

# **Increasing students' L2 usage: An analysis of teacher talk time and student talk time**

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Devise and conduct a piece of research which investigates the amount of talk you do in your classroom. A short introductory section should summarise findings to date in the area you are investigating. You should make a list of expectations/hypotheses before implementing the research. These should be based on the following pre-research self-evaluation:

Amount of time I think I spend talking in class	0-20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100%
Amount of time I think I should spend talking in class	0-20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100%

On analysing your results, do you find your expectations fulfilled? Do you feel you need to make any changes to the amount of (verbal) input you provide for your students? Describe and justify the changes you would make.

# 1. Introduction

Active use of the target language (hereafter referred to as L2) by students is considered to be an integral part of the language acquisition process (Nunan, 1999: 241). An effective learner-centred L2 classroom, therefore, should provide an environment in which students can contribute to learning activities and maximise their use of the language (van Lier, 2001: 103). In an English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) classroom, in particular, the opportunities to practice verbal communication outside the classroom are often significantly limited (Paul, 2003: 76). Here, the practice of such skills within the classroom can become the paramount activity for EFL students (Thornbury, 1996).

Teacher talk time (TTT) within the EFL classroom has been critically evaluated in the process of endeavouring to increase students' L2 practice time (Willis, 1990: 57; Paul, 2003: 137). Much research on TTT has focused on its quantity (amount) and/or quality (effectiveness). These studies have provided new insights into the ways EFL teachers teach in the classroom.

The aim of this study was to investigate the amount of TTT, and the extent of its effectiveness, in a specific children's class which I regularly teach. A series of changes were proposed to improve the quality of TTT in the classroom. Rather than simply comment upon the possible changes, I actually implemented the proposed changes in the studied classroom to examine their effects. The two lessons (before and after the changes) were recorded and analysed in terms of the quantity and quality of both TTT and student talk time (STT). I also comment on a particular issue I have noticed in regards to the study of TTT. In the current study, I will focus on TTT and STT in children's EFL classrooms to specify the discussion points.

# 2. Literature review

Negative effects of teachers talking for an excessive amount of time have been observed in a number of studies. Allwright (1982: 10) claimed that teachers who 'work' too much in the classroom were not teaching effectively. He commented that a good language teacher should be able to 'get students to do more work' in the classroom. Ross (1992: 192-93 cited in Nunan, 1999: 209) also indicated that constant teacher talk during the lessons did not significantly improve students listening comprehension and communication skills.

These studies suggested, at least indirectly, that the amount of TTT might be inversely correlated to the degree of students' active learning opportunities, *i.e.* the greater the amount of TTT, the less the students get to practice L2 in a classroom and therefore, the less the effectiveness of the lesson (Paul, 2003: 76). In order to further explore such a relationship between TTT and the student's learning process, various TTT analyses have been conducted (McDonough and McDonough, 1997). Many of the studies have highlighted that the amount of TTT predicted by the teachers prior to the analyses alarmingly differed from the actual measurement. Richards and

Lockhart (1994: 3) quoted a comment from a teacher after viewing a videotape of their own lesson as ‘I had no idea I did so much talking and didn’t let students practice’.

As a result of these studies, a number of teaching techniques and approaches have been proposed to curb excessive TTT and to optimise the balance between TTT and STT in EFL classrooms. These techniques and approaches include:

- a) Management of error correction (Willis, 1990: 61-62; Allwright and Bailey: 1991; Richards and Lockhart 1994: 191-192),
- b) Management of responses and elicitation (Chaudron, 1988; Skehan, 2001; van Lier, 2001: 94-95),
- c) Student pair work and group work (Richards and Lockhart, 1994: 153; Long, 1976 cited in Nunan, 1999: 54; Paul, 2003: 41-42; Willis, 1990: 60),
- d) Sufficient wait-time after elicitation (Richards and Lockhart, 1994: 188; Paul, 2003: 19), and
- e) The clarification of instructions and expectations for the students (Rosenshine and Stevens, 1986; Mercer, 2001: 255).

Here, it is important to note that although excessive TTT in the classroom has been criticised by many researchers, they usually do not advocate minimising TTT as an objective (van Lier, 2001: 104). Instead, a number of studies have emphasised the quality or effectiveness (contents) of TTT rather than the quantity (Paul, 2003; Ellis, 1984; van Lier, 2001: 104). TTT should be allocated to relevant interactions between the teachers and students. At the same time, teacher’s utterances need to be explicit and level appropriate for the students in the classroom. Only by doing this, can listening to the teacher’s authentic L2 potentially become a significant impetus to L2 acquisition (Allwright, 1982: 8; Willis, 1990: 63; Rost, 1994: 141-42 cited in Nunan, 1999: 200; Paul, 2003: 71).

There are many different variables which could affect the amount of TTT in the classroom (*e.g.* level, experience, and number of students) and TTT can vary among classes of the same teacher. However, Richards and Lockhart (1994) argued that individual teachers should become more aware of their TTT by measuring and analysing it in a specific class, which in turn, may help them assess the effectiveness of their teaching approach in general.

### **3. The present study**

#### ***3.1. Classroom and students in this study***

The current study was conducted at my private English school in Japan. The class chosen for the study consisted of five elementary school students (Table 1) who came to my school once a week for a 40 minute lesson. At the time of recording, they had been studying together for approximately one year. Before this study was conducted, I had been using only L2 with these students for all of their pedagogical, behavioural and

administrative instructions in the classroom. Although there were some level differences depending on their ages, all students' levels in terms of their English proficiency would be classified as low.

**Table 1. Student's reference codes and general profiles**

Reference codes	Gender	Age	Elementary school grade
A	Male	7	2
B	Male	7	2
C	Male	6	1
D	Female	7	2
E	Female	6	1

### ***3.2 Hypothesis and research questions***

In my English school, I have been aiming to achieve 20-40% TTT as a general guideline for all of my classes regardless of students' ages and levels. In this study, I chose a class in which I had often felt that I was exceeding this guideline. The students in this class, due to the combined effects of their ages, levels and personalities, had often become highly excited. Prior to the current study, on numerous occasions during their lessons, I had stopped classroom activities to instruct the students to behave themselves and to speak L2. I estimated that 40-60% of the total class time would usually be TTT for this particular class (Table 2).

**Table 2: Pre-research self-evaluation (TTT)**

Criteria	TTT %
Amount of time I think I should spend talking in class (general guideline in my school)	20-40%
Amount of time I think I spend talking in the studied class (expectation)	40-60%

In consideration of the above self-evaluation, I initially tested and examined the question: Did TTT comprise 40-60% of the total lesson time in the studied class? Subsequently, based on the results of the first analysis, I implemented several changes to my teaching approach for the same class. I evaluated these changes by comparing TTT and STT in the first and second lessons (before and after the changes were applied). In particular, I explored the following questions to investigate the effectiveness of the changes:

1. Was there any change in the amount of TTT after the changes were implemented?
2. What was the effect of the changes on the content of the teacher's utterances and on the effectiveness of TTT?
3. What was the effect of the changes on the amount of STT and the contents of the student's utterances?
4. Were there any changes in the way TTT (teacher's utterances) influenced STT (student's utterances) after the implementation of the changes?

## **4. Method**

### ***4.1. Data collection (recording)***

Two consecutive lessons (before and after the implementation of the changes) were recorded using a MP3 digital recorder. The recordings were made one week apart. To minimise the effect of being ‘observed’ and to control other variables which could affect the teacher’s and the students’ performance, the following guidelines were applied for both recordings:

- 1) Although the children and their parents approved the conduction of the current study, the recording dates were not specified.
- 2) Both recordings were conducted during the students’ scheduled lesson time in their usual classroom.
- 3) The recording device was hidden.
- 4) The same lesson plan was used for both lessons. The children focused on the same topics (*i.e.* classroom English and counting), language expressions (*i.e.* ‘What’s this in English?’ and ‘It’s a dog.’) and activities (*e.g.* bingo and dictation).
- 5) A similar number of unfamiliar letters and words were introduced to the students during both lessons.

Here, it should be noted that the lesson topics, language expressions and activities were already very familiar to the students at the time of the first recording. Hence, in the second lesson, if there was to be any remarkable improvement in the students’ performance, it would not be due to familiarity with the content or context of the lesson.

### ***4.2. Data collation***

All utterances were timed to the nearest second and categorised into TTT or STT. TTT and STT data were further categorised into 13 and 9 different utterance types, respectively (see Tables 3 and 4). Categorised data from both recordings was collated and the effects of the changes were investigated. In addition, the number of questions asked to the teacher by each student was counted to further examine teacher and student interactions.

**Table 3. Summary of teacher's utterance types**

Note: Unless specified, all of the teacher's utterances were in L2 (English)

<b>Teacher's Utterance types</b>	<b>Explanations</b>
Song	Singing by the teacher alone
Count	Counting by the teacher alone
Display	Display questions ( <i>i.e.</i> 'a question to which T' (the teacher) 'knows the answer', Nunan, 1989: 78)
Referential	Referential questions ( <i>i.e.</i> 'a question to which T' (the teacher) 'does not know the answer', Nunan, 1989: 78)
Behaviour	Instructions given in response to students' non-acceptable behaviour ( <i>e.g.</i> students speaking to each other loudly in Japanese, not responding to the teacher's utterances and walking off from activities)
Direction	Instructions for the general tasks and activities
Clarify / Correct	Clarifications of a student's utterance ( <i>e.g.</i> 'Did you say 'panda'?') or corrections of a student's utterance
Response to L1	Responds to a question from a student who is speaking in Japanese
Response to L2	Responds to a question from a student who is speaking in English
Answer own question	Self-answer ( <i>e.g.</i> when students do not answer a teacher's question)
Praise	Words of praise ( <i>e.g.</i> 'Well done')
Courtesy	Courtesies ( <i>e.g.</i> 'Thank you' and 'Here you are')
L1 explanation	Instructions given in Japanese

**Table 4. Summary of student's utterance types**

Note: Unless specified, all of the students' utterances in each type were in L2 (English)

<b>Student's Utterance types</b>	<b>Explanations</b>
Lost time* <sup>1</sup>	The time in which the students were not speaking L2 and/or displaying non-acceptable behaviour
Song* <sup>2</sup>	Singing by students
Count	Counting by students
Volunteer comments / Questions	Comments or questions which were voluntarily made or asked by students (in L1 or L2)
Repeat teacher voluntary	Utterances in which the students voluntarily repeated the teacher's L2 utterance
Repeat teacher on request	Utterances in which the students repeated the teacher's L2 utterance on demand
Display response	Responses to a display question from the teacher (in L1 or L2)
Referential response	Responses to a referential question from the teacher (in L1 or L2)
Courtesy	Courtesies from the students ( <i>e.g.</i> 'Thank you' and 'Here you are')

\*<sup>1</sup> Although all of the 'lost time' was included in STT in this study (*i.e.* the time was lost due to the *students*), some portion of the lost time may have been caused by the teacher (*e.g.* students waiting for the teacher to prepare materials for an activity). Teacher-caused lost time and student-caused lost time was not clearly distinguished in the current study as the definition of such a distinction can be highly subjective. Therefore, even if 'lost time' had been divided into teacher-caused (TTT) and student-caused (STT), the data might have been too questionable.

\*<sup>2</sup> Songs were explicitly related to teaching points and students were encouraged to change the vocabulary within the songs to avoid meaningless repetition.

### **4.3. Description of changes**

Table 5 summarises the conditions in the first lesson, the changes implemented in the second lesson, and the reasons / aims of the changes.

**Table 5. Description of the conditions before the changes and summary of the changes implemented after the first analysis**

No.	Conditions in the first lesson (prior to the changes)	Implemented changes	Reasons / aims of the changes
1	Classroom rules were explained in L2.	A new classroom <i>rules poster</i> (Appendix 1) was introduced and explained in L1.	To make teacher's expectations explicit (Hofstede, 1986: 316; Mercer, 2001: 248)
2	Students were instructed in L2 to stop non-acceptable behaviour.	A classroom <i>behaviour game</i> (to be played throughout the entire lesson) with a visual <i>scoreboard</i> (Appendix 2) was introduced and explained in L1.	a) To engage students in every classroom activity by setting an entire lesson as a game (Paul, 2003: 119) b) To make teacher's expectations explicit (Mercer, 2001: 248)
3	Game counters and whiteboard drawings were elaborate.	Game counters and whiteboard drawings were simplified.	To adhere to the focal point of an activity (Paul, 2003: 50)
4	It took an unnecessarily long time to start new activities as the teaching materials were not efficiently organised.	Changeover intervals between activities were shortened ( <i>e.g.</i> by having the materials for all activities within easy reach).	To minimise lost time due to administrative tasks (van Lier, 2001: 103)
5	Set homework was marked at the beginning of the lesson together with individual students.	Set homework was collected to be marked outside of the lesson time.	To keep all students engaged (Paul, 2003: 125)
6	The students entered the classroom as they arrived and played in the room before the lesson.	The students were asked to wait outside the classroom until the lesson time commenced.	To start the lesson efficiently and minimise lost time (Harmer, 1991: Ch 11)
7	Games were started without any explanation (language expressions necessary for the games were provided during the games).	More pre-activity directions were provided and language patterns necessary for the games were explained more thoroughly before the game.	To minimise corrections by the teacher during the activity (Richards and Lockhart, 1994: 182)
8	Student's roles within games were not clearly defined so students were often confused as to what they were required to do.	Student's roles during games were clearly defined.	To establish clear roles for the students (Mercer, 2001: 255)
9	The students counted in turn.	The students counted in unison.	a) To increase students' opportunities to practice L2 (Nunan, 1999: 241) b) To keep all students engaged (Paul, 2003: 125)
10	The levels of tasks were not appropriately graded.	More difficult tasks were preceded by more achievable ones.	To build up students' confidence to speak out (Bruner, 1983; Mercer, 2001: 248)
11	The students were usually praised to reinforce good behaviour.	Praising individuals was minimised.	To use that time for more constructive utterances ( <i>e.g.</i> questions and directions) (Breen, 2001: 318-19; Paul, 2003: 122)



## 5. Results and discussions

### 5.1. TTT and STT – Overall result

#### a) First recording

As shown in Table 6, TTT from the first recording fell within the range of the general TTT guideline for my school (*i.e.* 20-40%) and was lower than the initial prediction of TTT for this class (*i.e.* 40-60%). What was most striking in this recording was that approximately 44% of the total lesson time was students talking in Japanese (Table 6 and Chart 1). As mentioned above, I had felt that I was constantly giving directions to the students to guide them back to L2 activities in previous lessons with this class. TTT could have been overestimated as a consequence of this seemingly constant instructional exertion.

#### b) Second recording

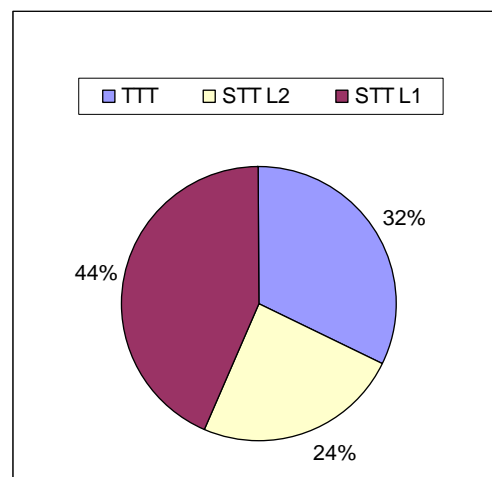
The amount of TTT was not affected by the changes implemented after the first recording (Table 7). However, the time in which students spoke L2 almost doubled in the second recording (Table 7 and Chart 2). In other words, the changes significantly affected the content of the students' talk rather than the amount of TTT. It can be suggested that the changes also influenced the content of the teacher's talk and increased the effectiveness of TTT. The effects of the implemented changes on the content of the teacher's utterances and the student's utterances were further investigated below.

**Table 6. Class talk time summary: First recording**

Note: Figures discussed are in red.

	seconds	minutes	%
TTT	748	12.5	32.3
STT in L2	556	9.3	24.0
STT in L1	1014	16.9	43.7
Total class time analysed	2318	38.6	100.0

**Chart1. Class talk time: First recording**

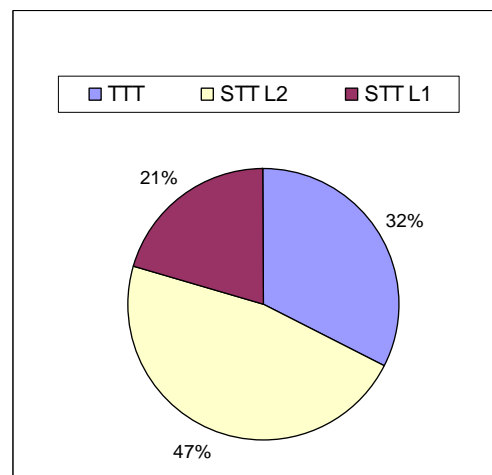


**Table 7. Class talk time summary: Second recording**

Note: Figures discussed are in red.

	seconds	minutes	%
TTT	743	12.4	32.4
STT in L2	1078	18.0	47.0
STT in L1	472	7.9	20.6
Total class time analysed	2292	38.2	100.0

**Chart 2. Class talk time: Second recording**



## 5.2. The effects of the changes on TTT (teacher's utterances)

### a) Classroom rules and behavioural instructions

In the second lesson, Japanese was used to explicitly explain the *rules poster* (Appendix 1) and also how the *behaviour game* (Appendix 2) would be used during the lesson ('*L1 explanation*' in Table 9). I regarded this use of L1 as one of the most significant impetuses which increased the overall effectiveness of TTT in the second lesson (Mercer, 2001: 250). In the second lesson, as students clearly understood what behaviour was non-acceptable, the '*Behaviour*' instructions and STT in L1 were dramatically reduced (Tables 8 & 9). Prior to the current study, L1 had never been used by the teacher during the lesson. It had been assumed that TTT in L2 was more beneficial for students than that in L1 as using L2 could be considered a listening comprehension exercise for the students (Allwright, 1982: 8). However, after careful consideration of the students' English proficiency level, it was decided that it would have been inappropriate to use L2 for explaining the behavioural expectations.

In addition, improvement in the students' behaviour might also have resulted in the increase in directional utterances ('*Directions*' increased by 1.1 minutes, see Table 9). In the second lesson, I was able to provide more detailed directions as I was unhindered by non-acceptable student behaviour (Slimani, 2001: 288).

Another effect of the introduction of the classroom rules was demonstrated in '*Song*' (in Tables 8 and 9). In the first lesson, the students often ignored instructions to sing along with the teacher which resulted in '*Teacher fronted*' singing (*i.e.* I was singing by myself). In contrast, because singing along with the teacher was one of the introduced classroom rules, the students always sang with the teacher which resulted in no teacher fronted singing in the second lesson.

There were two crucial factors taken into account when introducing the new classroom rules. Firstly, it was important to create an environment in which the teacher was viewed as a 'highlighter' of rules rather than an 'enforcer'. If this had not been realised, the students might have found it difficult to connect with their teacher and might not have felt comfortable or inspired to experiment with L2 (Paul, 2003: 117-20). The fact that STT in L2 almost doubled in the second recording indicates that the implemented changes effectively encouraged the students to practice more L2 in the classroom.

Secondly, the students needed to see themselves as responsible for their behaviour and for the consequences of that behaviour. To achieve this, I made the *rules poster* self-explanatory, and then I facilitated (in L1) a students' discussion on the classroom rules using the poster. Also, the classroom *behaviour game* was played throughout the entire lesson. To win this game, the students were self motivated to behave well.

### ***b) Praise***

The amount of teacher fronted praise (*'Praise'* in Tables 8 and 9) was similar in both recordings (the first recording: 22 seconds, the second recording: 19 seconds). However, in the first lesson, all students had received individual praise as well as teacher fronted praise, whereas in the second lesson, all praise was teacher fronted (*i.e.* students were not praised individually). It is probable that in the first lesson, I frequently attempted to reinforce (*i.e.* praise) examples of good behaviour with the students I felt were generally the most disruptive during the lesson. As a result, student E who received the least amount of behavioural instructions (6 seconds) in the first lesson also received the least amount of praise (2 seconds) in the same lesson. The other students (A, B, C and D) received greater amounts of both praise and behavioural instructions than student E. This praising pattern could develop a certain expectation among students that disruptive behaviour ultimately led to more praise (or attention) from the teacher.

In addition to the above prediction, other consequences of praising students may include:

- 1) Students may get confused as to why they do not receive the same reward (praise) even though they produce the same or similar result (Paul, 2003: 115).
- 2) The praising may cause a change of pace in a lesson, which may result in a loss of concentration. This situation was observed in the first recording. While one student was being praised by the teacher, the other students seemed to have regarded that time as a break in the lesson lost concentration on the task.

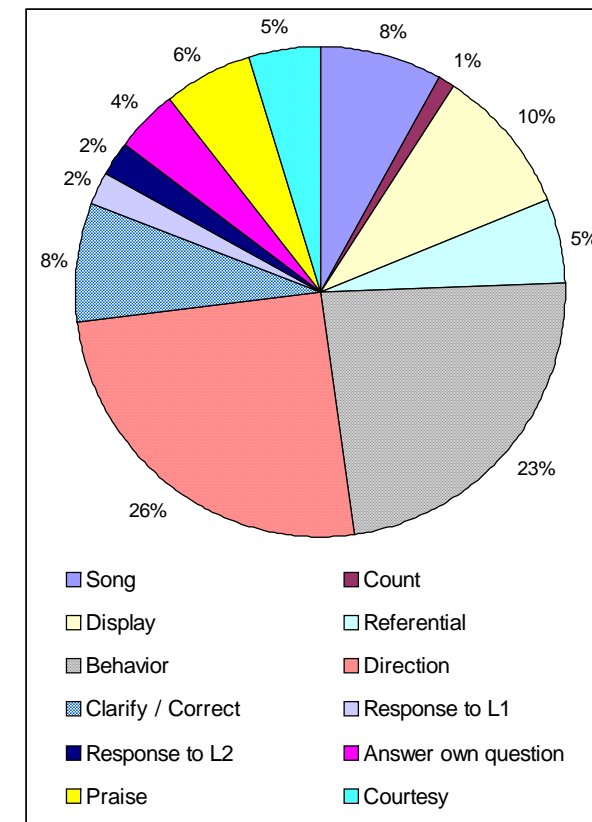
Careful caution is therefore required with praising individual students as it can have detrimental effects on students' concentration and classroom discipline (Paul, 2003: 116-17). I argue that for this particular class, praising may not be a constructive use of TTT. In fact, the negative effects of giving praise could outweigh the positive ones in many situations in this class.

**Table 8. TTT for each utterance type: First recording**

Note: Figures discussed are in **red**.

Teacher's Utterance type	Teacher fronted	A (boy1)	B (boy2)	C (boy3)	D (girl1)	E (girl2)	Total	
	seconds	seconds	seconds	seconds	seconds	seconds	seconds	minutes
<b>Song</b>	<b>60</b>	0	0	0	0	0	60	1.0
Count	9	0	0	0	0	0	9	0.2
Display	42	6	6	9	4	5	72	1.2
Referential	27	5	0	7	0	2	41	0.7
<b>Behavior</b>	53	<b>47</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>2.9</b>
<b>Direction</b>	115	17	9	16	13	19	<b>189</b>	<b>3.2</b>
Clarify / correct	20	10	8	5	7	8	58	1.0
Response to L1	0	5	2	7	4	0	18	0.3
Response to L2	0	5	0	1	10	0	16	0.3
Answer own question	22	0	2	7	0	0	31	0.5
<b>Praise</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>0.7</b>
Courtesy	18	5	5	4	1	2	35	0.6
Total (seconds)	319	104	69	76	67	44	748	
Total (minutes)	5.3	1.7	1.2	1.3	1.1	0.7	12.5	

**Chart 3. TTT proportions: First recording**

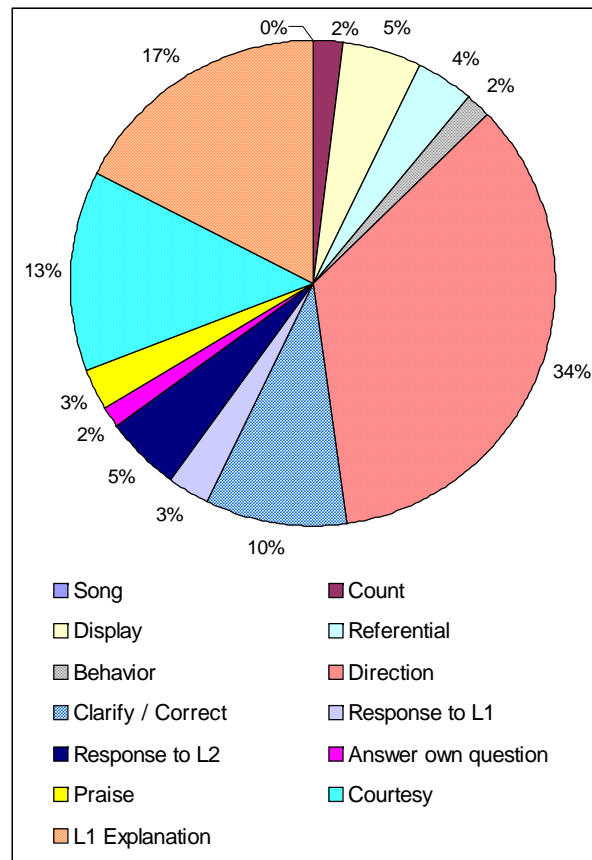


**Table 9. TTT for each utterance type: Second recording**

Note: Figures discussed in this essay are in red.

Teacher's Utterance type	Teacher fronted	A (boy1)	B (boy2)	C (boy3)	D (girl1)	E (girl2)	Total	
	seconds	seconds	seconds	seconds	seconds	seconds	seconds	minutes
<b>Song</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Count	15	0	0	0	0	0	15	0.3
Display	24	5	5	1	3	1	39	0.7
Referential	20	4	4	0	0	0	28	0.5
<b>Behavior</b>	1	5	3	3	0	0	12	0.2
<b>Direction</b>	181	10	29	27	0	13	260	4.3
Clarify / codify	24	3	11	7	18	9	72	1.2
Response to L1	3	0	6	6	0	4	19	0.3
Response to L2	6	0	18	7	6	0	37	0.6
Answer own question	4	0	2	0	0	6	12	0.2
<b>Praise</b>	19	0	0	0	0	0	19	0.3
Courtesy	28	10	20	12	22	8	100	1.7
<b>L1 explanation</b>	130	0	0	0	0	0	130	2.2
Total (seconds)	455	37	98	63	49	41	743	
Total (minutes)	7.6	0.6	1.6	1.1	0.8	0.7	12.4	

**Chart 4. TTT proportions: Second recording**



### **5.3. The effects of the changes on STT (students' utterances)**

#### **a) Lost time**

One of the most remarkable changes in the second recording was the reduction of lost time ('*Lost time*' in Tables 10 and 11, Charts 5 and 6). This improvement may have resulted from the combined effects of the different changes implemented. The reduction of lost time may have directly affected the content (quality) of TTT, such as the reduction in behavioural instructions (Tables 8 & 9).

#### **b) Counting and Singing**

Both counting and singing by the students significantly increased in the second lesson. As also discussed in TTT analysis (section 5.2), in the first lesson, counting and singing was often cut short or unable to start because students were more interested in having conversations in L1 and ignored the teacher's directions to participate. In the second lesson, however, the students were motivated by the *behaviour game* to participate in counting and singing. Counting and singing became game like activities and the students appeared to be more engaged in these tasks.

#### **c) Volunteer questions / comments**

Within STT, the proportion of L1 volunteer questions and comments ('*Volunteer comments / questions*' in Tables 10 and 11) increased from 6% in the first recording to 18% in the second recording. This may indicate that in the second lesson, students used L1 in more constructive ways rather than discussing unrelated subjects.

#### **d) Repeating teacher on request**

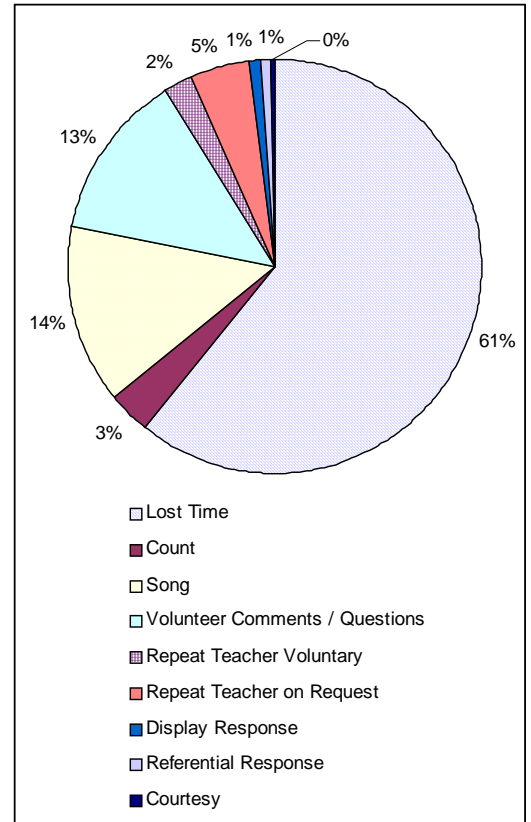
In the first lesson, the students repeated the teacher on request for 73 seconds (13.1% of the total STT in L2). In contrast, only 22 seconds (2% of the total STT in L2) were spent repeating teacher on request in the second lesson ('*Repeating teacher on request*' in Tables 10 and 11). This reduction may have partly resulted from clarifying target language expectations at the start of each activity. As the students better understood what they were supposed to say, it was no longer necessary for them to constantly be told to repeat the target utterances during the activity.

**Table 10. STT for each utterance type: First recording**

Note: Figures discussed are in red.

Students' utterance type	In L1	In L2	Total	
	Seconds	seconds	seconds	minutes
Lost time	953	0	953	15.9
Count	0	53	53	0.9
Song	0	218	218	3.6
Volunteer comments / questions	61	147	208	3.5
Repeat teacher voluntary	0	33	33	0.6
Repeat teacher on request	0	73	73	1.2
Display response	0	13	13	0.2
Referential response	0	16	16	0.3
Courtesy	0	3	3	0.1
Total	1014	556	1570	26.2

**Chart 5. STT proportions: First recording**

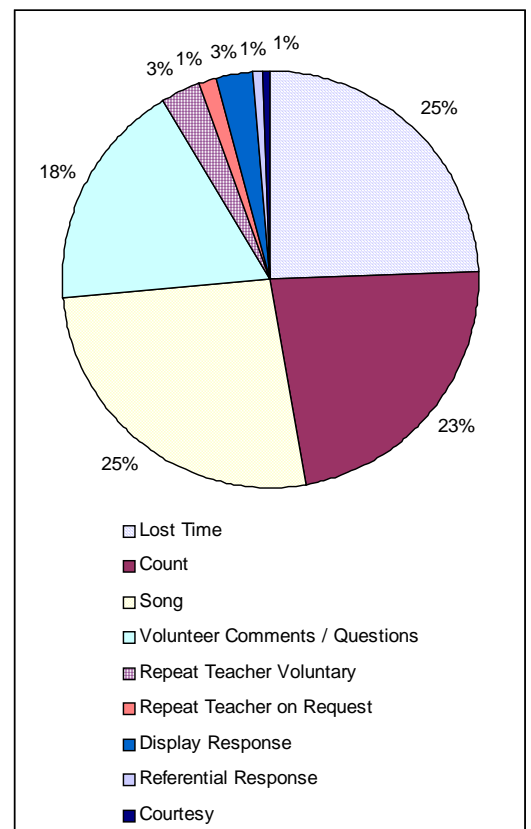


**Table 11. STT for each utterance type: Second recording**

Note: Figures discussed are in red.

Students' utterance type	In L1	In L2	Total	
	Seconds	seconds	seconds	minutes
Lost Time	380	0	380	6.3
Count	0	354	354	5.9
Song	4	405	409	6.8
Volunteer comments / Questions	85	190	275	4.6
Repeat teacher voluntary	0	44	44	0.7
Repeat teacher on request	0	22	22	0.4
Display response	3	42	45	0.8
Referential response	0	13	13	0.2
Courtesy	0	8	8	0.1
Total	472	1078	1550	25.8

**Chart 6. STT proportions: Second recording**



## 5.5. Relationships between TTT and STT

### a) Questions by the teacher and responses by the students

When TTT and STT were examined together, it was possible to note an interesting pattern in the teacher's questioning time and the students' response time. As illustrated in Tables 12 and 13, the teacher's questioning time was almost halved in the second recording (from 113 to 67 seconds). At the same time, the students' response time doubled from 29 to 58 seconds. The teacher's questions in the second lesson were more logically arranged, proceeding from easier ones to more difficult ones. This grading of questions may have helped students logically find answers by themselves and also build up confidence to speak out (Tsui, 1996 cited in Nunan, 1999: 235).

### b) Referral and display questions from the teacher

It is generally believed that referential questions tend to generate longer responses from students than display questions (Nunan, 1991: 194). In the current study, this was not the case. In the second lesson, especially, display questions resulted in a much longer response time than referral questions (Tables 12 and 13). It can be suggested that referential questions might have been too advanced for these particular children. In many cases, they simply did not understand the question or they did not even realise that they had been asked a question. Nevertheless, exposure to referential questions is essential in the process of developing L2 communication skills (Thornbury, 1996). Here, further research on the applications and effects of referential questions in the classroom for young EFL students can be suggested.

**Table 12. Display and referential questions: First recording**

Note: Figures discussed are in red.

	Questions in L2 from the teacher (TTT) (seconds)	Responses in L1 or L2 from the students (STT) (seconds)
Display	72	13
Referential	41	16
Total	113	29

Data extracted from Tables 8 & 9

**Table 13. Display and referential questions: Second recording**

Note: Figures discussed are in red.

	Questions in L2 from the teacher (TTT) (seconds)	Responses in L1 or L2 from the students (STT) (seconds)
Display	39	45
Referential	28	13
Total	67	58

Data extracted from Tables 8 & 9



### c) Questions asked by individual students

The number of questions asked to the teacher by each student was summarised in Table 14. Although the total count of questions remained very similar in both lessons (20 in the first lesson and 21 in the second lesson), there were noticeable changes to the number of questions asked of the teacher by each individual. The number of the questions from students B, C and E increased in the second lesson. These students may have felt more comfortable to speak out and ask questions in the more orderly classroom environment. On the other hand, students A and D who had asked the most questions in the first lesson asked the least number of questions in the second lesson. There could be various factors causing this decrease. For instance, the new classroom rules might have been misinterpreted as discouraging them from speaking directly to the teacher. Also, these students might have not yet adjusted to the new classroom environment. Alternatively, in the second lesson, they might have been able to comprehend the instructions more easily than the others and as a result, they would not have needed to ask as many clarifying questions.

**Table 14. Number of questions asked by each student to the teacher (in L1 and L2)**

Student	Total number of questions	
	First recording	Second recording
A	6	0
B	2	10
C	4	6
D	8	2
E	0	3
Total	20	21

### 5.6. Future direction - Focusing on the students and STT

Since TTT was the main focus of the questions in the current study (e.g. ‘How much TTT do you think you have in a lesson?’, ‘Do you think you need to make any changes to the amount of TTT?’), my primary concern of this research was initially myself, the *teacher*. However, as I further investigated TTT in this particular classroom, I realised that if the ultimate goal of a study was to provide an effective learner-centred lesson, the *students* had to be the key element of such a study. In this study, for instance, the way students perceived TTT was a crucial factor in analysing the effectiveness of TTT. Before the changes were implemented, the students seemed to have disrespected TTT because it was viewed as unimportant for the activities in the lesson. After the implementation of the changes, TTT became necessary for the classroom activities (*i.e.* to win the *behaviour game*) and thus was respected.

Moreover, it is imperative to examine how the students perceived the implemented changes and their effects on the overall lesson. In the case of the current study, the positive effects of the changes were observed on the

completion of the second lesson when all the students enthusiastically cheered upon winning the *behaviour game* against the teacher. Also, one of the students commented to the office staff on how much fun the class had been.

Although TTT and STT are closely interconnected, attempting to improve the classroom by firstly focusing on the amount of TTT may not be as productive as by firstly focusing on STT or the students' perspective on TTT (Paul, 2003: 146). With these considerations, I propose that a study of STT based on student-centred questions (*e.g.* 'How effectively do your students respond to TTT?', 'How would you rate the quality of STT in your classroom?'), rather than a study of TTT with teacher-centred questions, could provide us with more beneficial information for increasing the effectiveness of the EFL classroom.

## **6. Summary**

The current study revealed that the prediction I made for my TTT for the studied class was shorter than the recorded TTT. This difference between my prediction and the actual reality may have resulted from overestimating the behavioural instructions given to the students. In addition, it was observed that the time in which the students practiced English (L2) within the lesson was too short. The students were speaking in Japanese (L1) for almost half of the recorded class time.

In order to increase the efficiency of TTT and the proportion of STT in L2 in the classroom, a number of changes were implemented. The changes focused on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the teacher's utterances (Mercer, 2001: 255). Although interpretation of the results requires caution since recording was conducted in only two lessons, the results of the analyses indicated that the changes had a positive impact on the overall TTT effectiveness and efficiency in the studied classroom. In the lesson after the implementation of the changes, the amount of STT in L2 approximately doubled. At the same time, there was a significant reduction in lost time during the second lesson.

It was considered that the use of Japanese (TTT in L1) for clarifying the classroom rules to the students was one of the salient factors within the changes (Critchley, 1999). Not only did it clarify the teacher's expectation for the students, but also it changed the student's perception of the importance of listening to TTT throughout the class. The teacher's talk became a necessity for the students to perform activities and thus, the students paid more attention to the teacher's instructions and comments.

Despite this improvement in TTT effectiveness, the amount of TTT remained relatively the same in the two lessons. This suggested that the amount of TTT may not always be a reliable indication of classroom efficiency and/or effectiveness. Furthermore, these analyses of TTT and STT prompted the questioning of the validity of

focusing on TTT when endeavouring to provide effective learner-centred classes. In order to improve students' L2 acquisition process, the primary focus of such studies may need to be on the amount and the content of STT (which would inevitably influence the aspects of TTT in a classroom).

Although improvements in the second lesson were believed to have resulted from the contents of the changes, it is also possible that the students could have been reacting favourably to the novelty of the changes. If this were the case, once such a novelty had worn off, the effectiveness of the changes could significantly reduce. The effects of the changes implemented in this study will therefore need to be continuously monitored in the future to examine the long-term effectiveness of the changes and its impact on the students' L2 acquisition. More detailed analysis of students' feedback on the implemented changes may also be useful to gain better understanding of students' perspectives and interpretations of the changes.

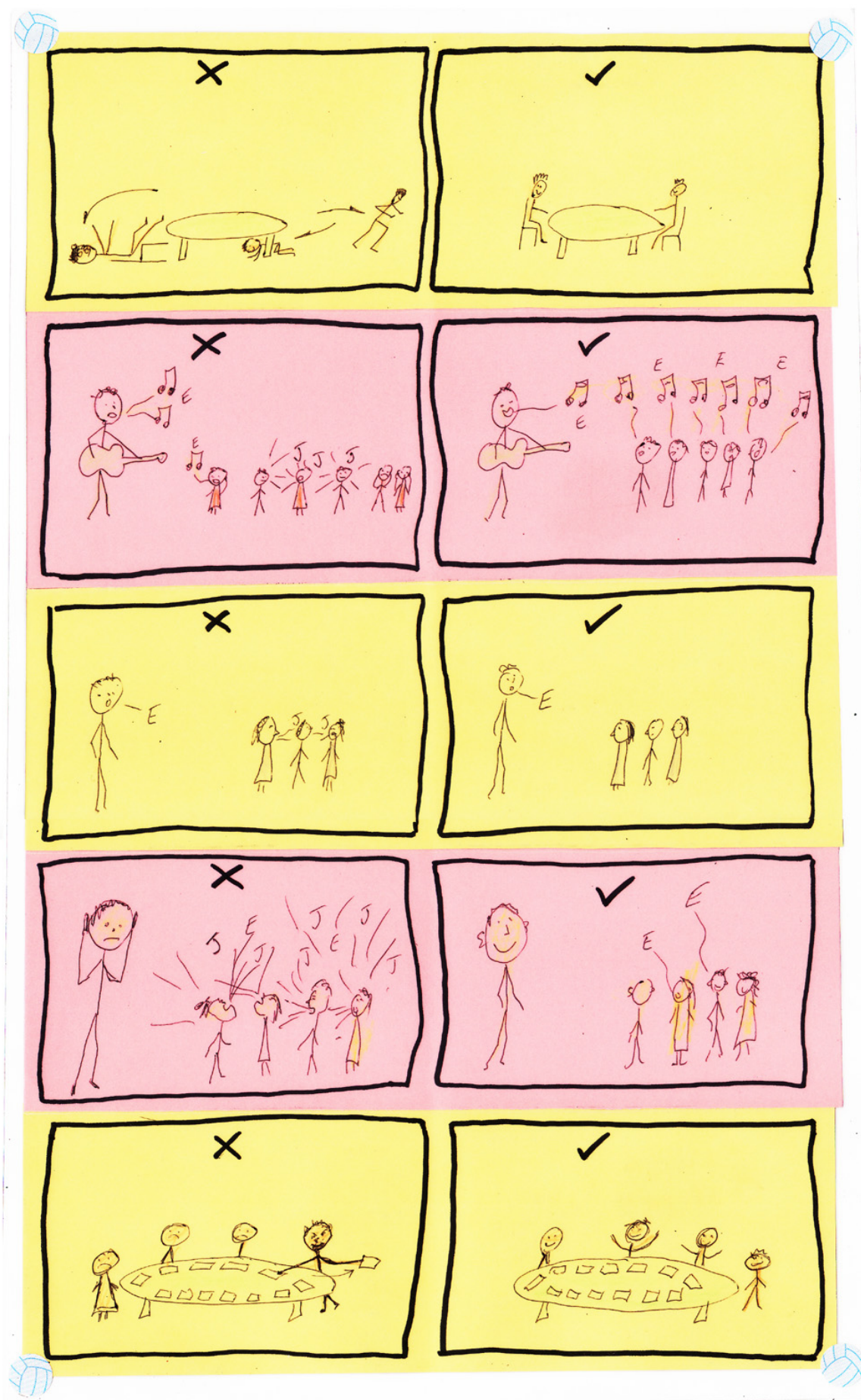
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# Appendix 1. Classroom rule poster

Note: 'E' represents English (L2) and 'J' represents Japanese (L1) in the poster





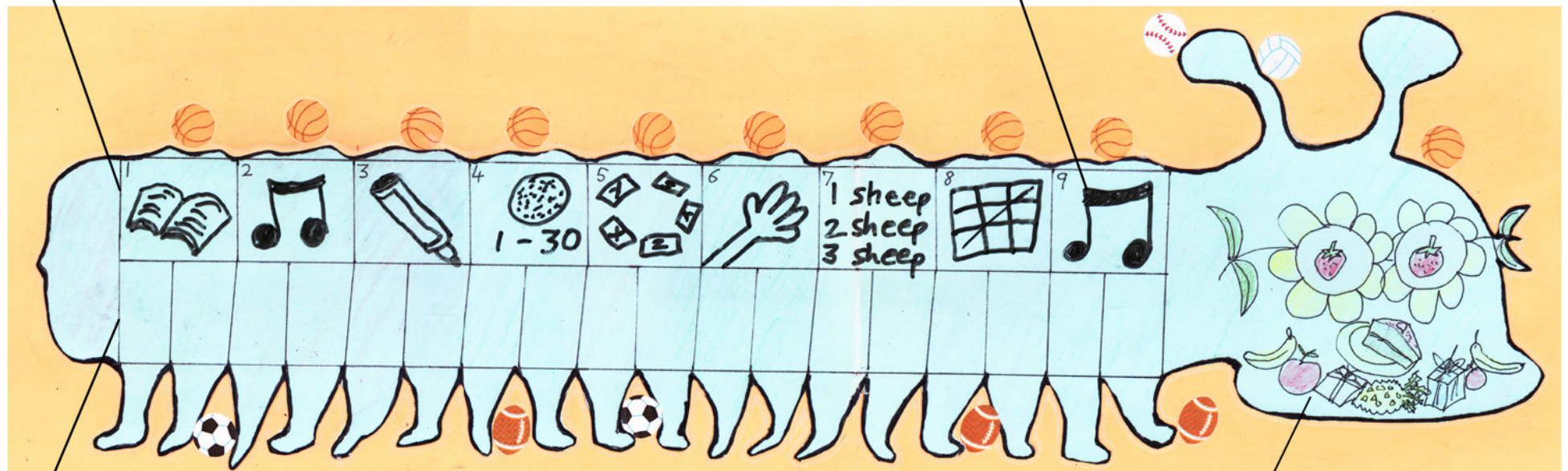
## Appendix 2. Behaviour Game and Scoreboard

Directions: the students race the teacher to reach the goal first: the students reach the goal at the completion of the lesson.

- Classroom activities: total of nine activities drawn on the students' scoreboard (these activities can be changed according to the lesson plan).
- Students' scoreboard: the counter moves as students complete each classroom activity (total of 9 spaces for the students to reach the goal).
- Teacher's scoreboard: the counter moves when a student breaks one of the classroom rules (total of 18 spaces for the teacher to reach the goal)

Students' scoreboard

Classroom activities



Teacher's scoreboard

Goal