English Classroom Interaction between Slow Learners and Teachers

A case study of slow learners at primary level in Suzhou district, China

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Abstract

English classroom interaction between slow learners and teachers in a primary branch of a private school was studied. It aimed at observing and finding the everyday situation in English classrooms of China. It specifically explored challenges faced by slow learners and their teachers in English classroom interaction. Possible ways to promote the present situation were discussed.

A qualitative case study design was applied to study four children and a teacher of English. Partly participant observation was used to explore repair and evaluation/ feedback in teacher-student talk, group work and strategies applied by the teacher in getting students' attention back to study. In addition, background information about informants was obtained from interview, informal conversations, school documents and records.

The findings indicated that the main pattern of classroom interaction in this study was a typical Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) type in which students did not initiate talk or activities. Within this pattern, the teacher used to initiate problems in students' talk and apply different strategies to help to repair them. Teacher's evaluation/ feedback was given according to different situations and influenced children. Group work was arranged by the teacher frequently in this study, which had its advantages in developing students' problem solving skills and cooperative learning strategy, but in the meantime, had its disadvantage in communication and attendance.

Based on the findings, recommendations were made. Teachers should leave more time for slow learners in classroom talk and provide elicitations when it is necessary. Besides, teachers should plan group work very well and put efforts to ensure its quality of attendance (Hassanien 2007). Furthermore, English classroom interaction pattern needs to be shifted more towards students and let them become active participants, for example, give them more open-ended and collaborative working tasks in class. Teachers may keep themselves be aware of information on slow learner

teaching from different sources. School principals and Bureau of Education may arrange some workshops on slow learner teaching for teachers. Besides, teachers of English should keep promoting their own listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities in English. If time and economy permit, Bureau of Education shall send more teachers to English speaking countries for English language training courses.

Dedication

To my dear family!

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Acronyms

CCFA: China Chain Store & Franchise Association

CET: College English Test in China

EFL: English as a foreign language

FAPE: Families and Advocates Partnership for Education Project

GOV: The Central People's Government (of People's Republic of China)

HERC: Higher Education Research Center of Sichuan Foreign Language Institute

IRE: Initiation-Response-Evaluation, a classroom interaction pattern

MOE: Ministry of Education (of the People's Republic of China)

NMT: National Matriculation Test

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

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1. Chapter I Introduction and Background Information

1.1 Introduction

Darwin (1872) says, the fitness survives in natural selection. This is a fast developing world in which competition is everywhere even in the school where people want to be excellent and extraordinary in academic as well as in other aspects. But there is a part of students who are left behind for different reasons in study by their peers and need special teaching (Bell 1974). FAPE (2003) uses the term *slow learner* for this group of students who learn more slowly than their peers, yet do not have a disability requiring special education.

Kephart (1971) describes a slow learner like this:

'One day he learns the classroom material to perfection; the next he seems to have forgotten every bit of it. In one activity he excels all the other children; in the next he performs like a two-year-old child. His behavior is unpredictable and almost violent in its intensity. He is happy to the point of euphoria but, the next moment, he is sad to the point of depression.' (p. Preface v)

Yet slow learner is a special but no consensus, undiagnosed term (Kaznowski 2004). Understanding of this term is different according to different scholars and researchers in different context. So it is specially introduced in Chinese context in Chapter 2 and referred again in concept explanation in Chapter 3.

These students bother the teachers, their parents and even themselves a lot. They are regarded as failures. Teachers try in different ways to help them. They spends a large amount of time on the slow learners, but it has been misspent (Heidmann 1973). It could have a good effect if the time has been spent on the children efficiently. Parents are also struggling in helping slow learners but lack of professional knowledge and

experience. Misunderstanding and bias on them require on edge deep researches about them. A research on slow learners is really necessary and urgent.

1.2 Research Problem

This is a study which investigates English classroom interaction between slow learners and teachers: a case study of slow learners at primary level in Suzhou district, China. It aims at observing and finding the everyday situation in English classrooms of China. It specifically explores challenges facing by slow learners and their teachers in English classroom interaction. Possible ways to promote the present situation will be discussed.

Being a teacher of English who taught in a primary part of a private-owned school for three years in China, the author met different 后进生(hou jing sheng) which is equivalent to slow learners in English (Li 2007; Du et al. 2003). She wonders why the opinions and the results differ so much from child to child while they start at the same point at the very beginning. What is happening in the classroom? What are the interactions among the slow learners, the peers and their teachers like? How to improve the present situation? However, in order to conduct an in-depth study within a limited time for a master study, the author decides to put her main focus on interaction between slow learners and their teacher in English lessons at primary level but not the peers. On the other hand, Rogoff (1990) claims, interaction with peers are less effective than interaction with adults in development of children.

1.3 Research Questions

- What are the characteristics of English classroom interaction between slow learners and teachers at primary level?

- How are repair and evaluation/feedback accomplished in teacher-student talk and group work?

- How do teachers get slow learners' attention back when they are not sharing focus on study in English class?

- What are the possible improvements for the present situation? This research is not going to explore solutions for the present situation, but the findings of it will bring us to a level where we can discuss possible improvements in the future.

1.4 Significance of the Study

To observe and study on the interaction between English slow learners and the teacher in the classroom is very important in seeking better understanding of the phenomenon. In the mean time, the study could provide information to teachers, parents and education officers about English slow learners. Besides, it could be used as a reference to other researchers who want to do their research in this area.

1.5 Overview of the Thesis

In chapter two, after this introductory chapter, the author presents the context where the study situates, outlining the situation of slow learners in China. In addition, the author presents the educational system and its connection to slow learners in this specific context. Afterwards, factors about English and English classroom in China are introduced.

In chapter three, slow learner and classroom interaction together with talk, repair and group work are presented as theoretical concepts in Chinese context. In addition, the author presents theoretical aspects contributing to the understanding of social interaction in the classroom.

In chapter four methodological aspects used in this study are presented. Case-study research is discussed, along with partly participated observation as the main method, interview and informal conversations as supplementary methods. Implementation of

the empirical study, factors which secure validity and reliability, factors which may threaten validity and reliability and ethical concerns are further discussed.

In chapter five the analysis builds upon the qualitative data from the observations.

The last chapter sums up the findings and attempts to provide answers to the research question. The extent to which theories have been found useful and relevant is discussed and recommendations for the future are presented.

2. Chapter II Chinese Context

Being the biggest communist country in the world, China has its own special situation which is different from other countries in different areas. In this chapter, slow learners' situation in China is introduced. In the meantime, related aspects on education system of China are presented briefly. Then unique position of English in China is described in three directions: government policy, international communication needs and big events. The last but not the least, English classroom as a main EFL (English as a foreign language) teaching place in China is presented.

2.1 Slow Learners in China

As the third-largest country in the world, the People's Republic of China has a land area of about 9.6 million sq km. At the end of 2006, population of china is 1,314,480,000 inhabitants (National Bureau of Statistics of china, 2007). There are 34 provinces, municipalities, directly governed cities and special administrative districts. The target district Suzhou locates in the east of Jiangsu province which has the largest population density as 729 p/km in China (CHINAPOP 2006). Suzhou, a middle city of China which is near Shanghai, has a population over 7 million (Suzhou China 2006).

Such a huge population brings lots of pressure and problem both on the country and individual level. Among them, employment is one of the trickiest issues. Severe competition in job market teaches people to strengthen their competency all the time. Everyone wants the top kindergartens, the top primary schools, the top secondary schools and the top universities. But the number of *tops* is limited comparing with the population. The very important and easy measurement which decides where you should go is academic score written on the paper. Under this pressure, teachers and parents pay great attention to students' academic scores (Wxxiong 2006). Teachers pay great attention to it because the school authority gives them the pressure. The

school authority has this pressure because schools are competing as well. Schools with high scores will get honored and more financial support from the government. Private schools with high scores can get more students recruited, which also means more financial income.

But there are always some students who learn things more slowly than the others. These students could not always finish their homework in time, disturb the class, could not concentrate on the class well, their scores are below average and so on (Du et al. 2003). Teachers call them 后进生 (hou jing sheng) among colleagues. Teaches spend much more time to give these students extra lessons and exercises. But it does not help much. Families feel desperate when they get a 后进生 (hou jing sheng) as the son or daughter because that's their only child (one child policy in China starts since 1979, CHINAPOP 2006). Teachers do not want 后进生 (hou jing sheng) in their classes because they may affect the average score of exam result of the whole class. Most of them do not have a chance to go to the university due to poor academic performance. On the other hand, applying a well-paid job without a university certificate is very difficult in most cases, especially in such a big country with a huge population (Huang & Hu 2004). After graduating from high schools or technical schools, they do physical labor which is poorly paid (Chu & Ling 2005).

2.2 Aspects Related to Educational System

The compulsory education in China includes six years in primary and three years in secondary school. After that, students can choose to go to high schools or technical schools for three years. Those who attend the high school will have a national exam in the end which is the final exam of high school and the only criterion for Chinese university application in most cases: National Matriculation Test ---NMT (MOE 2007). In NMT, Chinese, Math and English are three main and obligatory subjects. A student can enter those top universities like Peking University, Tsinghua University if he/she gets a good score during this exam; on the contrary, he/she will go to those

second-class, third-class universities, and even lose the chance to be educated in universities.

For children with disabilities, according to *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Disabled Persons* (GOV 2005), nine years' compulsory education should be provided for them (primary plus secondary). There are 1,605 schools of special education, 14,257 special classes of ordinary schools and a large number of disabled teenagers in regular studies by the end of 2006. School attendance rate of children with visual disabilities, hearing and speech disabilities and mental retardation arrives 77 per cent, the number of disabled children at school is 362,946 (MOE 2006).

2.3 English

English is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air-traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science, technology, diplomacy, sport, international competitions, pop music and advertising. English language education has been taken by the Chinese leadership as a vital role in national modernization and development (Hu 2005; Ross 1992; Adamson & Morris 1997).

2.3.1 English as a Gate Keeper in China

English proficiency brings individuals economic, social and educational opportunities (Hu 2005). It is a passport to higher education at home or abroad, lucrative employment in a public or private sector, professional advancement and social prestige (Hu 2002b, 2003; Jiang 2003). Chinese government pays lots of attention to national English learning. Firstly, according to Chinese curriculum (MOE 2001a), English is one of three compulsory subjects from primary three to senior three. In some poorly equipped schools, English as a subject can be introduced at Junior Secondary 1 (HERC 1993). It is in NMT as well (see Chinese educational system). In the university, students have to pass CET 4(College English Test Level 4) before

graduation no matter in which departments they are. Otherwise they can not get the certificate of graduation. English is also there in postgraduate entrance exam for students. Failing to pass it means a failed application. Secondly, English is like the gate keeper in the civil servant recruitment examination. Candidates who fail to pass it do not have qualification for government employee application (GOV 2006). Thirdly, when employment comes to non-governmental places like companies, organizations and institutions, English is still the necessary part even though some of the positions do not have any connections with English.

2.3.2 English and World Connection Needs

As a member of United Nation, China is on a fast developing track recent years. As a result, contacts between China and foreign countries are getting more and more frequent. Lots of foreigners come into China for investment and traveling. English is the main language in communication between Chinese and these foreigners because Chinese language is considered very difficult to foreign learners.

2.3.3 English and Big Events

When China opens its gate to the world, more and more international conferences and activities come to this huge country. The most recent and biggest one is the Olympic Games. China started to apply for the host of Olympic Games in 1982 and succeeded in 2001(Olympic China 2001). Lots of preparations have been done and are carrying on day and night for this worldwide event including English learning. Under government's call, a nationwide English learning activity is carrying on in China. People in different areas are learning English with great passion. Olympic China (2004) reports, people should not be surprised when they hear some old people reading English loudly in the Hutongs (small streets in Beijing) after supper.

So, English is getting more and more important in China. Because of the prominence accorded to English and the escalating demands for English proficiency, huge national and individual efforts and resources have been invested in English language

education (Niu & Wolff 2003). According to a report from China Chain Store & Franchise Association (CCFA 2006) on English training market in China, there are over 50,000 English training institutes in China. According to data from CCFA (2006), this training market creates about 15 billion yuan (Chinese currency) till 2006, and this number will be twice in the future. In China, there are over 300 million people learning English at school or in English training institutes now, which is about one fourth of the whole Chinese population (CASS 2006). But among these people, less than 20 million can communicate fluently in English. Questions like: *What is behind this sad result? What is influencing people in English learning?* attract lots of researchers' attention. For the author who has a background as a primary English teacher, she prefers to investigate this issue on primary level with slow learners in school.

2.4 English Classroom in China

English as a subject came into Chinese classroom in 1970s (Hu 2005). Chinese teachers of English, under the influence of thousands of years of Chinese traditional education culture, which is represented by Confucius, used to conduct teacher-centered education (Hu 2005; Sharpe & Ning 1998). Confucius (551-479 BCE), was a thinker, political figure, educator, and founder of the *Ru* School of Chinese thought. His teachings, preserved in the *Lunyu* or *Analects*, form the foundation of Chinese education thousands of years ago. Study, for Confucius, means finding a good teacher and imitating his words and deeds. *'A good teacher is someone older who is familiar with the ways of the past and the practices of the ancients'* (Lunyu 7.22). According to Chinese Educational Dictionary, school education is an activity in the need of a society or a class, which supports the teacher-centered education in a certain extent (Gu 1992). Although this condition is changing as Preus (2007) states that Chinese education is becoming more increasingly decentralized and learner-centred to meet the demands of globalization, the strong influence of the past can not be eliminated completely in a short time. Besides, NMT is still there leading the

developing direction of national education, which is a strong reason for remaining of teacher centered education in English classroom in China. According to the author's study and teaching experience, a traditional English lesson is like this:

Ss: Good morning, teacher!

T: Sit down, please! OK, today we'll learn the new lesson.

(Students take notes.)

T: Today we learned so many ideas. After class you must remember all. Now the homework is...

Students just take notes on what the teacher introduces throughout the whole lesson.

In a primary classroom, English lessons are much more active with games, songs and group works (Liu 2001). Students are eager to raise their hands to do presentation, performance and answer questions. However, under Chinese curriculum requirements, teachers have to finish teaching the contents set by the national curriculum within limited time (Pan 2006). Although the teachers try their best to make the English classroom more interesting with different activities, teachers' explanation still occupies a big portion of a lesson. Moments like deep exploration of problems and extra time leaving for slow learners to think before answering a question in English classroom teaching are still missing.

3. Chapter III Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, concepts of slow learner and classroom interaction are introduced related with previous literature. Within classroom interaction, talk, repair and group work as classroom activities are presented. Afterwards, in coping with the theme of this study, two theories are presented on social interaction level: ZPD from Vygotsky and guided participation from Rogoff (1990).

3.1 Concepts

3.1.1 Slow Learner

Throughout the years, slow learners have been called borderline, dull, dull-nor-mal, dull-average, low achievers, mildly mentally handicapped, marginal learners, gray-area children, at-risk, and struggling learners (Mary 2008; Kaznowski 2004). Scholars define slow learners in their own way. Hardin (1987) introduces that they are lack of academic success, especially in reading; low power of retention and memory; reduced ability to make abstractions; anxiety and fear of failure; poor self-concept; and poor organization. According to Kaznowski (2004, p. 3), they

- *Are working up to their potential, but far below that of their same-age peers;*
- *Have considerable difficulty learning;*
- *Do not meet most state criteria for special education services;*
- *Are expected to perform at the average and meet minimum competency testing requirements to receive a high school diploma.*

In China, situation is similar. Those who get very low scores which is comparing with the average of the whole class in a long run will be reported to the local educational bureau by the teachers. Diagnoses will be given by psychological experts. Those who are diagnosed as *learning disability* or *mental retardation* will not be included when class average score is calculated; while those who are not diagnosed

as disabled students but really get very low scores and behavior badly will be still counted into average and compete with their peers (Lei 2004). These students are called 后进生 (hou jing sheng) in China, which is the term used mostly in educational field and easy to be understood by readers in China (Du et al. 2003). Du et al. (2003) suggest 后进生(hou jing sheng) can be understood as slow learner in English. So, as it was mentioned in Chapter 1 that there is no consensus on definition of this term, slow learner will be the term used for this group of students in this study.

Low achievement in academic is a well-agreed character of slow learners. In Madison's (1971) opinion, a slow learner is labelled when he can not keep up with his peers in study. According to Pecaut (1991), a slow learner usually has difficulty in all the subjects. He does not have the capacity to learn intellectual things (Kirk 1993).

Moreover, slow learners are different from students with learning disability (Okey 2007). Kaznowski (2004) argues that slow learners who are not learning disabled either mentally retarded but need more educational help than others. Shaw and Gowens (2002) assert even the highest level of slow learners' performance can not reach the lowest requirements for regular students. However, most research concentrates on severe handicaps and learning disability but not on slow learners (Kaznowski 2004).

3.1.2 Classroom Interaction

According to Hegarty et al. (1998), a classroom is the room or space in which the teaching or learning takes place. It should be suitable for learners to interact with their teachers and other learners, to exchange ideas and information, and to interact with the learning material.

Again Hegarty et al. (1998) describe, interaction in a classroom is a two way communication which including discussion, questions and answers, collaborative learning, debate and group work. Farr and Shaeffer (1993) consider classroom interaction is effective for increasing problem solving skills, promoting positive

attitudes, enhancing thinking skills, promoting understanding of concepts and principles and developing values.

A typical classroom interaction pattern is the Initiation- Response- Evaluation (IRE) sequence (Kumpulainen &Wray 2002; Cazden 1986, 1988; Mehan 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard 1975). In this pattern, the teacher controls the interaction content and procedure, which has been criticized by little stress on communicative functions of interactions (Kumpulainen & Wray 2002). Gradually, the role of student in classroom interaction becomes an active participant:

'…the increasing use of student-centered learning situations, characterized by open-ended tasks and collaborative working modes, seems to have modified the traditional interaction patterns in classrooms and changed the roles of the teacher and students as communicators and learners'. (Kumpulainen & Wray 2002, p.134)

In classroom interaction between slow learners and teachers, the children need more *tricks in the sleeve* from their teachers to work with (Rhona 2008). Veir (1989) suggests, teachers should elicit students' responses, provide proximity, positively reinforce answers, provide time to respond, and give corrective feedback to create a helpful environment for the slow learners. Besides, according to Garner (2008), it is very important to bring the whole selves of both students and educators into the classroom when a classroom climate is created.

Talk and Repair in Classroom Interaction

Talk is '*an integral part of how understanding is developed'* (Maybin 1994, p.133). The importance of allowing space for talk within the curriculum has been recognized for a long time (Bruner 1978; Barnes 1976; Martin 1976; Britton 1970). According to Drew and Heritage (1992b), talk in a classroom is to impart some knowledge. While Johnson (1995) analyzes the ways in which teacher communication patterns influence and in certain ways restrict student participation opportunities, and by extension, their acquisition of a second language, which is English in this study.

McHoul (1990) refers to sequences in IRE (Kumpulainen & Wray 2002; Cazden 1986, 1988; Mehan 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard 1975) play an important role in the system of repair. He found in his study in Australia that in classroom talk, where teachers do next turn repair initiations, and third turn correction belongs to students, *'teachers tend to show students where their talk is in need of correction, not how the correction should be made'* (p. 376). *'Repair refers to the processes available to speakers through which they can deal with the problems which arise in talk'* (Liddicoat 2007, p. 171). There are four types of repair (Liddicoat 2007; Schegloff et al. 1977):

- Self-initiated self-repair, in which the speaker both indicates the problem and resolves it.

- Self-initiated other-repair, in which the problem part is raised by the speaker but resolved by the recipient.

- Other-initiated self-repair, in which the recipient of the talk indicates the problem and the speaker resolves it.

- Other-initiated other-repair, in which the recipient of the talk both indicates and resolves the problem.

From the author's experience who has been a primary English teacher for three years as it was introduced in Chapter 1, she believes that classroom talk and repair, especially between teachers and slow learners, can help children with knowledge commanding and good learning habits forming.

Group Work in Classroom Interaction

Group work is one type of active learning in which it encourages students to develop questions, hone their problem solving skills, and create something of substance (Colbeck et al. 2000). According to Watson (1992, p. 84), group work *'allows students to learn by doing rather than listening'*. Group work is often characterized as collaborative or cooperative learning strategies. *'Collaborative learning refers to a*

variety of instructional practices that encourage students to work together as they apply course material to answer questions, solve problems, or create a project' (Colbeck et al. 2000, p. 60).

According to Hassanien (2007), students feel that group work is a significant method to foster the development of critical thinking through discussion, clarification of ideas, and evaluation of others' ideas. His study (2007) shows that students consider *poor communication* and *poor attendance at group meetings* as the main challenges they face when working within a group.

In China, group work is one well known technique of communicative language teaching, which is commonly used in many EFL (English as a foreign language) settings (Chen & Hird 2006).

Kerry and Sands (1982) indicate that group work helps pupils work together and learn from each other, in the meantime, remove the sigma of failure for slow learners. They also mention that group work helps children come to respect each other's strengths and weaknesses. From the author's own experience, slow learners do not always just get help but also contribute meaningful ideas and efforts in group work. They are pleased when their contributions are applied by other members of the group.

3.2 Theory: Social Interaction

This study was based on social interaction theory. Social interactions (Rummel 1976) are sequences happening between individuals (or groups), who modify their acts, actions or practices according to the actions of their interaction partner(s)' actions. In other words they are events in which people attach meaning to a situation, interpret what others are meaning, and respond accordingly. It is not bound to physical relation or distance but lies in mutual orientation, which means there is no interaction if only one side acts without the other side's awareness or response (Rummel 1976; Weber 1947). Moreover, there is no social interaction when one side is only treated as a physical object, an animal, a machine or a phenomenon.

3.2.1 Vygotsky and ZPD

From Vygotsky's point of view, social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky (1978, p. 57) states:

'Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intra-psychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals.'

For Vygotsky, it is necessary that everything internal in higher forms was external, that is, for others it was what it now is for oneself. Any higher mental function necessarily goes through an external stage in its development because it is initially a social function. This is the center of the whole problem of internal and external behavior. To clarify this, Vygotsky (1981, p. 162) argues, '*any higher mental function was external because it was social at some point before becoming an internal, truly mental function*'.

Composition, genetic structure, and means of action (of higher mental functions)--in a word, their whole nature--is social. Even when it turns to mental processes, their nature remains quasi-social. '*In their own private sphere, human beings retain the functions of social interaction*' (Vygotsky 1981, p.164).

A significant aspect of Vygotsky's theory is the idea that the potential for cognitive development depends upon the '*zone of proximal development (ZPD): a level of development attained when children engage in social behavior*' (Vygotsky 1978, p. 86). Full development of the ZPD depends upon full social interaction. The range of skill that can be developed with adults' guidance or peer collaboration exceeds what can be attained alone.

Within ZPD, incorporation is very important for cognitive development. Individuals participating in peer collaboration or guided teacher instruction must share the same focus in order to access the zone of proximal development. '*Joint attention and*

shared problem solving is needed to create a process of cognitive, social, and emotional interchange' (Hausfather 1996). Furthermore, it is essential that the partners be on different developmental levels and the higher level partner be aware of the lower one's level. If this does not occur, or if one partner dominates, the interaction is less successful (Hausfather 1996; Driscoll 1994).

However, Vygotsky is too emphatic on the academic aspect of ZPD and seems to ignore the other areas of human development, for example, social skills, behaviours and physical abilities among others. Baldwin establishes a system of logic of development which is named '*genetic logic'* (Baldwin 1930, p. 7). He thinks the development situation of people is variable. And this variability follows social interaction in which people create their own experience. This theory has the similar point of view as ZPD but more concentrated on the developing situation.

When the issue comes to slow learners, Vygotsky's ZPD theory becomes closely relevant. Slow learners' own achievement is usually depressing as introduced in Chinese context and concepts. They need help from other people. In cooperation with or in interaction with more capable people, for example in classroom interaction with the English teacher in this study, they get the opportunity of developing inherent re-sources which is exploration of their potentiality in English learning in this study. The English teacher as a more capable person guides them and helps them in different ways, which will be analyzed in Chapter 5.

3.2.2 Rogoff and Guided Participation

Rogoff (1990) suggests that Vygotsky's view of social interaction enabling a learner to move through the Zone of Proximal Development may accurately describe the role of interaction in learning skills and knowledge that enable the child to use the intellectual and technological tools of the culture. But he seems to focus particularly on the interactions involving academic skills in schooling settings. Research indicates that social interaction is an important context for the development of planning skills. Children learn about the process of planning as they coordinate plans with others and

as they observe and interact with more experienced planners (Gauvain 1992; Gauvain & Rogoff 1989; Radziszewska & Rogoff 1988). The influence of adults in children's social interaction activities, especially in learning, is significant. '*Children's attention and skill with objects can be channelled by adults' highlighting of events during social interaction*' (Rogoff 1990, p.158). However, she (1990) also points out that young children's difficulties in participating in joint decision making in planning may influence cognitive development in social interaction. Later, Rogoff (2003, p. 284) indicates that '*the same processes are involved when children engage in interactions that assist them in learning skills and practices that many consider undesirable*'.

In her guided participation theory, Rogoff explored interactions not only in instructional interaction but also in other forms. '*It focuses on the side by side or distal arrangements in which children participate in the values, skills, and practices of their communities without intentional instruction or even necessarily being together at the same time*' (Rogoff 2003, p. 284).

There is no official definition of guided participation but according to Rogoff (1990), it involves guiding and learning between children and their social partners, in order to build bridges form children's present understanding and skills to reach new understanding and skills. What is happening in the process of guided participation is structuring situations and transferring responsibilities between children and their social partners. Besides explicit verbal communication, guided participation includes tacit, intuitive, and routine forms of communication and arrangement of children's learning environment. The widespread existence of guided participation is backed by Rogoff (1990) and other researchers' findings in various cultures, Mayan, Mexican, Indian, etc. What differs across cultures is: first, the skills and values to be learned (the goal of culture); second, the way of communication between adults and children (verbal or nonverbal, whose responsibility, participation or observation); third, social partners of children (parent or other children or community).

Instead of concentrating on academic knowledge of ZPD, guided participation widens the scope of learning under guidance. For example, it also includes social activities that are avoided to learn by social partners and by children themselves

(Rogoff 2003). Comparing with ordinary students, slow learners need more attention and guidance in different aspects. In this study, teacher's guidance was not just limited to textbook knowledge but also covered class rule, equality of students and so on in classroom interaction.

4. Chapter IV Methodology

This study is a qualitative approach, case study design. Observation was used as research method. Semi-structured interview and informal conversation were used as supplementary methods.

A qualitative approach '*must occur in a natural setting rather than an artificially constrained one such as an experiment*' (Marshall & Rossman 1989, p. 10). This study was carried out in the classroom which was a natural setting. Furthermore, according to Gall et al. (2007, p. 447), '*case study design represents a basic form of qualitative research. It is the in-depth study of one or more instances of a phenomenon in its real-life context that reflects the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon*'. So a qualitative case study research was adopted in this study which allowed the researcher looking closer to the interests, attitudes, knowledge, roles of students and teachers in English lessons.

This chapter includes participants, sample and sampling procedure, data collection methods and instruments, case description, pilot study, main study, data analysis, validity, reliability and ethical considerations.

4.1 Participants, Sample and Sampling Procedure

4.1.1 Participants

Participants of this study are students who are regarded as slow learners in English by their teachers in primary school. On the contrary to Eseza's (2004) sampling criterion for slow learners, which is less than 30 marks percent in exams, here in this study the criterion is up to 60 marks percent, which means participants in this study get their average score less than 60 marks percent in English exams as well as in daily performance and exercise. Although this could be criticized but according to Chinese

context and the reason that there is no agreement on the definition of slow learners which is stated by Kaznowski (2004), it worked in this research.

4.1.2 Sample

In order to get rich information of the informants, a purposeful sampling was applied in this study, which just as Gall et al. (2007, p. 178) once pointed out, '*in purposeful sampling the goal is to select cases that are likely to be information-rich with respect to the purposes of the study'*. Number of cases in this study was small which allowed the researcher seeking depth of the information from the cases (Patton 2002).

4.1.3 Sampling Procedure

China is a big country with big population just as has been mentioned in Chapter 2, so it is rather difficult either on time or economy for a single researcher to carry out a research throughout the whole country within six months. So the district was decided in Suzhou because of following reasons:

- Accessibility in terms of distance and safety.

- Well-developed economy and education especially in English education.

Only one particular school was purposefully selected for the study among many schools, because of the practical reasons below:

- It is a school with four branches: primary, secondary, senior and international branch. Students age from 6 to 18. Development of students' is easy to be traced.

- English is a main course and English study begins from Grade 1 in this school.

- The researcher was a teacher of English in primary branch of this school and familiar with the teaching and learning system of this school.

- It is easily accessible.

Four children were selected for the sample:

- Teachers' opinions.

- Average score in English exams during the last year is below 60 (score below 60 which means failure in Chinese assessment system, full score is 100)

- Without any known disability.

- Willing to be observed and to talk with the researcher.

Class teachers were chosen because they were close to students' study life and they had a lot of information about the phenomenon that was studied.

- Class teachers of the selected children: the teacher of English and the teacher in charge of the chosen class. (In China, there is one teacher taking care of daily issues like cleaning, disciplining and class activities in each class. During the research, the English teacher of the chosen class happened to be the teacher who was in charge of that class concurrently. So only one teacher was chosen at last.)

- Qualified teachers.

- Willing to be accessible on the subject of the study and to provide support and the necessary information when the situation demands.

4.2 Data Collection Methods and Instrument

4.2.1 Observation

'Although data from research participants usually are easy to obtain, many individuals bias the information they offer about themselves, or they cannot recall accurately the events of interest to the researcher. An alternative approach is to

observe directly the behavior and the social and physical environment of the individuals being studied'. (Gall et al. 2007, p. 263)

The purpose of this study is to find the characteristics of interaction between slow learners and teachers in English classroom settings. It needs the true situation and development of the teaching procedure from natural settings rather than information directly obtained from the individuals within the settings which maybe carrying bias. Sechrest (1979) suggests that observation can be useful to avoid potential inaccuracy and bias in this context.

There are two main types of observation: participant and non-participant. Lacy (1976, p. 65) defines a participant observation as '*the transfer of the whole person in an imaginative and emotional experience in which the fieldworker learned to live in and understand the new world'.* With this method, the researcher would be able to obtain more detailed and accurate information about the people he/she is studying through a long period of time (DeWalt et al. 1998). But, due to a practical reason that it was a six-month master study. It was rather difficult to do a complete participant observation. So to get accurate and rich information within limited time, a partly participant observation which is described by Yin (1994) as not to just observe things passively, but also take certain role within the case study, was applied.

4.2.2 Semi-structured Interview and Informal Conversation

'The semi-structured interview involves asking a series of structured questions and then probing more deeply with open-form questions to obtain additional information...This interview approach has the advantage of providing reasonably standard data across respondents...' (Gall et al. 2007, p. 246)

Informal conversations (Cazden 1988, p. 55; Tarule 1996, p. 291; Gall et al. 2007, p. 475) are natural conversations for information collecting which always happen without planning.

As Gall et al. (2007) find, observation is more *time-consuming* although it is good at getting data directly from research participants. Therefore, in limited time for a master study, semi-structured interview and informal conversation were used as supplementary methods in obtaining background information of the chosen school, the class and informants, as well as their feelings and opinions.

The teacher of English from the selected class was interviewed. Tape-recorder was used as a tool of interview. Open-ended interview guide was used to allow respondents to use their '*unique ways of defining the world*' (Denzin 1970, p. 125). Informal conversations with the school principal, teachers and slow learners were conducted during breaks and after school.

4.3 Case Description

Brief information from the interview and informal conversations about the target school, the class, the teacher and children is introduced below.

4.3.1 The School and the Class

This school was founded in May, 1997. It is a residential school with 2750 students from 6 to 18 years old and 228 teaching staff. It is divided into primary, junior, senior and international four branches, 70 classes, among which 26 belong to the primary branch. There are about 100 students from other Asian Countries and districts, for example, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Because of high tuition fee, most of the students in this school are from rich families. The class which was purposefully sampled in the research is in Grade 5 with 24 Chinese students, 2 Koreans and 1 from Taiwan. Most of the students in this class were born in 1997, 10 years old. Only three of them were born in 1996, 11 years old.

Foreign language schools take English as a very important subject, and in addition, other foreign languages such as Japanese, Korean and French are taught according to students' interest. According to Chinese curriculum, English subject teaching starts

from Grade 3 in public primary school (see Chapter 2). While in foreign language schools, it starts from Grade One. In number of lessons per week in English, it also has priority in foreign language school, which is from five to seven depending on different grades, while in public schools it is only two or three. In the school where this study was undertaken, there are five English lessons, one Bilingual Science (taught in English), one D.I.Y. (do it by yourself, students make handcrafts under teacher's instruction in such lessons, taught in English), and one Oral English lesson per week. The first three are taught by Chinese teachers and the last one is taught by foreign teachers who are from America or England. As the principal introduced, students' English level was higher than public school students', and they had the highest score in all the English exams and competitions since 1998 in the district.

4.3.2 The Teacher

This teacher graduated from a teacher's college which was two years after high school. This is her fourth year in teaching but the first year to be in charge of a class. She taught English in Grade 6, 4 and 3 in the past three years. In the study, she was teaching English in two classes in Grade 5 including the one chosen for this research. She introduced four 后进生(hou jing sheng) in English subject in the target class because they had the score below 60 per cent, bad habits of learning, could not concentrate on study for a long time or do their exercises correctly. In her point of view, to have them in the regular classes is good because the other students can help them. But as for students with disability like deafness, blindness or autism in regular classes is not a good idea because teachers do not have special needs education knowledge in regular schools in China. She said she kept encouraging them by asking easy questions during the class. She believed that it would be good for them to make teaching and learning activity more interesting in English classroom interaction.

4.3.3 The Students

These four students were introduced by the teacher specially. Some of the information below was got from the interview with the teacher, some came from informal conversations with the slow learners.

Some information is similar among these four students. All of them were born in 1997, 10 years old, resident in the school. All the parents own companies and they are busy. No one understands English among these parents. According to the teacher, their score in English reading, writing and speaking is usually less than 60, and their handwriting was hard to be recognized. In the four student informants' opinion, the desiring teacher should not always let the students go to the office when they do something wrong, not be so strict, like to smile, be patient to all the students no matter they are good at study or not, not give too much homework and not always require the parents to come to school.

Student informant (1) lives with his mother and sister who's a high school student in the urban area. His father lives in the town. Sometimes his father makes calls to them. His father rarely stayed with them during holidays, which was introduced by the teacher. But Jack said he still liked his father better because he took him traveling sometimes and never beat him while his mother did because of low score from the school. According to him, his mother cared about his study but she did not know English, his sister knew but had no time for him. Jack did not like English except the section of game playing as he told the author in one of informal conversations. Jack also introduced, he attended an after-class learning group where a teacher gave English lessons once a week, which he thought was helpful. As the teacher informant said, Jack never asked the teachers questions after class. In his opinion, 40 minutes per lesson was too much and lessons were boring.

Student informant (2) lives in the town with his parents and a cousin. His father is much more elder than other students' because his parents had him after their first son died at eighteen. He told the author that he liked this school because teachers here

were good. Besides, he said he liked English in Grade 4, but got less interest on it since Grade 5. According to him, he liked his father better because he was very patient and never beat him while his mother did. The teacher introduced, he could not concentrate on study, used to chat with classmates in the lessons, could not finish homework most of time and most of answers he gave were wrong although he was willing to raise his hand in class. "*He could be better if he wanted",* the teacher said.

Student informant (3) lives with his parents and grandma in the town. He said he liked the school because it was very beautiful and lots of nice teachers were there. His father meets him two or three times per week because he works in another city. He told the author that he liked English lesson and could cooperate with classmates. His mother hires a private teacher to teacher him at home during weekends, which he thought was very helpful. According to him, sometimes there was too much homework and some of it was too difficult for him. He also told the author, he could not always concentrate on the lessons within the whole lesson (40 minutes). According to the teacher, similar with Mike, Harry liked to answer questions in class but most of them were wrong, his writing habit was bad and hard to recognize.

Student informant (4) lives in the rural area with his parents who would blame him but never beat him when he got low score, he introduced. He said he loved his father better because his mother was too talkative. He told the author he liked this school because it was big and lots of friends were there. According to the teacher, Mike could not concentrate on the lessons for a long time or finish his homework alone, and sometimes he looked outside of the window in class.

4.3.4 Additional Information

It was the school where the author had been working in the last three years. The English teacher of the target class in Grade 5 was sick in the first two weeks in September. The school was lack of teachers at that time because four teachers were pregnant (they just took half of the work task) and three were sick including that English teacher out of fifty primary teachers in total. The principal invited the author

to take that class for two weeks as their English teacher. Students got familiar with the author during that period. When the English teacher came back, the author still had one lesson per week in their class on Bilingual Science (to teach Science in English).

4.4 Pilot Study

According to Gall et al. (2007), a pilot study needs to be included in the research project. It is to test and revise the procedure which is planned to use in the main study in a small scale.

4.4.1 Gaining Entry

Research application was made by the author to the Bureau of Education where she was suggested to apply directly to the target school because it was a private owned one. So the author asked for permission with an introduction letter from Special Needs Department of Oslo University to do her research to the school authority from whom she got a written permission (both letters see in the appendix). The school principal recommended Grade 6 which containing four classes to the author as a research grade, which was changed later into Grade 5 after the pilot observation. She informed the class teachers of the target grade about the research project. Class teachers agreed upon it.

Target students and their parents were noticed by the class teachers. They gave oral permissions because the parents said written things made them uneasy.

4.4.2 Pilot Interview

Before the formal interview, pilot studying of the interview guide was performed to '*ensure that they will yield reasonably unbiased data*' (Gall et al. 2007, p. 253). It was conducted in a separate room in English. The interviewee of the pilot interview

was a class teacher in Grade 5. Some of questions in the interview guided were rearranged for better understanding.

4.4.3 Pilot Observation

A pilot observation was carried out in Grade 6 at the first week of September to test the observation tool before formal observation. In the meantime, the author found there would be many exams during that semester in Grade 6 according to the school schedule, which meant there would not be plenty of time for research. So she had a discussion with the school principal who recommended Grade 5. Then the author went to the primary branch and had a discussion with the coordinator of primary branch and other class teachers. They suggested one class in Grade 5 because there were several students in this class had very low score in English as well as other subjects. The author made a phone call to the English teacher of that class who was sick during that time. She agreed with the study. Agreement from the four target students were obtained as well. The video camera which was used in the pilot observation was found not so clear in taking images. So a new camera was bought for the formal observations.

4.5 Main Study

Sixteen observations, one interview and some informal conversations were conducted in the main study. As introduced in case description, students and the teacher did not take the author as a stranger, or just a teacher, a researcher but also a close friend. It helped the author with bridging the gaps between the teacher and her, the slow learners and her, to get rid of nervousness of the participants and get a natural picture of classroom interaction.

4.5.1 Partly Participant Observation

After pilot observation, the author conducted one week's observations which had not been taken as research data later. These observations were made to get the teacher and students used to the video camera. Sixteen observations have been done from September to December for four target students, four observations for each: in order to catch every moment of the interaction clearly with the small video camera, the author decided to concentrate on only one student informant in one observation. Each observation recorded one lesson which lasted for 40 minutes. Up to first week of December, the author finished with all the observations. During the observations, field notes were taken for supplementary information.

All the observations took place in English lessons because this study was aimed at English learning specially. All the four selected children were boys although the author wanted to find some girls as well. But according to the criteria mentioned in sampling procedure, only these four boys should be sampled. During the observation, the teacher and the students knew they were observed but they were not aware which particular child was observing. They were told after class in informal conversations with the observer. This helped the observer get information on how the children behaved normally.

During one observation, the observer found no enough storage space in the video camera. So she deleted one observation in it which had been stored in the computer. It took her five minutes. She took detailed notes while releasing spaces from the video camera.

From 1st. November to 16th November, an English teacher from a public primary school had her English teaching practice in the target class. She was from a teacher training program which lasted for two weeks. One of the observations was taken when she was teaching in the class. It could be criticized but the focus of this study was on interaction not particular person. Although the English teacher was changed, the focus of the study had not been changed.

4.5.2 Semi-structured Interview and Informal Conversation

Just like the pilot interview, the formal interview the English teacher of the target class was conducted in a separate room. The interview language was English. It was recorded and in the meantime, brief notes were taken. The interview contained following aspects: background information of the class, background information of the teacher, background information of the slow learners and teacher's opinion about slow learners.

Many informal conversations with the class teachers including the one in this study and student informants were held during breaks and after school (It was a residential school where students stayed till the weekends.) on opinions and background information. Notes were taken during and after these conversations (sometimes the author did not have a pen in hand). The language used in informal conversations was Chinese which helped the conversation go through easily and relaxingly in the informants' mother tongue.

4.6 Data Analysis and Organization

'Analysis is a breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion.' (Jorgensen 1989, p. 107)

Videos from observations were transcribed right after data collection. Transcripts were read carefully to develop into different categories through coding process which '*is used to pull together and categorize a series of otherwise discrete events, statements, and observations which they identify in the data*' (Charmaz 1983, p. 112). Three categories of observation data were developed as

- Repair and evaluation/feedback in teacher-student talk;

- Repair and evaluation/feedback in group work;
- Strategies in getting children's attention back to study.

Transcribed observation data is going to be analyzed category by category in Chapter 5. According to Silverman (1993), conversation analysis (CA) concerns about the sequential organization of talk. During analysis procedure of observation data, conversation analysis is considered a very important part because it can study '*the organization and orderliness of social interaction*' (Anthony 2007, p. 6). Field notes taken during observations will be referred in data analysis.

Interview transcripts and notes from informal conversations were used as background information in Case Description section of this chapter. Students' records on exams, exercises and homework were also referred in the background information which helped the author find the students' performance in the past quickly and easily without direct participation of respondents.

Pseudonyms are used during the data analysis procedure to keep confidentiality of the informants.

Table 1. Pseudonyms and Abbreviations of the Participants

Participants	Pseudonyms	Abbreviations in Talk
English teacher	Teacher	T
Student informant (1)	Jack	J
Student informant (2)	Mike	M
Student informant (3)	Harry	H
Student informant (4)	Tom	T (In the talk with the teacher, the full name of Tom was used.)
One ordinary student in the observed class		S
Two or more ordinary students		Ss

4.7 Validity and Reliability

Hammersley (1990, p. 57) explains, '*by validity, I mean truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers'.* It tells us whether an item measures or describes what is supposed to measure or describe (Bell 1999). As for reliability, Hammersley (1992) defines it as the degree of consistency of obtaining the same result in repeated occasions by different researchers or by the same researcher.

4.7.1 Factors Secured Validity

Gall et al. (2007, p. 474) suggest a number of strategies which have been recommended by Maxwell (2005) as very important in reducing validity threats to increase quality and rigor of qualitative research. In accordance to their research, following factors secured validity in this study:

- Usefulness. English learning is a highly concerned issue these days in China (see Chapter 2). To explore and study English classroom interaction between slow learners and teachers at primary level would help people get a clearer picture and better understanding of how things going on at the beginning level of English learning in China

- Participatory models. Participants were involved all through the research from pre-study, data collection and data analysis by being asked for suggestions.

- Triangulation of data collecting methods, data sources and theories. Observation was used as the main data collecting method. Semi-structured interview and informal conversation were used to get background information and opinions of participants; Different categories of participants were used: slow learners, the English teacher, other class teachers and the school principal; Conversational analysis theory and IRE

classroom interaction pattern were used as basis of observation data analysis.

- Rich data. Rich data including videos and notes of observations, recording and notes from the interview and notes from informal conversations were collected to provide a full picture of classroom interaction for the study.

- Peer examination. Comments from colleagues were asked by the author. Drafts of this case study report were discussed in group meetings.

4.7.2 Factors Secured Reliability

Following factors secured reliability of this study:

- Long-term observation. Observation in this study lasted for four months. Seventeen observations including a pilot one were done with four English slow learners repeatedly to '*increase the reliability of case study findings*' (Gall et al. 2007, p. 475).

- High technical quality of recordings and sufficiency of transcripts (Perakyla 1997). Image and sound of videos from observations and recordings from the interview were good. Observation data transcripts were sufficient.

4.7.3 Factors may Threaten Validity and Reliability

- More observations were about to conduct. But there were lots of activities in that semester: Sports meeting, Foreign Cultural Festival, 10th Anniversary Celebration of the School, National Opening Class Competition, monthly exams and the Mid-term exam. Lots of lessons were cancelled or rescheduled.

- The observer's position in the classroom. It was about where the observer should stay when she was doing observations with the video camera. At the

beginning, she did it by sitting closely to the informants, where she could catch every little movement including face expression and murmurings of children. But they made faces towards the camera which turned to be an excuse for them not to focus on the lecture. Then she chose to stand not so closely to the informants, so that they did not pay so much attention to the video camera, but the murmurings and chatting from the informants became hard to be recorded because of the distance. Besides, the author could not be sure if her presence in the classroom affected participants and their interaction, but over time, it became weaker and weaker.

- Gender. All the four English slow learners were boys in this study according to the sampling criteria. It would be more representative if girls could be studied as well. On the other side, it might bring some bias because both the author and the English teacher were female (According to a report in 2007 from MOE, about three fifth of primary teachers in China are female).

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Harmful and sensitive questions in the semi-structured interview guide and informal conversations were modified or avoided. Proper permission was obtained from the school authority. Teachers and students who participated in observations, interviews and informal conversations had been told clearly about the aim of the research and their right to ask questions. Personal information was not reported in the result. Anonymity and pseudonyms were used to secure the confidentiality of participants. Raw materials would be kept in a safe place. Only the author and her advisor could access them.

5. Chapter V Observation Data Analysis

This study focuses on English classroom interaction between slow learners and their teachers at primary level. To answer the research questions raised in Chapter 1 on English classroom interaction characteristics, repair and evaluation/feedback in teacher-student talk and group work and teacher's strategies in getting slow learners' attention back, analysis of transcribed data from sixteen observations mainly focuses on three categories: repair and evaluation/feedback in teacher-student talk; repair and evaluation/feedback in group work; strategies in getting children's attention back to study.

In the first category, fulfilled repair accompanied with verbal and non-verbal evaluation/feedback are analyzed. In the second category, repair and evaluation/feedback in group work discussion and group work presentation are analyzed. Scenes in which the teacher applied verbal, non-verbal warning and individual guidance while she found student informants playing, chatting, sleeping and absent-minded in the classroom are analyzed in the third category. Besides, the four students' non-study activities which were ignored or undetected by the teacher are also presented.

The first observation with Jack was taken on Tuesday, in the morning of 18 September, 2007. The school started on 1 September. The observation started from 10:00 to 10:40. The English teacher of the target class just came back to teach after two weeks' medical leave. Due to school activities held in September, the second observation with Jack was conducted almost one month later, which was Wednesday afternoon. This observation was from 14:10 to 14:50. The third observation was taken a week later. It was Wednesday, 17 October, the second lesson in the afternoon, 14:10-14:50. After two weeks, the last observation for Jack was taken. It was a lesson in the morning from 10:00 to 10:40. In this observation, storage space was not enough when the lesson started for ten minutes. Five minutes were used to release the space by deleting some files. Notes were taken during the five minutes.

For Mike, the first observation was on Tuesday, 25 September, the fourth lesson in the morning, 10:00-10:40. The second one was also on Tuesday, 23 October, the fourth lesson in the morning, 10:00-10:40. It was a very noisy lesson. Mike even tried to interfere with the observation. The third one was on Tuesday, too. It was 20 November, the fourth lesson in the morning, 10:00-10:40. After two weeks, the fourth observation with Mike was conducted in the afternoon, 14:10-14:50. The teacher found three students including Mike were missing when the lesson just started. According to the students, one boy in this class got shit on his trousers, so Mike and another student went helping him in the dormitory. But they could not tell how long would it take. The observer decided to cancel this observation. However, she met the three students when she went down stairs on the first floor (the classroom was on the fourth floor). It was five minutes past since the lesson started, the observer followed them back to the classroom to do the observation.

The first observation with Harry was on Tuesday, 25 September, the forth lesson in the morning, 10:00-10:40. The second one was on Wednesday, 24 October, the second lesson in the afternoon, 14:10-14:50. And the third one was also on Wednesday, 7 November, the second lesson in the afternoon, 14:10-14:50. This lesson was taught by an English teacher from a public primary school, who was from a teacher training program which lasted for two weeks (1 Nov. -16 Nov.) as explained in the methodology chapter. The last one with Harry was Wednesday as well, which was 28 November, the second lesson in the afternoon, 14:10-14:50.

The first observation with Tom was on 16 October. The second one was after ten days, on 26 October. The third one and the last one were taken on 9 November and 28 November respectively. All the four observations with Tom were taken in the morning from 10:00 to 10:40.

Table 2. Conversational Transcribing Keys (Liddicoat 2007)

Symbols	Meanings
:	Lengthening of the previous sound.
___	A stress on the underlined part.
= =	One talk begins immediately when the first one stops. Or, two talks run together.
° °	Quiet talk. Using of °before and after the segment of talk which is quieter or whispered.
Er	Words searching.
-	A stop in the talk.
〔 〕	Two speakers begin to speak at the same time.
( )	Non-verbal elements of the talk/explanatory notes.
Uh-uh	No, negative speech sounds.
En/mm	Yes, but not so satisfied with the answer, positive speech sounds. *En,* as a positive expression, is one of Chinese speech sounds. (Teachers of English in China are used to pronounce Chinese speech sounds although they may have good knowledge of English.)

5.1 Repair and Evaluation/Feedback in Teacher-student Talk

In a class with only 27 students which was class under study, comparing with class size at 50-70 of public school, students got more chances to talk with the teacher. The biggest portion of talk in this study was in Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) pattern (Mehan 1979). For example,

T: What do we need for making a cake?

M: Em: some butter.

T: We need some:

M: We need some butter.

T: Some butter! Right! Sit down, please. (Observation One with Mike)

It was a typical example of IER pattern in this study. The teacher initiated the question on *making a cake*, Mike responded with *some butter* which was not a complete sentence, towards which the teacher initiated a place of repair by *we need some,* and gave a feedback as *right* after the repair was done by Mike. In this pattern, the teacher checked Mike's vocabulary on food, knowledge in daily life and helped him with arranging a complete sentence. Just as in the example, teacher initiated repair was very common in the talk, among which some was fulfilled by student informants, some was not. Towards different performance of them, the teacher applied different strategies to help them and give them evaluation/feedback in verbal or non-verbal forms. Apart from this, incomplete IRE examples in which the four student informants did not respond to teacher's questions were analyzed. They were called "response missing talk" by the author.

5.1.1 Fulfilled Repair and Evaluation/Feedback

In most of fulfilled repair examples, the teacher gave verbal evaluation/feedback like *good* and *yes.*

T: What's the difference between Picture 1 and 2?

H: There's a : clock in the : o :: on the world.

T: There is a clock in Picture - 2.

H: On the world. Er ::: er :: is isn't :::

T: There.

H: There.

T: There   〔isn't〕.

H: 〔There〕isn't : er :: clock :: er :: on the wall

T: In Picture?

H: In Picture 1.

T: Yes, good. OK. Now - I think you can put it on your book. (The teacher gave him a sticker.) (Observation Two with Harry)

As stated ahead, this talk is in IRE pattern. Within this pattern, teacher initiated repair appeared four times. In the first repair, the teacher initiated and repaired the problem with pointing out the picture number. Harry did not repeat the teacher's repair but continued to answer the question. The other three places of repair occurred with an incomplete sentence, in which the teacher initiated and repaired with telling Harry a part of the sentence. Harry repeated after her but could not finish it. Then the teacher elicited him with one more word, after which Harry modified his answer. But it was complete yet. So the teacher initiated the problem once again by informing him what is missing, after which Harry repaired the problem. The teacher evaluated Harry's answer with *yes* and *good*, in addition, a sticker (small pieces of sticky paper on which different pictures are printed, children like to put them on their books and bags) was given to him as a bonus.

In the following repair examples, the teacher applied *yes* as a confirmation to students' repair. In the third observation with Mike, the teacher reviewed ways of expressing time with the students, while Mike's attention was in his desk. After five students answered the same question according to different time showing on a paper clock, the teacher found that Mike was not listening.

T: What's the time? Mike, Mike! (The time on the clock was 8:45.)

M: It's a quarter past : nine.

T: Past or to?

M: To nine.

T: Yes.

This talk was initiated by the teacher, replied by Mike and a positive feedback was given by the teacher. Within this, the repair on prepositions was initiated by the teacher who gave two of them for choosing. Mike repaired correctly. The teacher affirmed his reply with *yes*.

This is an example from Jack's fourth observation, in which the teacher asked students to find the card with the phonetic symbol pronounced by her. Phonetic symbols were written on small paper cards.

T: /e/, /e/, /e/.

J: /e/, /e/, /e/. (Jack touched the card with "æ".)

T: No.

(Jack corrected himself by touching the right card.)

T: Yes.

The teacher initiated the talk by pronouncing */e/*, Jack responded with touching the wrong card. The teacher indicated the mistake by giving him a negative feedback *no*, after which Jack repaired his talk. At last, a positive feedback *yes* was given to him.

Mistakes might occur together with slow answering in these four students' talk. While the teacher still gave them positive feedback.

T: What does she like? What doesn't she like? (Harry waved both hands to attract the teacher's attention.)

T: Please. (She nodded towards him.)

H: En :: she like : she likes :: en :: water, but she don't : doesn't : don't like : er :::

T: Don't or doesn't?

H: Doesn't : like : juice.

T: Yes. (Observation Three with Harry)

The teacher initiated the talk by asking questions. Harry replied intermittently and incompletely with a difficulty in choosing a suitable word. The teacher elicited him by giving him the choices between *don't* and *doesn't*. Harry repaired his problem with choosing the right one after hesitating for a little while. A positive feedback of *yes* was given by the teacher.

In some talk, the teacher chose to repair the problematic items by herself. In the first observation with Jack, he was asked to repeat *September the eighteenth* after three girls.

T: You try.

J: Temb :: tember :: the eighteens.

T: Th! (The pronunciation of "th".)

Jack: Th.

T: Yes.

In structure, it was initiated by the teacher's invitation, responded by Jack, after which a feedback was given. In content, Jack pronounced *September* as *temb/tember* and *eighteenth* as *eighteens*. The teacher initiated and repaired the second one by pronouncing it to let him follow. The first one was not mentioned by the teacher. After that, *yes* as a positive feedback was given to Jack.

Tom was asked to spell the word *invitation* in the second observation with him.

T: Tom, please.

Tom: I-n-v-i-t-a-t : a : t-a : .

T: T-i.

Tom: T-i-t-o :::.

T: T-i.

Tom: T-i-o-n.

T: Yes.

After the talk was initiated by the teacher, Toms tried to spell the word but he was confused with the last four alphabets. The teacher initiated with telling him two of them. However, Tom still replied with wrong spelling. Till the teacher initiated again with the same letters, he got it and repaired correctly. A positive feedback *yes* was given by the teacher afterwards.

Similarly, in the fourth observation with Harry, he was asked to say something about a picture.

H: She have a beautiful :: red ::: red :::en ::: tent.

T: Yes, she has a beautiful red tent.

Also initiated by the teacher, this talk contained one mistake where *has* should have been applied to the pronoun *she* in Harry's answer. But he used *have*. The teacher said *yes* to him and repaired his mistake directly.

Occasionally, nonverbal feedback was given according to different situations. Sometimes this happened in gestures. The meanings of the gestures which were given by the teacher were confirmed by her after classes in informal conversations with the author. For example, Tom was asked about his birthday in the second observation. He hesitated in choosing a suitable preposition in his response. The teacher helped him to make a right decision in repair with initiating him two choices and then let him sit down with a hand moving in the air late which meant: right, sit down, please.

T: When's your birthday?

Tom: My birthday is : on the :: seventeenth : : :ov for November.

   (He moved his fingers in the air while answering the question.)

T: Of or ov?

Tom: Of November.

(She let him sit down with her hand moving down in the air.)

Giving students a five was also used as a non-verbal positive feedback in this study. In the first observation with Harry, the teacher asked where the students planed to go on Chinese National Day (1 October). Several students gave their plans. But Harry did not understand the teacher's question at the beginning. Then the teacher explained in Chinese. Harry raised his hand.

H: Let's go to Lily home. Yeah! (Students laughed loudly. Lily was a girl and she was one of his classmates. Students around 10 years old in China keep great distance between girls and boys.)

T: Let's go to Lily's home. OK! (The teacher corrected him and gave him a five.)

After the teacher initiated the topic, Harry responded with a suggestion with a grammar mistake on *Lily*. The teacher did not tell him that he was wrong. Instead, she repaired *Lily* as *Lily's* while repeating Harry's suggestion and gave him a five as an encouragement.

Sometimes, feedback was showing indirectly. In the following three examples, no feedback was given directly to the student informants, but the positive meaning was still conveyed, which was confirmed by the teacher afterwards.

T: Jack, you try. <u>Jack, can you try?</u> (Jack was chatting with the student sitting behind him. Teacher raised her voice at the second time.)

J: P-r : i-m-a ::: r-y: (He wrote in the air with his right hand when he was spelling.)

T: Primary.

J: Prabary.

T: Primary.

J: Primary.

T: Read it together! (Observation One with Jack)

In this talk, Jack did not respond when the teacher initiated at the first time because he was busy with chatting. When the teacher initiated second time, he spelled correctly but slowly. After his spelling, the teacher indicated that he should read it once by reading the word herself. So Jack responded again with reading it but his pronunciation was wrong, which was initiated and repaired by the teacher. He repeated after her. Afterwards, the teacher did not give feedback to him directly but let all the students read the word together, which also meant Jack had pronounced the word correctly.

In the following example, the teacher let the informant ask another student with the same question he made in stead of giving a direct positive feedback.

T: Mike! Mike!

M: What day today?

T: What's the date today?

M: What's the data today?

T: Ask your classmates, please.

(The teacher did not let him sit down and pointed at another student.) (Observation Two with Mike)

Mike heard the teacher at the second time when the teacher raised her voice. His reply was wrong, which was initiated and repaired by the teacher later. He repeated the teacher's repair. After that, the teacher let him ask another student with this question, which meant a *yes* feedback in the meantime.

Still with Mike, in the fourth observation of his, the teacher asked a further question instead of giving a positive feedback to him.

T: Mike. (She moved the needles on a paper clock to ask about time.)

M: It's :: er :: thir : thirteen :::

T: Thirteen?

Ss: Fifteen! (Students corrected him.)

M: It's fifteen past six.

T: And we also can say…? (She asked another student.)(Observation Four with Mike)

Mike obscured *thirteen* and *fifteen*. The teacher initiated the problem with repeating it and the other students repaired for him. He repeated the repair afterwards. Then the teacher asked a follow up question towards another student, which meant a positive feedback as well.

5.1.2 Unfulfilled Repair and Feedback

Due to different causes, some teacher initiated repair had not been fulfilled. In the following example, the teacher gave *en* as feedback towards the talk with unfulfilled repair.

T: Hello, Mike, what do we do on Mid-autumn Day?

M: En :: en ::: (He stood up slowly.)

T: We.

M: We :::

T: Watch.

M: We watch the moon.

T: on :

M: Mid-autumn Day.

T: En, sit down, please.

En was the feedback from the teacher. This was the first observation with Mike, he was asking what to do during Mid-autumn Day (15 August in Luna calendar, middle of September in Gregorian calendar) which was a Chinese traditional festival when family members staying together. The teacher initiated three times for him little by little. He repeated almost every word that came from the teacher but still failed to arrange a complete sentence. The teacher's reply was *en*, which was a positive reply but showed her dissatisfaction as presented in Table 2.

Towards following unfulfilled repair, the teacher showed her negative opinions directly. In the third observation with Harry, he raised the hand to answer the question about time on the paper clock.

H: It's : er : er :: thir :

T: Thirteen?

H: Two, oh, 不是 (bu shi, Chinese, means "no") : It's :::

T: How many? Five? Ten?

H: Tw :: Twenty :::

T: Twenty?

H: Two :::

T: Uh-uh. Who can help him?

The teacher initiated the problem in Harry's answer three times followed with his three tries of repair which were still wrong. Then the teacher said *uh-uh* directly and invited other students to help him.

In most examples of unfulfilled repair, negative feedback was given by the teacher indirectly. For example, in the fourth observation with Jack, he did not understand the teacher's initiation on the problem. He was asked to pronounce a phonetic symbol for a dictation. A student was invited to write it on the blackboard.

J: /ei/.

T: /ei/?

J: /ei/.

T: I said we just review these symbols. Don't mention those we haven't taught. (She meant those were reviewed in this lesson. Jack sat down quietly.)

In this example, Jack gave a phonetic symbol which had not been taught. The teacher reminded Jack on the problem in his talk by repeating it. However Jack did not get it but repeated his answer again. The teacher did not continue with initiation but explained the problem in his answer, which could be understood as negative feedback.

In following two examples, the teacher repaired the problems in the talk by telling the right answers directly. The first one was from the first observation with Harry, he was hitting the girl beside him to get her attention when the teacher was discussing favorite types of moon cakes. The teacher asked him what kind of moon cakes he wanted. He replied hesitantly after the teacher asked twice. Then the teacher repeated his answer to inform him about the problem in it. But Harry did not realize it. So she repaired for him.

T: What do you want? (She was asking about moon cakes.)

H: I:

T: What do you want?

H: En :: I :: en ::: I want :: er :: er :: ri :ce.

T: Rice? - Oh, you want rice - moon cakes. Thank you.

(There are no rice moon cakes in China.)

The other example was from the third observation with Harry, he did not use pronouns in front of *big one* and *small one* when he was asked which spoon in the teacher's hand he preferred. The teacher did not make directly negative comments but repaired Harry's mistake. However, she did not repair the first mistake with *big one.* Maybe she did not hear the answer clearly.

T: Which spoon do you like, Harry?

H: Er :: I like ::: er ::: er ::: big one but I don't like small one.

T: <u>The small one! OK?</u>

Sometimes, unfulfilled repair could be caused by the teacher. In the second observation with Mike, ways of time expressing were reviewed again. Lots of students could describe different time in English successfully, while Mike still had confusion about it. The teacher repeated his answer to let him know that he was wrong. But she did not leave time for him to repair, but called immediately for other students who could answer the question.

T: What's the time now? (The teacher moved needles on a clock.)

M: It's eleven to twelve.

T: <u>Eleven</u> to twelve?! Who knows? Who knows? (The whole class laughed at him.)

S: It's five to twelve.

5.1.3 Non-repair Talk and Feedback

In two types of talk, repair was not there. The first type was when student informants answered correctly. For example, in the fourth observation with Harry, he spelled a word telescope very slowly. The teacher replied with *mm* which meant she was not so satisfied with him (see Table 2).

H: Telescope. T-e-l-e-s :: c :: s-c :: s-c ::: o-p-e, telescope.

T: Mm. Yeah.

In the third observation with him, he made a sentence with *which*.

H: Which ::: er ::: en ::: man ::: er ::: your ::: is your ::: father?

T: Which man is your father? Yes, sit down, please.

He used 52 seconds to complete this sentence. The teacher repeated it and said *yes* to his answer.

In the second observation with him, he was asked to make sentences according to the examples: *What does your mother like? What doesn't she like?*

T:Harry!

H: What does ::: your ::: mm ::: sister ::: like? Er ::: what doesn't ::: she ::: like? (He put his book on his head.)

T: I feel <u>so</u> tired when you say the sentence. Please say it more fluently, OK?

(He smiled and talked with his classmate after that.)

The teacher made her comments by telling Harry her feeling about his speaking speed and raised a requirement for him, which showed a negative feedback towards his answer.

The second type of talk without repair in this study was *response missing talk*, in which the four student informants did not know what to answer towards the teacher's questions. In the following three examples, IRE pattern was not complete because missing of student informants' response. For instance, in the second observation with Jack,

T: What is the time?

(Jack stood there and kept silent. He leaned at the window.)

T: Sit down, please!

(Jack sat down and slept on the desk.)

Towards his silence, the teacher just let him sit down.

In the last observation with Jack, cards with different phonetic symbols were passing through students. The one who had got a card should give one word which contains the pronunciation of the one on the card. Jack got the card with /u/ by shouting *me, me, me…*

T: Please.

(He stood up with a card, looked up and down, but did not know how to continue.)

T: Come on.

(He did not say anything but gave the card to the girl sitting beside him and started to move on the chair and shake his head. The teacher gazed at him for a while.)

Although the teacher did not say anything, the gaze here could be understood as a negative feedback.

A similar one with Tom in the first observation: *Students were asked to recite the names of twelve months one by one. But Tom stood up silently and looked around.*

The teacher shouted, "<u>Sit down, please!</u>" From the teacher's loud talk, dissatisfaction could be felt which might be understood as a negative feedback as well.

In very few cases, teacher initiated repair could be placed wrongly. In the first observation with Harry, the teacher was asking questions according to a listening material on food ordering in KFC which was just played for the students.

T: What does Eddie want? (She asked three times.)

H: Mm :: He wants :: he wants ::: er ::: some juice,

T: Oh, he wants some juice.

H: Some Cokes,

T: Some Cokes.

H: And two hamburgers.

T: Two hamburger : ?

Ss: A hamburger.

T: Yes, two hamburgers. Sit down, please.

In the later part of this talk, Harry gave the right answer two *hamburgers*. But the teacher thought he did not have *s* with *hamburger* which was the mistake occurred to these four informants frequently. So she intended to inform Harry to correct it. In the meantime, other students thought the teacher meant the number of hamburgers was wrong. So they responded with a *hamburger*. But soon the teacher corrected her mistake when she realized Harry was right. In the meantime, a positive feedback *yes* was given to Harry.

Findings: Firstly, Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) pattern was very common in teacher-student talk. Secondly, teacher initiated repair appeared in most examples classroom talk, among which more than one repair in an example of talk was

common, and in some examples number of repair even reached four. Thirdly, within problem initiation, sometimes the teacher initiated the problems with two or three choices. Student informants finished repair easily after these initiations. Fourthly, the teacher repeated students' answers when they replied very slowly. Fifthly, different evaluations and feedback were used in teacher-student talk according to different situation. Most of negative feedback had not been made directly towards the four students. Instead of using *no* and *you are wrong*, she used indirect feedback a lot, for example, repairing the problems, inviting another student to answer etc. Sixthly, in some examples the teacher had to repeat several times to invite a student informant to answer a question. Lastly, in some talk, after several times of teacher initiated repair towards student informants' problematic response, positive feedback was still given.

5.2 Repair and Evaluation/Feedback in Group Work

Group work is commonly applied by teachers in primary English classroom in China. In every observation of this study, the teacher gave different tasks for students to work in groups. Group work in this study consisted of two steps: discussion in groups and presentation in class. Presentation procedure in group work was to report group discussion results to the whole class. Due to noisy condition of the classroom while students were discussing in groups, data presented here on detailed group work dialogues were from presentation procedure.

Below was a group work presentation between Harry and Tom from the second observation with Harry, in which he was supposed to ask Tom about his mother's favorite food and disliked food.

H: Hello, Tom. What does your mother like?

Tom: And!

H: And :: er ::: doesn't ::　　〔What doesn't〕your : or　〔you ::〕your like?

Teacher: 〔*What doesn't*〕 〔*she*〕 *=What*

doesn't she like？*=*

H: What doesn't she like?

Tom: She likes saw :: She likes sausages but she doesn't like : hamburgers.

Teacher: That's all?

(Both boys sat down.)

Three places of repair were done in this presentation, among which one was conducted by Tom, the other two were by the teacher. At the beginning of this talk, Tom used an *and* to remind Harry that he should say more. Then the teacher helped Harry with telling him the starting of the sentence when he could not arrange the sentence. Another repair was done by the teacher because Harry failed to finish the sentence. After the two places of repair, the teacher read the sentence completely which was followed by Harry then. No direct feedback was given afterwards. But from the teacher's question *That's all?* could be seen that she was not so patient either satisfied with the presentation, which was also confirmed by her.

Another example from the fourth observation with Harry was from a group work of Harry, Mike and another student. It was an oral practice. Students were told to make sentences with have/has according to a picture of a sitting-room in which a boy was with a tin-opener, a girl was holding some flowers, beside them, two girls were playing with a puppet, a man and a woman were sitting on a sofa in a corner. Some of the sentences they made were about this picture, some were according to their own situation.

M: I have got :

T: I have! Not "I have got".

M: I have :: what does 〔*he*〕 *…*

T: *⟨I⟩ have a?*

M: Knife.

T: Knife.

M: What does he want :: oh : he have?

H: He : he has :: a ::: ten :::

T: Tin!

H: Oh, tin : o : opener : er : I have a : a ::: what does she have?

S: She has some flowers. What : what do they have?

M: They have a puppet. I : oh :: we have :: oh : we have tent.

T: A tent.

M: We have a tent. What does she want?

H: They!

M: Oh, what does :::

T: What does or what do?

H: °They have! They have!° (Harry whispered to Mike.)

M: What do they have?

H/S: They have a sofa.

T: Yes. Thank you. Sit down, please.

Due to the mistakes in content, grammar and structure that appeared in this group presentation, five examples of teacher initiated repair were conducted. In the first

repair, the teacher pointed out the problem and repaired in the meantime. Afterwards, it was repeated by Mike. In the second one she indicated the problem by telling Mike a part of the answer, after which Mike completed his sentence. The third and the fourth repair were both conducted by the teacher. In the last one, the teacher initiated the problem with offering Mike two choices which made the repair easier. Mike repaired his answer after Harry reminded him by telling half of it. The teacher gave them a positive feedback after their group work presentation.

In the following simulative dialogue in a shop between Tom and Harry, both of them had problem parts in their speech.

H: What :: what ::

T: What or which?

H: Oh, which :: Er : volleyball do you want?

Tom: Er :: I want ::: I want this one.

H: Which one?

Tom: This one. (He turned back smilingly and pointed at the volleyball on the shelves standing at the back of the classroom. Harry turned him back by grasping his shoulders.) I want this one.

T: Which one?

Tom: I want :::

T: The big one or the small one? Or the brown one?

Tom: I want the small one.

T: Mm. Sit down, please.

There were three places of repair which were initiated by the teacher. In the first one, she gave Harry two choices which helped him repair the problem. In the second

repair, the teacher asked for clarification by a question *Which one?* when Tom finished his answer. As Tom could not get it, she gave him three choices on the answer, from which Tom chose one as the repair. The teacher said *mm* after their group work presentation, which meant she was not very satisfied with this presentation, as she told the observer after this lesson.

However, not all the group work could reach to the presentation procedure in this study. Some of them even had not started discussion because of different reasons. In the first observation with Jack, he would rather to scratch his feet than to practice English sentences with his partner. The teacher noticed that and remind him about it. But it did not work very well with him: *…Jack continued to scratch his feet. He did not practice the sentence with the girl. The teacher came and asked him to read. He stopped his activity at once and managed to read the sentence with the girl. He continued scratching when the teacher left.*

In second observation with Jack, he was willing to join in a group discussion. But the group members refused him. The teacher joined in their discussion and resolved the problem. *Jack went to two boys to discuss on the topic 'my daily life' which was given by the teacher, but the two boys in that group refused him. The teacher came into this group and let him come back. He made jokes with another boy in the group when the teacher was talking with a boy in his group. Later he introduced his daily life to the teacher. His group members and the teacher corrected mistakes from his speech.*

In some group work, the discussion failed to be conducted not because of the student informants' own activities or group members' refusal: *Mike realized what to do after half a minute. He left his seat and looked for his partner. But he moved so slowly and seemed hard to choose a partner. The observer suggested one for him. But the teacher said time is up when he was going to start discussion with that student (Observation Three with Mike).* Mike was two slow in starting a group work.

In some observations, the reason for a failed group work was because lack of preparation. For instance, in the fourth observation with Mike, he failed to attend a group work because he lost his picture clock which should have been done at home. *He searched in the desk, in the books and in the school bag but got nothing. The teacher took him to the group but time was up at that moment. He did not do that discussion.*

Sometimes, discussion in groups was done in Chinese, which was away from the teacher's requirement. Because according to the English teacher in the study, one important aim of group was to practice students' oral English ability. For instance, in a five minute's group discussion of the fourth observation with Harry, his group *spent three and a half minutes to decide how to present this story, till the teachers came to their group and asked them how everything was going on...During the whole group discussion, they used Chinese.*

Findings: Group work as a classroom interaction activity was applied in every lesson. In group work, interaction pattern was different from IRE (Mehan 1979) in teacher-student talk. It was initiated by group members, responded by group members and given evaluation/feedback by the teacher. Furthermore, repair in group work was not always initiated by the teacher, group members initiated and repaired some of the problems appeared. On the other hand, slow learners were with slow learners and ordinary students were with ordinary students in grouping. Sometimes, the teacher interrupted student informants' speech with her right answers, after which they showed little confidence and made more mistakes with slower speed.

5.3 Strategies in Getting Children's Attention back to Study

Different from the first two categories' instructional talk, talk in this category turned out to be coordinating. The teacher applied warnings and individual guidance to help student informants' attention back to study when she found they were occupied by other activities or absent-minded instead of studying during the lessons. Besides,

ignoring students' non-study activities by the teacher will also be analyzed as a teaching strategy according to empirical data obtained through observations in this study.

5.3.1 Warnings

In following examples, the teacher called student informants' names loudly to get their attention back to study. While the students might do not understand what was going on although they stopped their activities.

Tom read the newspaper which he just got from the teacher after reading the word "newspaper" correctly. He did not listen to the teacher. The teacher looked at him over four seconds and said, "Tom, look at me!" Tom stood up at once but did not know what happened (Observation Two with Tom).

Mike put a book on his head to attract other students' attention. The teacher called his name loudly, "Mike!" He did not hear it and continued his action. The teacher walked towards him and repeated more loudly, "<u>Mike</u>!" He took down the book immediately (Observation Two with Mike).

Sometimes, to stop these four students just by verbal warning was not adequate. Instead, the teacher approached them "unconsciously". In the fourth observation with Mike, *he looked down at his hands behind the desk. The teacher called his name twice loudly, "Mike! Mike!" He got his attention back to the lesson. But after 30 seconds, he turned the attention to his hands again till the teacher left the teacher's desk and came to him.*

Examples from Jack and Tom:

He did not answer the questions or read after the teacher.... He stopped his activity for a moment as the teacher came to him while he continued after the teacher's leaving (Observation One with Jack).

When students were giving examples, he rubbed the table. The teacher came to him while teaching. He stopped. But he started again when the teacher left (Observation Four with Tom).

5.3.2 Using Individual Guidance as a Strategy

In the following scenes, the teacher gave student informants individual guidance when she found that they were not focusing on the study. *An individual oral English task of reading was given by the teacher. Jack continued his repairing work of the pencil-case just like he did not hear it until the teacher approached to him. The teacher asked him to read. He read with the right hand writing in the air. She corrected him and taught him how to read. She stayed very close to him because it was very noisy in the classroom while everyone was practicing (Observation One with Jack).*

In the fourth observation of Mike, the teacher asked students to finish an exercise on the English book. Mike did not find the right page yet when the other students had started writing. The teacher reminded him about that.

T: Mike, turn to Page 32.

(Mike turned pages back and forth quickly and found it at last.)

T: Can you finish it?

(Mike did not answer but began to check his pencil. Some students had finished the exercise and raised their hands at that time.)

5.3.3 Ignoring as a Strategy and Undetected Scenes

It is time consuming to stop lessons from time to time to give warnings and individual guidance when the teacher planned a lot to teach. Therefore, the teacher ignored students' non-study activities in some occasions during teaching. Normally, she kept teaching in class and just let them do their own activities. After class, she

might have a talk with these students, which was written in the field notes by the author. For example, in the first observation with Jack, *he turned around here and there but did not recite the chant while the other students were reciting under the requirement of the teacher…he played with his hands on the desk, did not repeat after the teacher…he did not read the new sentence "A new term starts on September 1ˢᵗ." after the teacher. During discussion section, students were asked to practice with a partner on this sentence. He did not have a partner and did not work with classmate. He continued to fix the pencil case.* The teacher let Jack go to her office after class.

In the third observation with Mike also showed the similar scene: *…Mike did not write anything. He could not give the answer while the teacher was checking the answers with them. Then it was the second run to write words which contained the same pronounced vowel with 'bat', 'clap', 'dance' and 'black'. He does not write on the paper, either. He touched his nose when the teacher was checking the answers with them.* The teacher let him to go to the teacher's desk after class and asked him what he did during the lesson.

When it came to Tom, situation was very similar, and he was brought to the office after both lessons. *Tom did not read after the teacher, instead, he put up the book, hided behind it… He was playing with some small toys in his desk … Tom played with his stationery on the desk. And then he played with his own hands…Tom played again with the toys in the desk. (Observation One with Tom)*

Tom played his cards…Tom hided his head and plays in the desk when the teacher was writing on the blackboard. (Observation Two with Tom)

Sleeping in class was another big problem of these student informants. Jack once told the author that he felt boring in lessons, which got proved in the observation data by gaping, scratching the body and sleeping on the desk every now and then. The teacher did not stop him but kept teaching. *Jack scratched his arm and neck when the teacher and other students were discussing about 'how to say September the eighteenth'…he gaped when they were talking about 'the eighteenth of September'.*

He looked outside of the window, did not repeat the expression with the classmates...He scratched his arm while the teacher was introducing another expression. He gaped and checked his left arm when the teacher taught English expression for other dates in a month...Jack slept on the desk...He scratched his feet and gaped when others were concentrating on the practices of the new sentence (Observation One with Jack). After class, the teacher asked him what he learned from this lesson and checked his notebook which was blank on this lesson.

Apart from above, there were some moments undetected by the teacher, or maybe she saw them but didn't show them either during the lessons or afterwards. Chatting with classmates during lessons was another characteristic of these four students that was got from observations of this study. Sometimes they were asking questions about study. But mostly, they were making jokes irrelevant to study. However, the voice of chatting was low and lasting time was short, which was hard to be heard by the teacher. Jack used to talk with the boy behind him, *he turned back to the student who was sitting behind him to talk with him three times (Observation One with Jack). One boy talked to Jack and they laughed a lot...He chatted with his classmates without reading after the teacher (Observation Two with Jack). Jack did not sing in the front but chatted and played with a Korean boy who was sitting behind him (Observation Three with Jack).* Harry liked to chat with the girl sitting behind him in class. For instance, *the teacher was teaching some new words. Harry looked around and made jokes with the girl sitting behind him (Observation Three with Harry).*

Absent-minded periods were difficult to be detected by the teacher, which was common among the student informants. In those moments, they did not get what the teacher taught or requested and asked their classmates around them about what they missed, which caused more missing parts of their knowledge because the teacher taught further while they were asking. An example from Jack, *he did not do when the teacher requested to open the textbook to Page 21 and read the dialogue there...Then the teacher asked two students to do role reading, he began to open his book and checked the page with the student sitting behind him (Observation Three with Jack).*

Findings: In this category, towards student informants' non-study activities which were common among Jack, Mike, Harry and Tom, three main strategies were applied by the teacher. Among these strategies, both verbal and non-verbal warnings might work at certain moments but the effect did not last long; Individual guidance might work well but was not used much by the teacher. In certain moments, student informants' non-study activities were ignored by the teacher, and she talked to them after class.

6. Chapter VI Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

In this chapter, discussion of findings from Chapter 5 in relation to the theoretical framework of Chapter 3 is developed according to the categorization of data analysis. *'A key task in writing the discussion chapter is to identify and interpret the important results'* (Gall et. al. 2007, p. 62). A brief conclusion of this study is done afterwards. After it, recommendations are suggested.

6.1 Discussion

In this section, main and important findings from the analysis chapter are introduced and discussed. In the discussion, related theories, previous literature and Chinese context are referred. In teacher-student talk section, findings on classroom interaction pattern, teacher questions, teacher's initiation and repair strategy, shortcomings of other repair and teacher's evaluation/feedback strategy are discussed. In group work, teacher's interruption in group talk, advantages and challenges of participating, grouping and language using of slow learners in group work are discussed. Afterwards, teacher's strategies in copping with slow learners' non-study activities are discussed. In addition, two more findings are stated and discussed: teacher's proficiency in English; inconsistency between slow learners' classroom performance and their academic score, which is put forward by the author as confusion.

6.1.1 Repair and Evaluation/Feedback in Teacher-student Talk

In this study, classroom talk between the teacher and slow learners was initiated by the teacher, replied by students and then the teacher gave feedback. It is a typical Initiation-Response-Evaluation pattern which was stated by Mehan (1979). In the meantime, it is in accordance with typical English classroom interaction pattern in China (see chapter 2). No students, including slow learners, raised any questions to

the teacher in the sixteen observations of this study. In this pattern, teachers have full control over the classroom teaching and learning procedure. Teaching plan can be fulfilled successfully in good time. But students do not participate actively in such a pattern, which is also illustrated by Kumpulainen and Wray (2002) in their study. Although this tradition of teacher-centred classroom interaction is changing throughout the nation according to Preus (2007), the procedure is slow and a lot need to be done, which is including reformation of the national exam system.

Among classroom talk of this study, the teacher used her questions to guide and control students' learning activity. Some questions were applied to find out whether they have the knowledge. It is important to check slow learners' knowledge level every now and then in class teaching as Hausfather (1996) and Driscoll (1994) recommend. It is also helpful in promoting slow learners' ZPD (Vygotsky 1978) level because when their present knowledge level is known by teachers, better guidance and assistance can be done. In the study, however, no one among teacher questions was aiming at what slow learners would like to know or interested on. To certain extent, teacher questions restricted slow learners' participation in such a language learning classroom, which is consistent with what Johnson (1995) discovers in his study.

Teacher initiated repair occurred in most places of classroom talk in this study. Some of the problems were repaired by the slow learners after initiated by the teacher and some were done by the teacher and occasionally by ordinary students: the former is other-initiated self-repair, the latter belongs to other-initiated other-repair as Liddicoat (2007) defines. In self-repair, the teacher initiated problematic places in slow learners' talk but did not repair them for the students, instead, she let the slow learners repair by themselves. She gave suggestions when it was too difficult for them, which shares Veir's (1989) opinion in helping slow learners. Slow learners might not have enough knowledge at the beginning. However, after explained or enlightened by the teacher, they could reach the right point. In such interaction, both sides work towards the same object in joint attention, which makes a good interaction

as Hausfather (1996) suggests. In the research of McHoul (1990) in Australia, he discovered the similar finding. Through this procedure, slow learners reach a higher level in their ZPD: slow learners get problems in answering teacher questions on their own knowledge level, under the teacher's guidance they repaired the problems successfully.

Within problem initiation, sometimes the teacher initiated the problems with two or three choices for the slow learners, who finished repair easily after these initiations. From the author's opinion, by the teacher's elicitation of two or three choices, the difficulty level of the problem is reduced to these slow learners' knowledge level. The result is obvious that the slow learners resolved the problems which had been difficult for them before the teacher's initiation.

In other-repair examples of this study, ZPD was supposed to be there because slow learners repeated the repaired parts after they had been done by the teacher or other students. However, the author doubts whether slow learners understood the repaired parts even after they repeated them. ZPD is not developed if they just repeated what people told but not understood or remembered. On this point, although both initiated by the teacher, self-repair is more helpful in getting better understanding of knowledge for slow learners than other-repair in which the teacher gives them the answer directly. This was agreed by the teacher informant who told the author that she'd rather let them correct themselves if time permitted during the lessons.

In application of evaluation/feedback in classroom talk, the teacher had her own criteria and methods. In many examples, the teacher still applied positive evaluation/feedback to slow learners when different problems had appeared and repaired by slow learners under her initiation. Positive evaluation/feedback was helpful to slow learners, which is also proposed by Veir (1989). Furthermore, most of negative feedback had not been made directly towards the four students. Instead of using *no* and *you are wrong*, the teacher used indirect feedback a lot, for example, repairing the problems, inviting another student to answer etc. It shows that the teacher knows these slow learners' knowledge level and tries to help them get more

confidence in English study, which leads to successful social interaction in ZPD as Hausfather (1996) and Driscoll (1994) suggest.

6.1.2 Repair and Evaluation/Feedback in Group Work

In some observed group work, the teacher interrupted slow learners' talk when they answered very slowly. It made them more nervous, even harder to get a right answer. In the author's opinion, the teacher did it because she should finish teaching tasks according to curriculum requirements, just as Pan (2006) introduced. However, slow learners are not learning disabled and they are expected to study like other students and meet minimum competency, which is mentioned by both Kaznowski (2004) and Lei (2004) in their studies. Being educators, teachers should elicit slow learners, provide them time to respond and create a helpful environment, as recommended by Veir (1989).

Group work was used by the teacher in every lesson of this study, which is a classroom interaction component according to Hegarty et al. (1998). In the group work, slow learners discussed and made decisions with other students, which was helpful to them in question developing and problem solving skills, which is also asserted by Colbeck et al. (2000). On the other hand, as Liu (2001) argues in her study, application of group work enriched the teaching methods and made the classroom more interesting and active in this research. It reduced the teacher's teaching time and provided students time and space to work with peers rather than just listen to the teacher in the classroom, which is mentioned by Watson (1992) as well. After hundreds of years' teacher centred education in China as introduced in Chapter 2, group work can help students find their own voice in classroom interaction.

However, as the author observed, students especially slow learners spent most time of group work in chatting and playing when the teacher was not around, which influenced their social interaction in the group, as Rogoff (1990) states in her study. It reveals a short coming of group work: hard to control, which had not been mentioned

by scholars above. In China, teachers and students alike have been used to teacher centred education in which teachers talk and students copy. It is not so easy for everybody getting motivated and activated in group work where the teacher does not teach. As Hassanien (2007) writes in his study, poor communication and poor attendance is the main challenge of group work. So to take advantage of group work in classroom interaction, teachers should plan it well and check it frequently.

Apart from above, a factor can be found in group work which was recorded in this study: in grouping, slow learners were always in the same group, while ordinary students had their own groups. They helped with each other in group work, which is also found by Kerry & Sands (1982) in their study. For example, they initiated problematic items and repaired for each other in group presentations. Everybody has his strengths and weaknesses, which is the same for slow learners. They can practice their ability and learn things through collaborating with others, which is also indicated by Rogoff (1990). However, it becomes a problem after happening all the time within the study. In one of the observations, Jack was refused when he tried to join in a group of ordinary students in a group discussion. This was resolved after the teacher got involved. In Chinese classroom, it has been like an unwritten rule that *good* students work with *good* students, slow learners group with slow learners, which is not only in group work in classroom interaction, but also in game playing after class. Under this condition, peer teaching, which can also be very useful in slow learners' development as claimed by Rogoff (1990) in her guided participation, may not be achieved. Therefore, teachers need to intervene in grouping procedure and let slow learners join in ordinary students' groups on purpose.

There is one finding revealed by this study, which also bothered the author all through her teaching career: students especially slow learners could not stop speaking Chinese in English lessons, especially in group discussion. In this study, the teacher tried different strategies in prevent students from speaking Chinese, for example, let students who spoke Chinese go to the back of the classroom and stand there. However, students especially slow learners still used Chinese to answer teacher's

questions and have group discussion, which could be seen from data analysis chapter. For foreigners, Chinese is a difficult language; for Chinese, English is not easy, either. Although English is getting more and more popular in China as presented in Chapter 2, ordinary Chinese do not have much chance to speak English. In this study, parents of the four student informants did not know English. English classroom was the only chance for them to speak English. The teacher told the author after class, she took it very seriously with encouraging slow learners to speak English as much as possible in English classroom, but the result was not as expected. The confusion of the English teacher in this study also belongs to lots of English educators in China, which is not only in primary English education, but also in secondary, university and adult level as Huang and Hu (2004) introduce.

6.1.3 Strategies in Getting Children's Attention back to Study

In the observed English lessons, slow learners did non-study activities like playing in the desk, looking outside of windows, chatting and so on. Although the teacher applied different strategies in stopping them, for instance, verbal, non-verbal warning and individual teaching, they started again very soon. It could be understood in one way that the lessons were boring to slow learners. They need special teaching methods which are different from the ordinary ones, as Weber (1947) finds in his study. For examples, as suggested by Rhona (2008), plan the lessons with more *tricks* like games, role playing and songs to attract children's attention. Otherwise, interaction is not successful if only the teacher initiated teaching activities while slow learners did not participate, which is also put forward by Rummel (1976).

When individual or group tasks were given during classroom interaction, the teacher left the teacher's desk and walked around the classroom to guide students individually especially slow learners. It ensures two things: one is to prevent slow learners from doing their own activities, the other one is to help them finish the given tasks. Although teaching time was very limited because of heavy curriculum requirements of China, the teacher still gave slow learners special care in class, which

would be helpful to the slow learners as proposed by Kaznowski (2004) and Bell (1974).

In certain moments, the teacher ignored slow learners' non-study activities during lessons. Instead, she talked to them after class in some of the examples. As the author understands, this can be a strategy in classroom teaching when Chinese context is considered. As introduced in Chapter 2, competition in schools of China is fierce. In addition to standard national curriculum, more teaching content and higher requirement is added by each school, especially private schools. Teachers have to teach what they are told, in the meantime, be fast and accurate. To warn slow learners when they are not focusing on study from time to time during classes will reduce the teaching time and slow down the learning procedure of the whole class. When such incidents accumulate over time, the teaching plan is changed and the consequence will be shown in students' exam score. As the teachers explained in informal conversations, teaching objects were different from week to week according to the curriculum, once a week's object had not been finished, the next object's teaching plan would be affected, which would influence exam results and other aspects in students' study. So English teachers had to be very *mean* in teaching time and finish each specific task in every lesson according to teaching plan. In the author's opinion, to ignore slow learners' non-study activities in classroom interaction is not a good teaching way. But in China with its special context, it can be a teaching strategy if it is used reasonably.

6.1.4 Additional Discussions

In the observation, some information was recorded by the video camera, which was not in the interaction scenes with slow learners. So it was not included in data analysis chapter. However, the author assumes, it will be helpful in getting a better understanding of classroom interaction between slow learners and the teacher in this study. That is the teacher's English proficiency. There were considerable mistakes in the teacher's talk in the observed lessons, for example, the usage of *he* and *she*,

pronunciation of words like *dessert* and *desert* and application of tense. Although for a foreign language, mistakes and confusions are unavoidable. While for a teacher, it is dangerous to have them in the speech. English teachers are very important roles in students' especially slow learners' English study. They learn vocabularies and grammar from the teacher. They imitate pronunciations and intonations of the teacher. The knowledge is forming day by day. In the author's teaching career, she found students' level of English especially spoken English connected strongly with the teacher's proficiency in English.

There is one more finding which confuses the author a lot when she was analyzing the data from observations: the four student informants were not so *slow* in a number of observed classroom interaction scenes, while the results of the exams and exercises show that their achievement in study is far below the average in the same class. Their non-study activities in class could be one of possible reasons. But have they worked up to their potential as described by Kaznowski (2004)? Is there any other possibilities behind and how do they work? A further study is needed at this point.

6.2 Conclusion

In this study, English classroom interaction between English slow learners and their teacher in a primary school were observed and studied. Repair and evaluation/feedback in teacher-student talk, in group work and teacher's strategy in getting slow learners' attention back to study in classroom interaction were analyzed and discussed mainly in Chapter 5 and 6. Through these observed classroom interaction scenes, the author found that slow learners had difficulty in controlling themselves in classroom interaction. Some of them were active in answering teacher's questions but with lots of mistakes. The teacher applied different strategies to help them in class, for example, gave them elicitation in repairing when they met difficulties in talk and encouraged them with positive feedback; got their attention back to study in different means when they were having their own activities; guided them individually in group work and individual work section.

However, interaction is a two way procedure, missing of awareness or participation from either side can not produce a successful one, which is indicated by Rummel (1976) and Weber (1947) as well. Good classroom interaction won't come if only the teacher applies good teaching strategies but the slow learners do not participate; or only the slow learners struggle in classroom but the teacher does not provide chances and guidance.

6.3 Recommendations

In English class teaching, teachers should leave more time for slow learners in classroom talk and provide elicitations when it is necessary (Veir 1989). Besides, group work can be a great help in developing students' practical ability (Colbeck et al. 2000; Watson 1992). But teachers should plan it very well and put efforts to ensure its quality of attendance (Hassanien 2007). Furthermore, English classroom interaction pattern needs to be shifted more towards students and let them become active participants, for example, give them more open-ended and collaborative working tasks in class (Kumpulainen & Wray 2002).

In profession, teachers may keep themselves be aware of information on slow learner teaching from different sources. School principals and Bureau of Education may arrange some workshops on slow learner teaching for teachers.

In English proficiency, teachers of English should keep promoting their own listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities in English. If time and economy permit, Bureau of Education shall send more teachers to English speaking countries for English language training course.

In research, for generalization, a quantitative study can be done based on useful findings of this explorative research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter from University of Oslo

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to certify that **QIAN, Jianhua,** date of birth 09.02.1979, is a full-time student pursuing a course of study at the Department of Special Needs Education at the University of Oslo, Norway, leading to the degree of Master of Philosophy in Special Needs Education (M. Phil. SNE).

This is a continuous two-year programme run on the "sandwich" principle, which involves periods of study and field work/research in both Norway and the home country. The student has concluded the initial 12-month period in Norway and will be returning to the home country at the end of July 2007 to continue full-time studies/research until 1 January 2008 when s/he returns to Norway for the final part of the degree. The period of study will be completed at the end of May 2008.

The main responsibility for supervising the research, developmental work and thesis remains with the Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo, Norway. However, we would kindly request that the relevant authorities give the student the access required to the schools and educational establishments necessary in order to undertake field work and research. We would also be most grateful for any assistance that is afforded to the student which enables her/him to carry out this work, particularly the use of facilities such as access to telephone, fax, e-mail, computer services and libraries at the various educational establishments.

Yours sincerely

Ass. Professor Steinar Theie
Academic Head of International Master's Programme
Department of Special Needs Education

Institutt for spesialpedagogikk
Det utdanningsvitenskapelige fakultet
Universitetet i Oslo
Norge

Department of Special Needs Education
Faculty of Education
University of Oslo, Norway

Appendix 2: Application Letter for Permission to Head Teacher

Department of Special Needs Education

Faculty of Education

University of Oslo, Norway

P.O. 1140 Blindern

0317 Oslo

Head Teacher:

School:

Date:

Dear Madam,

I'm a student at the University of Oslo, taking a Master of Philosophy Degree in Special Needs Education and currently carrying out research in my home country. This research is aiming at promoting inclusion which is both beneficial to the school as well as to the research. In the meantime, I hope it will contribute to the establishment of inclusion in the school and in the country as a whole.

I intend to work with pupils and teachers of Class 2 Grade 5 in the primary branch. All matters discussed during the course of my study, will be treated with confidentiality. Only my supervisor and I are allowed to watch/ listen to the materials. All the materials will be deleted after my research is over. On request the results of the research will be copied to you.

A consent form is attached and I hope for a favorable response from you:

Informant Consent Form

Tick in the box that corresponds to the statement that applies to you:

1. I am willing to participate in the research.

2. I am not willing to participate in the research.

Appendix 3: Application Letter for Permission to the Class Teacher

Department of Special Needs Education

Faculty of Education

University of Oslo, Norway

P.O. 1140 Blindern

0317 Oslo

Class teacher: Zhu Yan

Class: class 2 Grade 5

Date: 12·04·07

Dear Madam,

I'm a student at the University of Oslo, taking a Master of Philosophy Degree in Special Needs Education and currently carrying out research in my home country. This research is aiming at promoting inclusion which is both beneficial to the school as well as to the research. In the meantime, I hope it will contribute to the establishment of inclusion in the school and in the country as a whole.

Your class in particular has been selected to participate in the study. . All matters discussed during the course of my study, will be treated with confidentiality. Only my supervisor and I are allowed to watch/ listen to the materials. All the materials will be deleted after my research is over. On request the results of the research will be copied to you.

Please let me know whether it will be possible to conduct this study in your class by filling in the informed consent for attached. The form will be collected in person.

Informant Consent Form

I'm a student from University of Oslo taking a master of philosophy degree in special needs education. I was a teacher of English in this school before I began my master study in Norway. I am interested in studying interaction the inclusive classroom for my thesis. I plan to do a qualitative study so as to get in depth information about my topic. Your class and you have been purposefully selected for the study. I therefore request you to allow me do the study in your class. If you decide to accept, here is what will happen:

- I'll observe with a video camera as you teach and take some notes.
- I'll observe some children with a video camera as you teach and take some notes.
- I'll interview you for background information of your students and your opinion on inclusive education.
- I'll tape record the interviews.
- I'll work with you in class: help you mark books and make learning aids.

Participation in this study is voluntary and your decision will not affect your profession in any way. Even after deciding to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. The study will be conducted during the normal class lessons. Your head teacher has agreed on the terms. At the end of the study, all data collected becomes a property of the investigator. All the information concerning you will be kept confidential. The data will be dealt with according to the standards of the University of Oslo. For anonymity purposes, pseudonyms will be used, but people who are close to the school and you may identify your involvement.

Please feel free to ask me if you have some questions during this research. If you are willing to take part in the study and you have read and understood the form, please sign below.

Signature: *Zhu Yan*   Date: *0· 04· 07*

Appendix 4: Semi-structured Interview Guide for the Teacher

Tell the teacher that the information will be kept confidential and his/her name will not be mentioned in the study. Inform that the examiners may wish to look at the raw data. Remind the teacher of the aim of the research and he/she is free to stop the interview if he/she no longer wishes to be interviewed. Ask whether to interview can be tape recorded. Tell the participant that interviewer will be noting down a few points during the interview.

<u>Background Information</u>

Position of the teacher:

Educational experience of the teacher:

<u>Main questions</u>

1. How many years have you been teaching?

2. Which grade have you even taught?

3. How many classes are you teaching now?

4. Can you introduce the class recommended by the coordinator?

5. What do you know about slow learners?

6. Do you have experience with slow learners? (If *yes*: How do you experience slow learners?)

7. Are there slow learners in your present class? (If *yes*: Why do you think they are slow learners? Do you feel challenges in teaching them? If *yes*: What are they?)

8. What do you think to have slow learners in regular classes? And why?

9. Did you use special strategies to help slow learners? (If *yes*: What kind of strategies did you use to help them?)

10. Are there other strategies you think will be useful and will apply to help them in the future? (If *yes*: What are they and how to apply?)

*   *Empirical data in this study is not from interview which is just used for background information gaining.*

Appendix 5: Thesis Procedure

Activities	Months of the year															
	2007												2008			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4
Proposal(writing)	★	★	★	★	★											
Making an interview guide					★	★	★	★								
Doing literature review/chapter2		★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	
Seeking for permission		★						★								
Pilot study									★							
Main study									★	★	★	★				
Observing									★	★	★	★				
Interviewing									★							
Writing chapter1, 3, 4													★	★		
Data analysis (chapter 5)												★	★	★	★	★
Discussion, conclusion, and recommendation (chapter 6)															★	★
Delivering thesis																★