist of questions similar to the closed and open types. The inclusion will be questions at Level 2. These are general knowledge, vocabulary, and language proficiency questions.

My reflective teaching journal indicates that I was very satisfied with the results on that day.

> Then for the observation form that I asked other teachers to record for me, the results were very different from the last two times. The students' oral participation increased rapidly. This was the first time that students talked more than I did. If it had not been the end of class, we may have kept on talking. The talking was so enjoyable. (Reflective teaching journal, Time 3).

After the class, Student 1 came to me and said that he loved the class that day since it was very informal and friendly and all students laughed together with me. I believe that the interesting topic played a significant role in this successful class, too. This was also what Wiethoff (1999) suggested: Keep it light. No "heavy" topics or self-disclosure.

### *Time 4*

In this session, I asked students to give me examples using the idioms they had learned in the classroom. It was a Presentation activity which took 15 minutes. The purpose was to increase students' oral participation. When students wanted to speak, talked, and used idioms simultaneously, oral participation increased (Cogan, 1998). The results showed that I spoke the same amount as the students did or less:

| | *TL* + *TQ* + *TR* (minutes) | *PR* + *PV* (minutes) |
|---|---|---|
| Observer 1 | 10 | 10 |
| Observer 2 | 10 | 11 |
| Observer 3 | 8 | 12 |

According to the transcriptions, the students spoke 32 times, and I spoke 31 times. Among 32 times, there were only 2 times that the students spoke more than one sentence.

Three kinds of questioning techniques were used: *TQ-O; TQ-Y;* and *SQ-I* (Students questioning—Students initiating questions). Only 1 *TQ-O* occurred, with 16 *TQ-Y* and 7 *SQ-I* asked. The students asked many

questions, and this part was the most different from the other days' observations. This increase in questions may have happened because students did not understand several idioms in the text and were very anxious to understand them. Since my goal was to increase students' oral participation, this was a good result.

This class was very different from the previous one because the type of questions asked by the teacher. In the previous classes, the teacher didn't ask students to explain idioms in the text. They simply started discussing topics in the text. So students had chances to express themselves freely. In this class, I wanted to make sure that all students understood those ten idioms, so I asked students to explain them one by one. I will only explain those that students didn't understand. That restricted students' responses to being short. Once students explained the idiom correctly, the teacher continued to the next one.

## Conclusion

One of the most difficult challenges in teaching a foreign or second language is finding ways to help students improve their oral fluency (Bresnihan & Stoops, 1996). Spoken activities are means to examine what students have learned (Carrasquillo, 1994). In English conversation class, teachers' techniques on asking and/or responding to questions are keys in increasing oral participation of English conversation class (Brown, 1975; Duncan & Southon, 2000; Sato, 1982, etc.). Teachers should consider the reasons of reticence in the class (Lee, 1998; Tsui, 1996).

This action research showed that the activities used in the class were critical for increasing students' participation. According to Clark and Yinger (1979), activity affects how teachers organized their classes and of course affected how students participated. For the four class periods, only two categories of activities were used: Application activity and Presentation activity. These two activities greatly improved students' participation in class.

In ESL classrooms, especially EFL classrooms, students could stop talking if they don't know the vocabulary that they need for their sentence. At that moment, a word hint could keep students talking. The example shown in Time 2 indicated that teachers need to play the role of facilitator at that kind of situation. Offering a right word at a right time provides necessary connection for students to continue the oral production.

The results of the research are in line with Ho's (2005) observation that different types of questions, especially level 2 questions, elicit more oral participations of students in conversation classrooms. Among all instruments used in this research, including transcriptions, activity forms, observation forms (by 3 observers), and reflective teaching journal, one theme was very clear: students had a lot to say in response to questions that directly related to their prior knowledge or experience. This provided a strong suggestion that we should use textbooks that can be related to students' prior knowledge or prior experience so that teachers' questions can be easily related to that.

Affective factors such as anxiety played important role in nonparticipation of English conversation class (Lee, 1998; Tsui, 1996). Through the transcription, I strongly noticed that an informal and friendly classroom atmosphere helps to make students talkative. Class should always be informal and friendly. The teacher may be very kind, but if he or she has a serious tone in class, the classroom atmosphere may not be friendly. Students can gain more knowledge if the classroom atmosphere is informal.

The implication of this research is that, while the general objective of ESL/EFL English is to increase oral participation in conversation classrooms, teachers should use multiple methods to analyze and reflect the strategies employed in the class. I believe that Brown's categories of *TL*, *TQ*, *TR*, *PR*, and *PV* in BIAS are crucial in illuminating what Duncan and Southon (2000) pointed out as discouraging learning manner: non-specific feedback questions. I employed four instruments to triangulate what and how I performed during my teaching. While *TQ* and *TR* showed my feedback to students, *TL* provided explicit guidelines for the conduct of classroom discourse (Sato, 1982). On the other hand, *PR* and *PV* told me the potential of changing the teacher-dominated classroom into a student-centered classroom, and thus the potential of increasing students' oral participation (Brown, 1975).

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*Michael WEI, PhD, is Assistant Professor and TESOL Program Director at University of Missouri, Kansas City, USA. His research interests include parental involvement, second language acquisition, learning environment, reading English as a second language, and teaching English pronunciation.*