STUDY OF IMPROVING THE TEACHER-SUDENT
INTERACTION IN EFL IN CHINESE VOCATIONAL COLLEGE

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STUDY OF IMPROVING THE TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION
IN EFL IN CHINESE VOCATIONAL COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

STUDY OF IMPROVING THE TEACHER-SUDENT INTERACTION

IN EFL IN CHINESE VOCATIONAL COLLEGE

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Under the Supervision of Prof. Daniel Leitch, PHD

Interaction between student and teacher has been regarded as one of the most critical factors which affect students' academic outcomes. This paper analyzed the student-teacher interaction in Chinese EFL classroom and focused on the factors affect teacher-student interaction, and gave some suggestions about what instructors and students should do in order to maintain efficient interaction in both their teaching and learning processes. The purpose of the paper is to develop good student-teacher interaction with the improvement of teaching method in EFL of Chinese vocational college.

By sending out the questionnaire this paper sought to analyze the learning style of students' with low achievements and relationship with teachers. Data and results from 70 accounting students in Chinese vocational college shows what are the students' behavior in class and what the students' ideal teacher look like. Through the questionnaire we can get a conclusion that the learning environment could be greatly improved if Chinese teachers could show more helpful, friendly behavior and less admonishing behavior. It is also revealed that a good teacher-student relationship is really important which can lower students' anxiety and allow the students to feel comfortable to speak in English. Different teacher-student relationships can create different classroom environments, and classroom environments can affect the teachers' teaching and student learning.

THE PROPOSED TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Ⅰ Introduction

In Chinese vocational colleges, More than 90% of students are extremely poor in English learning. Chinese college students and teachers usually have few interactions even in class. Students are usually silent and unconfident in English class. The traditional Chinese culture about education emphasizes the idea that the students are inferior to the teachers which encourages the teachers and the students' unequal status in the classroom. The teaching contents and processes are all decided by the teachers while the students must obey unconditionally without participation. Students must listen to whatever our teachers say and do everything according to their orders. So the students can only accept what the teachers teach them and cannot challenge them.

Statement of the Problem

The paper explores the following questions: 1.How to measure the Interaction between students and Teacher? 2. What is the relationship between student-teacher interaction and students' growth in EFL? 3. How to promote the teacher-student interaction by E-teaching and learning of EFL in Chinese vocational college?

Definition of Terms

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching. It specifically refers to the teaching of English to students whose native language is not English.

Student-Teacher Interaction: According to Moore, student-teacher interaction stresses the frequency and intensity of instructors' influence on learners as amplification to learner-content interaction. It concerns directing, stimulating, and motivating learning; present information; counseling and supporting learners (Moore, 1989). Interaction in this study refers to psychologically and physically meaningful change by consistent communication between more than two people.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to provide a review of the research literature related to student-teacher interaction. An additional purpose is to provide interaction analysis through the survey and questionnaire in Chinese vocational college. There is a need to figure out what factors may affect teacher-student interaction and methods to improve the teacher-student interaction.

Significance of the Study

English teaching is very different, which pays more attention to communication than other subjects. For Chinese English teaching, interaction between teachers and students is still the key element. Teacher-student interaction, as a critical part of English Language Teaching (ELT) with respect to teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) especially in Chinese vocational college, is considered to be of practical significance and well worth studying.

Past studies have primarily focused on students' class engagements and how teachers' interpersonal behaviors affect students' academic outcomes. By analyzing the real Chinese EFL class student-teacher interaction, this study not only gives insight to the significance of student-teacher interaction and the importance to have a good student-teacher relationship in

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EFL class. A good teacher-student relationship can lower students' anxiety and allow the students to feel comfortable to speak in English.

Delimitations of Research

The research will be conducted in and through the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Primary searches will be conducted via the Internet through EBSCO host with ERIC, Baidu Scholar, Merriam Webster, Long Man and Google/Google Scholar as the primary sources. Key search topics will include "teacher-student interaction", "classroom interaction analysis", and "E-Teaching and Learning".

Method of Approach

A brief review of literature relating to the teacher-student interaction was conducted. A second review of literature will be based on factors that affect teacher-student. The findings will be summarized from the recent relevant studies and recommendations will be made. In addition, most important data will be collected from the questionnaire among my students in vocational college.

ChapterⅡ Literature Review

Theoretical framework

According to the social constructive theory of Lev Vygotsky (1978; 1987, as cited in Monzo, D. L.; Robert R., S, 2001), learning and development is a kind of social and cooperative activity,

which cannot be taught but developing in social process. It stresses that people's learning and development happens in the communication and interaction with other people while the teacher is the most important interactive part for the students. Knowledge is constructed by the learners themselves, but not transmitted by other people. This kind of construction takes place in the process of communicating with other people and is the result of communication.

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978; 1987, as cited in Monzo, D. L.; Robert R., S, 2001), emphasizes the social nature of learning and the cultural-historical contexts in which interactions take place. Therefore, teacher-student interactions and the relations play especially vital roles in students' achievements. Learning and development have begun to be conceptualized as sociocultural processes. This view emphasizes the social nature of learning and seeks answers to underachievement in the interactions that produce learning and in the contexts that effect those interactions.

As Piker and Rex (2008) mentioned in their paper, the international ethnography approach studying the kinds of student-teacher interactions will support and hinder students' language developing outcome. Rather than obeying the teachers' authority, it prefers the importance of students' engagement in social interactions with teachers in English classes. It is recommended that teachers can take positive actions to provide optimal circumstances to enhance the students' English learning interactions with their teachers.

Language is used for human communication. In the process of language teaching which aims at the use of the language for communication, the learners should become the center of learning. All of the teaching activities should promote the learners' linguistic performance and the learners should be given much more time to develop their own ways of language use through experience within and outside the classroom. The purpose of teaching should be directed at the learners

themselves. The teachers should analyze the learners' needs and take into account the learners' feelings to achieve the final goals of promoting personal development and developing personal ability not only in the field of language but also in other aspects..

Significance of student-teacher interaction

According to Jian-E Peng, and Lindy, W.(2010), contemporary second language (L2) pedagogy which attaches great importance to communicative interaction in class try to develop learners' communicative competence. Individual learners, however, are not always willing to attempt L2 communication. Chinese students, however, are often stereotyped as passive learners in the language classroom.

Some scholars pointed out that second language (L2) learners acquire linguistic knowledge and ability through the interaction with each other. In the classroom interaction, both the teachers and students can create the learning opportunities, which motivate the students' interest and potential to communicate with others. The interactions which occur throughout the school day in the classroom can create and enhance a friendly and caring relationship or bring damage to the caring relationship (Krieger, J. D., 2002). According to Kang, M. and Imt, T. (2003), learners exchange information and knowledge with teachers by interactions. In many studies, interaction is the key to affecting students' learning outcome.

Song and his colleagues have commented that China has always been a country that emphasizes teacher dignity and student respect for teachers. They pointed out that teachers are stern in front of students and students obey the teacher without discussion (Song, et al. 2005). Kang (2005) proved that students can gain new knowledge and exchange information among

classmates and teachers through interaction. As a result, interaction is important for it can affect students' learning outcome and personal development.

Wei pointed out that Chinese teacher is seen as an honorable person. Chinese teachers are treated with solemnity and awe by the students. Chinese teachers are expected to be stern in front of students and students are expected to show absolute respect to their teachers. However, the learning environment could be greatly improved if Chinese teachers could show more helpful, friendly behavior and less admonishing behavior. And also he mentioned that previous research in psychology has shown that the effect that teachers have on students is largely determined by students' psychological responses to what the teacher does. The results showed important associations between interpersonal teacher behavior and students' attendance (Wei, M. et al. 2007).

With the development of foreign language teaching in China, the communicative language teaching approach has become prevalent in recent years emphasizing student-centeredness. With the student-centered teaching model, an English teacher is recommended to play different roles such as organizer, promoter, co-worker, and bilingual helper. In the basic interpersonal relationship in China's college English classrooms, the teacher-student relationship cannot only directly influence the effectiveness of English learning and teaching, but also communication in English between teachers and students.

Factors which affect teacher-student interaction

Class size

During a typical Chinese post-secondary education period, the class sizes of English as a second-language learning are usually extremely large due to the economic and financial

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considerations. Especially for the non-English majors in high-education level, the number of class size is usually very large. Usually, the class size is over 40. With a crowded classroom, teachers might find it difficult to measure effectiveness. Teachers with large classes feel challenged and stressful, and finally exhausted after classes. For many teachers and parents, class size is obviously an important factor that influences the effectiveness of what teachers and pupils are able to do to promote high quality learning.

It may seem like common sense that fewer children with one effective, certified teacher will yield higher achievement among those children. The research in this document deals with the interactions between teachers and students in primary classrooms when the class size is a factor (Krieger, 2002). "This is often achieved though at considerable cost to teachers' energy, stress and morale. The quantity of academic interactions in large classes tends to be enhanced through teachers' more formal structuring of lessons when they set firmer standards of behavior and establish a more tightly controlled environment" (David, 2006, p.215).

According to Krieger (2002), in several instances the teachers in the regular classes spoke loudly across the room. Several of the regular-size class teachers mentioned "yelling" or speaking loud enough to be able to "get over" the noise of the students. Some of the regular-size class teachers made loud, sarcastic remarks. Consequently, there will be more negative attention remarks in the regular-size classes than in the small-size classes. This would account for the small-size class teacher being able to devote communication to remarks directing more time to the task of teaching (p.8).

David (2006) suggested that teachers interact with students individually and in groups. "Teachers report that reduced opportunities for individual interactions in larger classes make it more difficult than in smaller classes for them to establish and maintain rapport with pupils, to

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develop knowledge of pupils' needs, interests, background and academic progress, and to provide personalized forms of support and formative guidance"(p.218).

Teachers' emotional engagement

Michele, R. (2013) mentioned that teachers who hold unfavorable expectations describe the families of low socioeconomic-background students as poor role models with a poor work ethic. Findings suggest that teachers' unfavorable academic expectations for low SES students are influenced by student immigrant status. Cross-cultural similarities between the findings of this study and studies regarding teacher attitudes toward English learners of low SES in the U.S. are discussed followed by implications for the field of teacher education. According to Michele, R. (2013), students from middle class are easy to interact with their teachers. Studies show that these students from well-educated and employed families have neat and clean appearances, and they are more interested in participating well as a member of a group.

Rist (2000) pointed out that, "The lowered expectations are formed in the minds of teachers early in their relationship with students and are 'determined' by a series of subjectively interpreted attributes and characteristics of that student" (p. 3). In other words, a teacher will often link characteristics unrelated to a student's cognitive abilities in order to determine the student's potential for success. Krieger (2002) cited that, "Effective teachers who show care and concern for their students should relay the caring through interactions." (p.5).

According to Ames (1986), the effectiveness of the learner must be examined in relation to those beliefs and perceptions that enable learners to become involved, independent, and confident in their own learning, so teachers need to have more emotional engagements, such as trust, confidence ,etc. in their students (Peng, J., &Woodrow, L. 2010). Peng pointed out that

eight themes classified into individual context and social context that influence students' willingness to speak in class. Individual context includes communication competence, language anxiety, risk-taking, and learners' beliefs. The social context includes classroom climate, group cohesiveness, teacher support, and classroom organization.

Teacher's interpersonal behavior

Many studies have shown that students' perceptions of teacher interpersonal behaviors are strongly related to student achievement, as well as to students' subject-related attitudes. Teachers' behaviors while interacting with students have been found to influence students' like or dislike for learning a subject (Lang.Q. C., Wong, A., & Fraser, B. J., 2005).
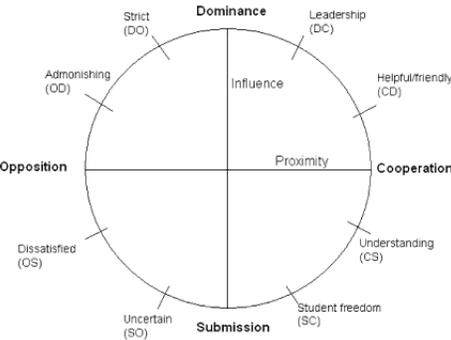

Fig. 1 The model for interpersonal teacher behaviour

In fig.1 it shows important associations between interpersonal teacher behavior and students' attendance and performance. These teachers can be described as strong leaders, friendly and understanding, but not uncertain, admonishing or dissatisfied. The best interpersonal teacher provides some freedom to students and can sometimes be strict. Students usually get high scores and behave well in test. Their teachers are more understanding, helpful, and friendly. They give

them more freedom. Students with teachers who are more admonishing, dissatisfied and strict usually have low scores in the test (Wei, M. et al., 2007).

Classroom climate

To create a positive classroom climate is to give students changes for enjoying and having fun in the class. Students will have enthusiasm for the class even though they have a really bad day. English teachers need be very careful about controlling the class, shouldn't talking too much, but let students communicate. Students should play active role in language class. The time of teacher-talk should be no more that fifteen percent of the time. Teachers need give students time to express their feelings. (Marlowe, M. &Hayden, T., 2013).

According to Peng, J., and Woodrow, L. (2010), classroom environment predicts willingness to communicate (WTC), communication confidence, learner beliefs, and motivation. English classes need to be more interactive to keep students interested in the lessons. After ten years of teaching I have learned that English need not be a boring subject; on the contrary, it can be fun if teachers supplement the formal lessons with alternative methods and techniques.

The control-oriented teaching approaches are often unsuccessful in the language teaching classroom, because it focuses on obedience rather than interaction. "Never miss a chance to laugh. Absolutely nothing is as relaxing and de-stressing as laughter."(Marlowe, M. &Hayden, T., 2013, P87) We need to help students enjoy the class environment. For example, we can have English games through the process of teaching. Games are effective teaching tools and have many positive aspects, including the creation of opportunities for students to communicate in a relaxed, friendly, and cooperative environment. Games reduce tension by adding fun and humor to lessons, and they add an element of competitiveness that motivates students to participate.

When students are absorbed by games, they internalize and acquire the essential vocabulary, grammar, and other aspects of English in an unconscious manner because they are focused on the message and not the language itself. Importantly, games provide a perfect opportunity for the teacher to take the backseat and let the students do the talking (Cervantes, E. P. 2009).

According to Wei, M. et al., (2007), a good teacher-student relationship can lower students' anxiety and allow the students to feel comfortable to speak in English. Different teacher-student relationships can create different classroom environments, and classroom environments can affect the teachers' teaching and student learning. If the teacher-student relationship is good, the classroom atmosphere will be friendly and harmonious; students will feel relaxed and think actively. A harmonious situation is what students like; in a poor classroom atmosphere, students may unconsciously want to escape. After a certain time, their negative feelings will affect their interests in learning.

Chapter III Recommendations and Conclusion

Classroom interaction analysis

The survey questionnaire was sent out to the second-year accounting majors in the Chinese vocational college where I work. These accounting students have studied College English for two semesters. In general, most of them are not good English. Eighty-eight accounting students received the questionnaire, 77 completed and returned the questionnaire. An Eighty-eight percent return rate.

Figure 2 Classroom interaction analysis

Number/rate	Always	Rate	Sometimes	rate	occasionally	rate	never	rate
1.Like to sit in the back of classroom	11	14%	21	27%	31	40%	14	18%
2.Interrupt teacher and ask questions	0	0%	3	4%	16	21%	58	75%

3.Communicate with teacher during the class break	0	0%	22	29%	32	42%	23	30%
4.prefer the teacher taking the initiative to chat with you	32	42%	37	48%	5	6%	3	4%

Seventy-seven accounting students from two classes asked in the questionnaire. The reason why they don't want to interrupt their teacher in class is 21 percentage of them are shy and unconfident. More than 90 percentage of the students are poor in English speaking. In English class, teachers also feel frustrated, for whenever he or she poses a question, few students can answer in English. They are usually silent and unconfident in English class which leads students and teachers to usually have few interactions even in class. Teachers tend to give more attention to outstanding students. The students whose academic achievements are relatively poor may be neglected. During the two-year English classes, they failed the English test, and gradually seldom show up in English class.

Figure 3 open questions questionnaire

Questions	Answers
1. Why do you like to go to English class?	Teacher is friendly and nice, humorous, knowledgeable; English class is interesting.
2. Why do you skip the class?	poor English; boring English class; teacher is not friendly
3. What is the ideal student-teacher relationship in your mind?	friends
4. List the best English teacher's qualities in your mind.	friendly; humorous ; fair; helpful; trustworthy
5. List the worst English teacher's qualities in your mind.	arrogant; unfair; strict; uncertain;

According to the survey, we can draw a conclusion that more than 90 percentage students are extremely poor in English learning. Their average English test scores in college entrance examination is under 50, while, the total score is 150. However, they said they liked to go to English class, if their English teacher is funny, humorous, friendly and English class was also relaxed. They hope their English teacher could be friendly, humorous, funny, kind in class and

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chat with them like friends. In the answer to the question, "why you skip the English class?" most poor English students answered, "I don't understand what the teacher said in English!"

Ways to improve effective student-teacher interaction

Using effective Teaching method

Students displayed a preference for passive learning styles. The traditional teaching methods cannot meet the need for Chinese college English education, especially the students with low achievements. Fan (2012) pointed out that class activities can be used to effectively manage large classes. For example, students can be grouped into four, eight or ten to carry out an activity. "Teachers could vary their teaching methods and strategies to include projects (individual and group), demonstration, team teaching, the application of information and communication technology (ICT) and investigation/exploration of the school or home environment by students" (P97).

Using Music

Music is relaxing, and many students enjoy practicing common phrases in music rather than in conversation. Students generally respond positively to lessons and activities that involve music.According to Wilmes, B. et al, (2008), "music directly affects pulse rate, blood pressure, the nervous system, and glands of the body. Music appeals to emotional, cognitive, and psychomotor elements of the brain, and several studies show a link between music and increased learning. Music can be used for arousal, as a carrier of words, and as a primer for the brain" (p.27).

Music can be used to accomplish various learning goals including; creating a relaxing atmosphere, establishing a positive learning style, providing a multi-sensory learning experience

that enhances memory, and increasing attention by creating a short burst of energizing excitement, developing rapport, providing inspiration, and adding an element of fun. If the students have high anxiety and are reluctant to speak in English, they cannot improve their English speaking skills or interact with their English teachers in class (Wilmes, B., et al, 2008).

During my teaching, I am trying to explain the English grammar in a easy and relaxing way. Some English songs are useful in teaching sentences pattern. For example, the sentence patterns, *Noun +link verb +ADJ* and sentence pattern, *Noun + Trans verb+ ADJ*. in the first paragraph of the song "you are my sunshine";

> You are my sunshine, my only sunshine,
>
> You make me happy when skies are grey;
>
> You will never know dear, how much I love you.
>
> Please don't take my sunshine away.

After explaining the sentence structure to the students, they will have fun in learning sentence and singing the songs by groups. The most important part is that they can learn the sentence structure without bored.

ESL games

According to Cervantes, E. P. (2009), appropriate games can lower students' anxiety, sustain students' interests in learning English, and help them learn and retain the language such as new words, new concepts, language points, and grammar in a fun way. However, ESL games are not just activities aimed at breaking the ice between teachers and students. For an ESL game to work in a college English class in China, it should be a well-organized activity that allows college

students to practice English; it should also be appropriate for college students with their learning styles and English language proficiency being taken into account.

College English teachers tend to adopt a textbook-centered teaching approach; as a result, the classroom atmosphere is often dull and inactive, and students are very passive and often silent. In the past decades, more and more Chinese college students found that they lost interest in learning English, and they could not use English proficiently for communication purposes although they have learned English for many years. They spent a lot of time on passing the exams and improving their writing and reading skills at the expense of learning English for real communication. Given these circumstances, how to arouse Chinese college students' interest in English and improve the class atmosphere is of great importance. There are many ways to teach English as a foreign language, but one exciting and rewarding way is to use ESL games.

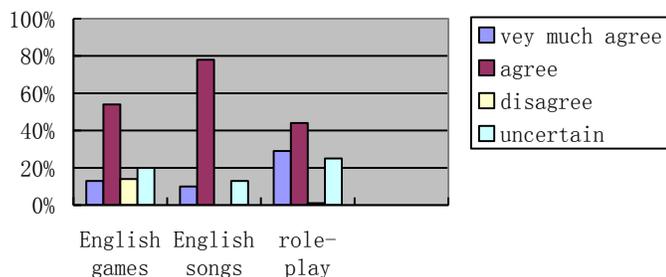**Figure 4 students' attitude to class activities**

Figure 4 shows students' attitude to class activities, nearly 80 percentage students agree to use English songs as a teaching tool.

Finally, ESL teachers should be enthusiastic in front of the class. Enthusiastic teachers generally can motivate their students. Teachers and students could have a good interaction through playing games in class. A good ESL games are as something enjoyable for all

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participants, competitive but friendly, keeping participants involved with the English language, helping students focus on the use of the language, and of course allowing students to learn.

Establishing good teacher-student relationship

A good teacher-student relationship can shorten the psychological distance and provide relaxing and friendly language environment; students may be more willing to have English classes and be confident. Numerous surveys show that student's preferred teachers' qualities are friendly, kind, smiling, humorous, funny, enthusiastic, and passionate. Wei, M. et al., (2007) mentioned that a good teacher-student relationship can lower students' anxiety. And also it will help students feel comfortable to speak in English. The classroom atmosphere will be tense, if the teacher-student relationship is poor. Students will feel unsafe or keep silent. If the teacher-student relationship is good, the classroom atmosphere will be friendly and harmonious; students will feel relaxed and think actively.

In the previous figure 3, through two open questions, "What are the characteristics of a Chinese 'ideal' teacher and what is the quality of teacher you dislike", we can identify Chinese students' perceptions of 'ideal' Chinese teachers and how such an ideal compares with the 'actual' teacher present in the classroom. Students' ideal teacher-student relationship is as friends. They wish to make friends with their teacher.

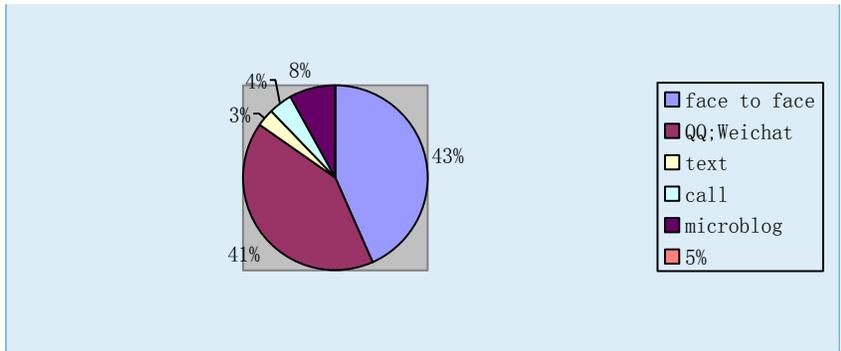**Figure 5 preferred ways to communicate with their teacher**

Figure 5 shows that most of the students prefer the teacher taking the initiative to chat with them. And also Figure 3 shows that 39 percent of students prefer to face-to-face communication with their teachers. QQ has been the main communicational tool among the teacher-student interaction.

Conclusion

Past studies have primarily focused on students' class engagements and how teachers' interpersonal behaviors affect students' academic outcomes. By analyzing the real Chinese EFL class student-teacher interaction, this study not only gives insight to the significance of student-teacher interaction and the importance to have a good student-teacher relationship in EFL class. A good teacher-student relationship can lower students' anxiety and allow the students to feel comfortable to speak in English.

As the Christine Nuttall's motto says, "Never say the words students can help speak". What he means is a student-centered teaching method. Besides music, songs, and games, for example, teachers arrange and use classroom space to encourage interaction by moving chairs and having students face each other. During lecture, the teacher can move to different parts of room, or teach

from the back and have students write on the board. Consequently, to have the entire classroom interaction in a creative and friendly atmosphere will motivate the learners' interest, motives and comprehensible input.

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Appendix: Student-Teacher QUESTIONAIRE

Gender: female/ male   University Grade:

1．How much is your national college entrance exam in English？ (Total score: 150)
A.120-150   B.100-120   C. 100-80   D. 80-60   E.60-50   F.50 below

2．Why do you want to learn English?
A. Pass the test   B. Know the world   C. Talk to the foreigner
D. write down other reason:_____

3.When do you want to put more effort into English study?
A. When getting higher scores on the English test?
B. When praised by my English teacher
C. Make foreign friends   D. Make friends with English teacher other reason:_____

4.Do you interrupt your teacher and ask a question when she/he is giving a lesson?
A.YES   B.NO   C. Sometimes   D. Never
If your answer is **D.NEVER**, please write down your reason:_____

5.Do you prefer to sit in the back of classroom?
A. Never   B.Occasionally   C. Sometimes   D. Often
If your answer is **D.OFTEN**, please write down your reason:_____

6.Do you communicate with your English teacher during the break of class?
A. Never   B.Occasionally   C. Sometimes   D. Often
If your answer is **A.NEVER**, please write down your reason:_____

7.Do you like the teacher to take the initiative to communicate with you?
A.YES   B.NO   C. Sometimes   D. Uncertain
Which way is the best way to communicate with your English teacher?
A.Face to face   B.QQ   C.Text message   D.Call   E. Micro-blog   F.E-mail   H.other_____

8.Games are a good teaching way
A. Disagree   B. Agree   C. Strongly agree   D. Uncertain

9.English songs are a good teaching way
A. Disagree   B. Agree   C. Strongly agree   D. Uncertain
If your answer is **NEGATIVE**, please write down your reason:_____

10. Do you spend time on self-initiated English study per week, besides the English classes?
A. Never   B. Occasionally   C. Sometimes   D. Often
If your answer is **NEGATIVE**, please write down your reason:_____

11. Do you like the role-play roups   gin the form ofwhich we did in Unit 2?
A. Disagree   B. Agree   C. Strongly agree   D. Uncertain
If your answer is **NEGATIVE**, please write down your reason:_____

PART 2:   OPEN QUETIONS

1. Do you like to go to English class? Why?

2. Why do you skip the class?

3. The best relationship between you and your teacher? Why?

4. Describe one of the most unforgettable English classes in your memory:

5. List the best English teacher's qualities in your mind

6. List the worst English teacher's qualities in your mind