

**Creating a collaborative ESL classroom through teacher  
leadership: A case study in Guizhou Province, China**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This research looks into collaborative learning with teacher leadership in the ESL classroom of Guizhou, China. The phenomenon, purpose, research methods, main results and conclusions of the study are provided in the abstract.

Under the phenomenon of New High School Curriculum Reform Program in China in 2004, all Chinese schools are trying new teaching methods to improve students' English level. The purpose of the study is getting a better understanding of collaborative learning with teacher leadership in the ESL classroom.

Qualitative research is applied to collect the data from the Chinese school. The research data is collected through two questionnaire surveys (open-ended questionnaires), one is for teachers, and another one is for students.

The results of this study mainly indicate how to create a collaborative ESL classroom through teacher leadership. The results include some reform changes, teachers and students' attitudes, advantages and disadvantages, barriers, the ways of utilizing collaborative learning with teacher leadership, and many advices from teachers and students.

The central contribution of the study is that the researcher made an investigation of collaborative learning with teacher leadership in an undeveloped ESL classroom of Guizhou, which has Chinese characteristics. Limitations and recommendations of the study are also summarized.

Keys words: teacher leadership, collaborative learning, ESL classroom.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

When face the rapid development of global economy and society in the 21st century, all countries adapt their policy to the fierce competition. The core is the competition of comprehensive national power and talents. Education is an activity that is purposeful, organized, planned and systematic to impart knowledge and technical specifications, which can make contribution to economic growth and promote national prosperity. Teachers are an important part of education, and teacher leadership has a significant impact on education (Jin Yu-le & Ai Xing, 2006).

Since China has joined the WTO (World Trade Organization), English gradually plays an important role in Chinese economy, culture and education. Therefore, in Chinese schools, every student will learn English as a second language (ESL). Across many countries, economic, social and political forces have combined to create a climate in which an ESL educational reform is expected and in which schools feel continued pressure to improve. China also faces such a challenging educational reform and must carry out it under the global educational reform, especially in underdeveloped district schools.

In the Chinese traditional classroom, students are monitored by teachers and they have a heavy psychological burden. There is a boring and tense, lack of vitality atmosphere in the classroom. Teachers are all exhausted and lack of accomplishment, which lead to low study efficiency. In the current reform situation, there are various teaching forms in the classroom, e.g. discussion, exchange and collaborative learning. Meanwhile, some teachers still use system of rewards and penalties to defend their own power (Gao Sheng-ying & Liu Liang-hua, 2002).

Actually, teachers often feel lack the ability to do what they would like to do. It seems that the happiness of teaching is felt if students are obedient and quiet in the classroom. When some teachers face the diversity of the

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classroom organization, they cannot grasp the order of classroom and fear classroom chaos. Therefore, teachers draw up a tedious classroom rules. Students are in accordance with teachers' instruction and obey the classroom rules. Everything is in good order and also the whole classroom is monitored by teachers strictly. It not only inhibited the physical and mental development of students, but also led to a serious decline in efficiency of classroom teaching. What's worse, it is contrary to the requirements of current personnel training. There are two reasons for this. One is because most teachers are lack of advanced educational teaching concept to manage the classroom. Another one is that the school ignores the exploration of classroom management. Therefore, "teacher leadership" was put forward, which became a good breakthrough and challenge for educational reform and classroom management Collaborative learning is does not only serve for the classroom management, but can also could be an educational reform (Yu Ze-yuan & Tian Hui-sheng,2008).

Slavin (1987) argues that collaborative learning can narrow the achievement gap among students. Therefore, teacher leadership impacts powerfully over collaborative classroom and teaching activities, which contribute to student improvement and increase effectiveness of teaching methods (Slavin, 1987). That is to say, teacher's role and function are essential in a classroom. Consequently, it is urgent to transform the teachers' role and create a collaborative classroom through teacher leadership, especially for China.

When I became an English teacher in my hometown in China, I found that many English teachers still use traditional teaching methods in ESL classrooms. Although the voice and action of English education reform have already overspread in China, some undeveloped district schools finally got the inconspicuous results. In this case study, I will present why collaborative learning is productive for Chinese schools, how to motivate teachers and

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students use Collaborative Learning, how to get effective results from Collaborative Learning, and how to reflect upon Collaborative Learning in the school daily practice. Through real-life stories, I also explore the promoting factors and barriers of implementing collaboration in ESL classroom and how to create it in an undeveloped school.

In this study, the qualitative methods are applied to collect the empirical data from a Chinese school in Guizhou Province. Qualitative surveys collect information that people attach to their experiences and on the easy they express themselves. Qualitative surveys provide data to answer questions like this: “What is X, and how different people, communities, and cultures think and feel about X, and why” (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, I designed open-ended questions in my surveys. I invited 15 English teachers and 15 students from the school randomly (4600 students and 236 teachers in the school).

A survey was designed to assess the effect of English reform, the advantage of collaborative learning, the factors to promote collaborative learning and the barriers of collaborative learning from students’ perspective. Another survey was designed to assess the same items about collaborative learning and teacher leadership from English teachers’ perspective. In order to get more background information about the school, I collected and studied the school documents, promotion materials and websites.

This thesis attempts to make its contribution towards a better understanding of collaborative learning with teacher leadership in the ESL classroom, especially in undeveloped areas. The concept of collaborative learning was established in U.S, and also developed in China (Chen & Long, 2009). There are many previous studies about collaborative learning in Chinese developed provinces, such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou etc. Fewer studies examine it in undeveloped provinces. Nevertheless, China has 34 provinces. If researchers only investigate some certain provinces, we

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cannot get a comprehensive understanding of collaborative learning through teacher leadership. That is why I had a strong interest to examine collaborative learning through teacher leadership in Guizhou.

In this case study, I present changes in the ESL classroom, teachers and students' attitudes, advantages and disadvantages. Through teachers and students' real experiences and stories, I analyze the promoting factors and the barriers of utilizing collaborative learning through teacher leadership in the school in Guizhou. In the end, I present the limitations of my study and the recommendations to the future studies in a related field in China.

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## **2. TEACHER LEADERSHIP**

In next chapters, teacher leadership, collaborative learning, and traditional ESL classroom will be examined from the perspectives of different scholars.

### **2.1 Definition of educational leadership**

Educational leadership is gradually being shifted towards a form of collective, shared, distributed and organizational responsibility, stretched over the school's social and situational contexts (Harris, 2008). Hence, school leaders and teachers increasingly work in closer co-operation and collaboration with one another. This culminates in deep democratic involvement in leadership practice and collective capacity building (Senge, 1990).

#### **2.1.1 Six categories of leadership**

Leithwood and Duke (1999) indentified six categories of leadership: transformational, moral, instructional, participative, managerial and contingency. Looking at each category, it appears that teacher leadership is most closely related to instructional and participative forms where leadership equates with the "behaviors of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students" (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 47).

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## 2.2 Definition of teacher leadership

Teacher leadership is not a formal role, responsibility or set of tasks. It is more a form of agency where teachers are empowered to lead development work that impacts directly upon the high quality of teaching and learning (Harris and Muijs, 2005). Teacher leaders are chiefly concerned with securing enhanced instructional outcomes, generating positive relationship with staff and students, and creating the enabling conditions for others to learn (Murphy, 2005). It has at its core a focus upon improving learning and introduces a mode of leadership premised upon the principles of professional collaboration, development and growth (Harris and Muijs, 2005).

In general, teachers have taken the roles of team leaders, department heads, association leaders and curriculum developers for a long time. However, recently, research has proposed some different roles for teachers, including increased leadership roles. Teachers are serving as research colleagues, working as advisor mentors to new teachers, and facilitating professional development activities (Victoria & Kathleen, 2015). They are also acting as members of school-based leadership teams and leaders of change efforts. Such work emphasizes the need for teachers to extend their sphere of influence beyond the classroom and into school-wide leadership activities. This advocacy is premised on the belief that they are closest to the classroom, and teachers can implement changes that make a difference to learning and learners (Harris and Muijs, 2005). Research has also shown that teachers do not subscribe to traditional definitions of leadership as “higher” or “superior” positions within the organizational hierarchy. Instead, teachers view leadership as a collaborative effort with other staff members to promote professional development and growth and the improvement of educational services (Troen & Boles 1992).

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The concept of teacher leadership has been developed forward by Katzenmeyer and Moller. They (1996) state that, "Teachers, who are leaders lead beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice, and accept responsibility for realizing the goals of their leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996: p. 5)" That is to say, teacher leaders are teachers who develop new and collaborative relationships with the principal, school management team, and colleagues. Students empower themselves, and influence others towards realizing a shared vision for improved teaching and learning in a school (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Crowther et al., 2009).

There are several important things to highlight in teacher leadership. First, teacher leadership is a kind of distributed leadership form that comprises of teachers' contributions to school effectiveness, teacher's improvement and students' development. Second, Moreover, teacher leadership means giving teachers opportunities to lead and improve the quality of teaching efficiency in a positive way. In this way, teachers will be given more authority in the real teaching situations (Harris & Muijs, 2005).

There are a number of important things to highlight about the definition of teacher leadership. Firstly, teacher leadership is associated with the creation of collegial norms among teachers that evidence has shown can contribute to school effectiveness, improvement and development. I will discuss it in the next part. Second, teacher leadership equates with giving teachers opportunities to lead, which research shows having a positive influence upon the quality of relationships and teaching within the school. Third, at its most practical level, teacher leadership means teachers working as instructional leaders influencing curriculum, teaching and learning. Finally, teacher leadership is associated with re-culturing schools, where leadership is

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the outcome of the dynamics of interpersonal relationships rather than just individual action (Harris A, 2005).

Teacher leadership has taken various forms. Since the mid-1990s, teacher leadership has been the topic of dozens of books and numerous research and practitioner-oriented publications (see, e.g., Barth, 2001; Lieberman & Miller, 2004), particularly in the USA, Canada and Australia. In the USA, the number of teacher leadership programs and initiatives has grown strongly over the past decade, and the notion of teacher leadership is widely accepted by practitioners and researchers (Smylie, 1995). In China, many researchers have investigated teacher leadership. However, for most educators, the concept of teacher leadership is still relatively new.

### **2.2.1 Teacher leadership in China**

The early concept about teacher leadership occurred in 1980s (Jenkins, 2009). But recently decades of years, the research of teacher leadership was attracted attention by most Chinese educators. As a new topic in the field of current education, many researchers achieved a large amount of remarkable research findings about teacher leadership, which deepened the understanding of the field. Nonetheless, the investigations of teacher leadership are still extremely deficient in China.

For example, Professor Li Sen (2006), from Southwest University, wrote an essay called "The definition, function and strategies of teaching leadership". He referred to teaching leadership and recognized it as a dynamic process of achieving teaching goals and optimizing teaching system. Professor Chen Yijun (2010), the same university, arouses the creative attention of teacher leadership in his essay "The analysis of middle school teacher teaching leadership types". In conclusion, people have not a deep exploration of teacher teaching leadership, which restrain the function of teaching leadership (Xie, 2013).

The Chinese educators divide management leadership into teaching and administrative leadership (Xie, 2013): “Administrative leaders and teaching leaders have different working areas.” Being good teaching leaders should set about motivating students and high quality teaching activities (Dong, 1995). Table 1 indicates teacher leadership development in China as follows:

TABLE 1: Teacher leadership in China

Year	Name	Practice
1978	Zhao Guang-lin	He stated that teacher leadership is focus on excellent teaching, leading teaching with holistic and conceptual development, the action of promoting education by the teachers’ professional development and students’ progress.
1993	Chen Wang-dao	Teacher leadership is that teachers have an effect on students.
1998	Wang Zi-xuan	Teacher leadership means the ability of guiding teaching activities, which guides students to acquire scientific knowledge and also learn how to learn and develop various capabilities at the same time, which ensure students to enrich knowledge continuously in the future social life.
1998	Liang Si-cheng	Teacher leadership is to arouse students’ enthusiasm and learning initiative, so that students are willing to study. In addition, teachers should master the curriculum and textbooks expertly and use appropriate teaching methods to teach independently, which based on the actual situation

		of students.
1999	Shi Liang-fang Cui- Yun-chun	Teacher leadership is a process that includes establishing an appropriate classroom environment, keeping classroom interaction, ensuring order and efficiency of classroom teaching, coordinating various relationships between people and matter in the classroom, and promoting classroom.
2001	Ye Lan	Teacher leadership is those teachers' effects, interaction between teachers, students and classroom, and the change of teaching organization.
2005	Cai Jin-xiong	Teacher leadership is a process which has an positive influence on students, school administrators, colleagues, parents and communities
2006	Li Sen Zhang-tao	He argued that the main part of teacher leadership is a process of achieving teaching aims and optimizing teaching system.
2006	Lu Nai-gui Cheng Zheng	Teacher leadership is whether positions or appointment, the essential characteristics of which is to improve the teacher profession, redistribution of power and the interactive among colleagues.
2007	Jin Jian-sheng	Teacher leadership is that a teacher who has some kind of abilities among teachers. He or she exert influence on the persons or matter in the school for achieving the common goal in a particular context
2007	Ma Hui-mei	Teacher leadership means a teacher organizes an effective learning environment in the teaching

		activities, guide and help students to participate in it, which achieve scheduled teaching goals. There are five role characteristics: instructor of learning activities, leader among students, managers of classroom discipline, a model code of conduct and coordinator of interpersonal relationship.
2009	Chen pan, Long Jun-wei	Teacher leadership is a process of improving teaching, students' learning outcomes, completing teaching goals by teachers.
2009	Zhang Bi-juan	She argued that promoting teaching efficiency, improving students' learning outcomes, providing guidance and resource, and coordinating various relations are main points of teacher leadership.
2010	Chen yi-jun	Teacher leadership is divided into five parts: arouse students' enthusiasm of studying, high-quality education, provide correct guidance, the direction of learning, help students overcome learning difficulties and motivate students' learning satisfaction.
2011	Li Kuan	Teacher leadership is a kind of comprehensive influence on students, formed by the interaction of teachers' professional authority, knowledge, ability, and emotion.

These discussions presented in Table 1 show that teacher leadership plays a critical role in school reform and supports the development of all students, and also creates opportunities for teachers to become leaders due to inconspicuous power relationships and shared tasks in school (Muijs & Harris,

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2007). Therefore, the relationship between teacher leadership and individual outcomes or students' learning outcomes is important. This issue will be discussed it below.

### **2.2.2 Teacher leadership and student learning outcomes**

Many argue that link teacher leadership is connected with student learning outcomes. Various writers have discerned the benefit of teacher leadership on enhanced student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). However, the empirical basis for such claims remains somewhat modest. York and Duke argued that there is much positive impact of teacher leadership upon individual and organizational outcomes. Teacher leadership is essential to school and individual improvement and is one worth exploring, as it has been argued that the "evidence of such effects, especially at the levels of classroom practice and student learning are sparse" (York-Barr & Duke 2005, p. 282).

Also, York and Duke (2004) found only five studies that directly examined the effects of teacher leadership on students. Some studies have shown a more positive relationship between teacher leadership and student learning outcomes (York-Barr and Duke, 2004). Silins and Mulford (2002) concluded that student outcomes are more likely to improve where leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community and where teachers are empowered to lead. Similarly, a study of eighty-six US middle schools found that both teacher professionalism and collegial leadership were positively related to improved student outcomes (Harris, 2005). Other work by Lemlech and Hertzog (1998) has suggested that encouraging teachers to take on leadership roles positively affects self-efficacy and behavior, which subsequently influences student learning outcomes. Recent research by Harris and Muijs (2004) found an indirect relationship

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between teacher involvement in decision making and improved student outcomes.

In summary, the direct link between teacher leadership and student outcomes is far from clear or proven. What the literature does confirm is that where teacher leadership work is focused upon the classroom rather than the organizational level and where instructional improvement is at the heart of the work of teacher leaders, there is greater chance of a positive impact upon student learning outcomes. In brief, teacher leadership can be advantageous to the individual teacher and to varying degrees their schools and students (Vail & Redick, 1993).

To sum up, teacher leadership has been proven to have a positive influence on students' learning outcomes. In addition, Slavin argued that collaborative learning can narrow the achievement gap amongst students (Slavin, 1987). Chinese Professor Wang also argued that collaborative learning is one of the most effective teaching methods in the classroom, which could be improve students' learning outcomes (Wang, 1998). In the next chapter, collaborative learning will be discussed in detail.

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### 3. COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

#### 3.1 Definition of collaborative learning

Bruffee (1993) notes that collaborative learning is a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together. Unlike individual learning, collaborative learning means that two or more people are engaged in a common task and capitalize on one another's resources and skills, from participating cooperatively in group activities, group problem-solving, and group discussions by sharing experiences (Chiu, 2000).

Slavin was one of the first famous scholars of collaborative learning. He thought that collaborative learning means that students study and join teaching activities in a group, and the teaching technique of classroom will be awarded and approved based on their group performance. He also thought that collaborative learning can narrow the achievement gap amongst students (Slavin, 1987). An American educator Guskey states that "collaborative learning is a kind of teaching style." He asked 2-6 students to join in the teaching activities and completed the task that the teacher gave for the group. In every group, students were often engaged in various cooperative and mutual assistance studies (Guskey, 1990).

D.W. Johnson and R.T. Johnson from Cooperative Learning Center in American University of Minnesota are also scholars of collaborative learning. They stated that in collaborative learning, students can maximize their own and each other's learning when they work together (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). They also mentioned that collaborative learning has five key elements: positive interdependence, face-to-face promotive interaction, individual accountability, social skills and group processing (Johnson & Johnson, 1998).

A Chinese educator Wang Hongyu argued that collaborative learning referred to a mode of group learning as a main form of organization in classroom teaching. The instructional of collaboration encourage students to learn together in heterogeneous groups, which could contribute to students' cognitive, emotional teaching strategies system (Wang, 1992). Another Chinese educator Wang Tan noted that collaborative learning is a kind of teaching activity. The basic form of which are heterogeneous study groups and the evaluation criteria is group results, which promotes students' learning outcomes and achieves the common teaching goals by using interaction between dynamic factors of teaching (Wang, 2001).

In sum, collaboration is one of the key skills in the 21st century. It comprises of a complex set of skills, abilities, and behaviours that can be taught and modelled, including, mentioning a few (Sheila, 2011):

- Cooperation skills: leading and following and switching from leading to following, taking responsibility for group tasks, attending to group process (Sheila, 2011).
- Emotional skills: being aware of one's own and others' feelings, expressing feelings appropriately, and showing compassion and empathy (Sheila, 2011).
- Mental skills: focusing on a task until complete, following a conversation, processing it, summarizing it, and taking creative leaps based on it (Sheila, 2011).

### **3.2 Four traits of a collaborative classroom**

Anderson and Garrison (1998) described the three more common types of interaction discussed in the classroom: student-student, student-teacher, student-content. Also, another scholar Wang Hongyu (1992) described a

similar instructional three-dimensional system of coordinate that is based on teacher, student and content.

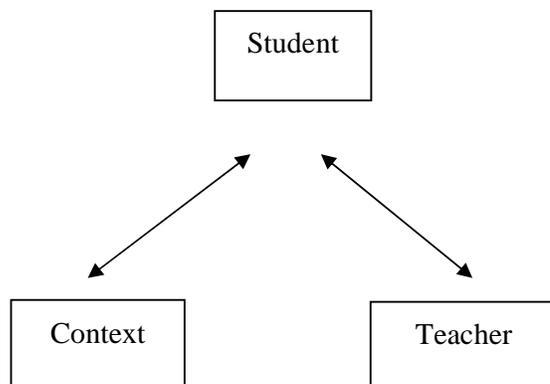


FIGURE 1: An instructional three-dimensional system (Wang, 1992)

Efforts at enhancing student-student interaction in the classroom through case- or problem-based collaborative learning activities, have long been shown to increase not only student achievement, but also student completion and enjoyment rates (Slavin, 1995). Therefore, collaborative learning is important for teachers and students when build collaborative classroom. There are four traits of a collaborative classroom (Tinzmann et al, 1990: Page 2-3):

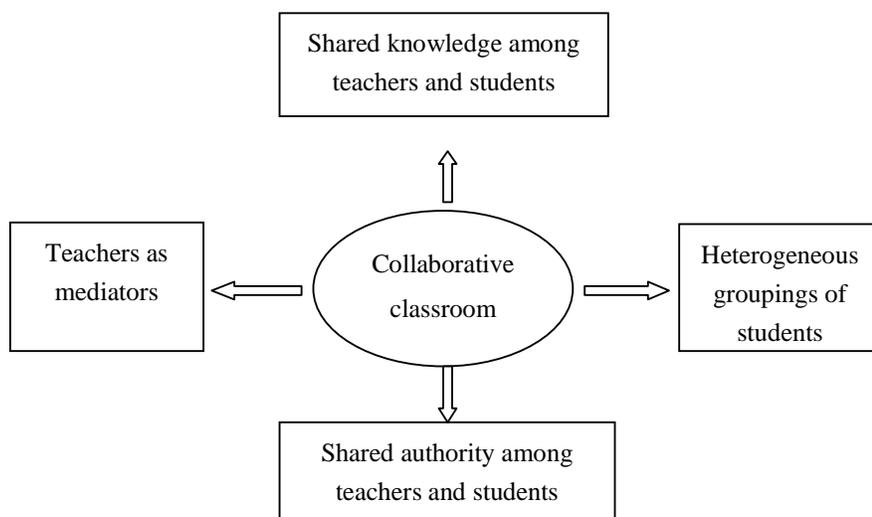


Figure 2: Four traits of a collaborative classroom (Tinzmann et al, 1990)

**1) Shared knowledge among teachers and students (Tinzmann et al, 1990).**

In traditional classrooms, a teacher is a person of authority, who has vital knowledge about content, skills, and instruction, also providing the only way of knowledge flow from the teachers to students. However, teachers in the collaborative classroom also value and build upon the knowledge, personal experiences, language, strategies, and culture that students bring to the learning situation. Thus, when those students who do have relevant experiences are given an opportunity to share them, the whole class is enriched. Moreover, when students see that their experiences and knowledge are valued, they are more motivated to listen and learn in new ways, and they are more likely to make important connections between their own learning and "school" learning. In other words, they become empowered (Tinzmann et al, 1990).

**2) Shared authority among teachers and students (Tinzmann et al, 1990).**

In most traditional classrooms, the teacher is largely, if not exclusively, responsible for setting goals, designing learning tasks, and assessing what is learned. In collaborative classrooms, students will be invited to set specific goals within the framework of what they have learned, provided options for activities and assignments that capture different interests and goals, and encouraged to assess what they have learned. In addition, students have opportunities to use and share their own knowledge, their learning strategies, treat each other respectfully, and focus on high levels of

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understanding. Teachers will help students listen to diverse opinions, support knowledge claims with evidence, engage in critical and creative thinking, and participate in open and meaningful dialogue when they have collaborative activities (Tinzmann et al, 1990).

### **3) Teachers as mediators (Tinzmann et al, 1990).**

In the collaborative classroom, teachers as successful mediators help students connect new information to their experiences and to other learning areas, help students figure out what to do, and help them learn how to learn, which can maximize the ability to take responsibility for learning (Tinzmann et al, 1990).

### **4) Heterogeneous groupings of students (Tinzmann et al, 1990).**

The perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds of all students are important for enriching learning in the classroom. That means that keeping students' diversity in the classroom is productive for students for improving their critical thinking, various problem-solving skills, different communication skills, and strategy-making skills (Tinzmann et al, 1990).

In addition, teachers are defining their roles in term of mediating learning through teacher leadership and collaboration: facilitating, modeling, and coaching. Teacher leaders act in a variety of ways and roles with individuals, teams and the entire system with a focus on improving teaching and learning for students (York and Duke, 2004). Because teacher leadership has a powerful influence over classroom practices and teaching activities, this contributes to student improvement and increase effectiveness of teaching methods. Collaborative learning affords students enormous advantages that are not available more traditional instruction because a group, whether it is the whole class or a learning group within the class, can accomplish

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meaningful learning and solve problems better than any individual can alone (Wertheimer & Honigsfeld, 2000).

As professors Yu and Tian argued that collaborative learning is not only one way to classroom management, but also could provide an educational reform (Yu & Tian, 2008). Therefore, both teacher leadership and collaborative learning are good for the improvement of students' learning outcomes and classroom efficiency, even in Chinese English teaching classroom.

### **3.3 Collaborative learning in China**

Collaborative learning as a kind of instructional theory and a mode of instruction, which has aroused widely attention by many countries, also in China. Already two thousand years ago it was said in China: "Study alone and no friends, then ignorant". This was recorded in the book of Xue Ji, which emphasized the important of collaboration during the study. In the beginning of 1990s, group work was introduced in Chinese classroom teaching, which triggered the exploration of collaboration. The researcher Wang Tan (2010), who works in the Shandong Institute of Education Science, introduced the theory of collaborative learning, strategy of collaborative learning and development prospect in the book of Collaborative Research and Experiment. Many researchers and teachers also explored the mode of collaboration, For example, Wu Qinwen, Liang Zhanxin, and Tian Xueling, from the Educational Institute of Hu Nan Normal College. They did the experiment of collaboration in English teaching and many other subjects. Another Chinese researcher Chen Xinye did an experiment about collaboration. The book argued that the motivation and improvement of students in the collaborative classroom are much higher than that in the non-collaborative classroom (Chen, 2003). Dong Qi also investigated the mode of collaboration. He took the English class as an example. The experiment presented that students'

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learning outcomes in the experiment class were much higher than the ones of students in the normal class. In addition, the motivation and interest of students were aroused by collaboration. The relationship between teachers and students became more harmonious (Dong, 1995). Later, the Institute of Education in Zhejiang University also did the experiment of collaboration. Chinese collaboration classroom got an improvement by this research, but is still not lacking of study.

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## 4. TRADITIONAL ESL CLASSROOM IN CHINA

In Chinese traditional ESL classroom, traditional ESL teaching methods emphasized language points, and also large-size classes. Therefore, one teacher cannot pay attention to every student, which leads to imbalanced chance to participate in the English teaching activities. In addition, there are still some problems in traditional ESL classroom, described in the following chapters.

### 1) English teacher leaders have quite backward teaching idea.

Nowadays, the new curriculum reform is carried out in a deep-going way in Guizhou Province, but some teachers still “went the old way by using new shoes”. English teachers focus on teachers’ teaching instead of students’ learning on intellectual progeny instead of students’ emotional attitude and on other effects of nonintellectual factors. In the class, teachers always try their best to lead students to “answer the questions” very accurately, which curb the development of students’ creative thinking. Though teachers also agree the idea of teaching composed mainly of by students, teachers still play a leading role in the teaching activities. They did not build the fair, democratic and harmonious relationship between teachers and students indeed. The subject status of students is not presented indeed (Jin & Ai, 2006).

### 2) English teacher leaders always attached importance to teach English grammar, but look down upon language learning and language acquisition.

In Chinese National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), English is one of the main examinational subjects. Teachers and students regard it as a key subject. However, in most provinces, only English reading and English

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writing are the test parts in NCEE, English listening and spoken English are not. So is the situation in the Guizhou Province. Therefore, most schools gave up English listening and Spoken English teaching, and they pay more attention to English vocabulary, English grammar and English knowledge point. Also, they encouraged students to take excessive assignments tactic for high scores in NCEE. Teachers focus on the analysis of the grammar structure and constituents of sentences. Students focus on recite English vocabularies and grammar points. The teaching methods are not accordance with the new curriculum reform. In order to ensure the high rate of NCEE, most schools have the same teaching methods and student exercises, which is makes it difficult to teach students in accordance with their aptitude and cognitive rules, and develop individual proficiency. Students nearly have any chance to practice and use Spoken English and Listening, which leads to an affective language communication ability (Ma, 2007).

In addition, under the effect of traditional teaching methods, the interaction and communication only occurred between teachers and the whole students. There is no interaction and communication between student and student and, consequently, no collaborative learning or team work. More and more teachers realized that language communication ability should be cultivated in the real communication instead of “teaching” (Jin & Ai, 2006). A Chinese Professor Wu Xin said that most teachers took many activities that students should have taken. Teachers took most time in the class and become the center of the whole class, instead of a student-centered classroom (Wu Xin).

**3) The modes of teaching methods are very simple, and teaching methods are very backward.**

In the traditional classroom, teacher-centeredness is very popular. Classroom atmosphere is very nervous and strict. Teachers only emphasized individual

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learning outcomes. Students are lacking of collaborative awareness and team spirit. Because of large the class size, lecture method became the main teaching method in the English class. It is also called the cramming method of teaching. Though the lecture method have some advantages like spending less time, such as teaching large amount of knowledge, various real language communication activities cannot be organized flexibly under the lecture method. More importantly, the pace of the lecture method cannot pay attention to students' diversity, which leads to the extreme polarization. Students might feel exhausted and bored, even dislike English (Wang, 2010).

#### **4) Less student activities, bad student learning outcomes.**

Student can get high scores in the examination by using Chinese cramming method of teaching. But they always indicate low communication abilities in the real situation. English is a foreign language; English teaching should obey the discipline of language acquisition. China should cultivate students into real language situations. However, in China, especially in undeveloped provinces, students have fewer opportunities to communicate with English, which have some negative influences. Therefore, words, phrases, grammar and sentences are become everything of English teaching. Whether you accept them or not, teachers will instill knowledge to students. Neither teachers nor students feel happy from about teaching and learning. It not only wastes much time, but also induces less improvement in teaching efficiency (Chen, 2010).

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## 5. RESEARCH PROBLEMS

The main research question is now established: How to create a collaborative ESL classroom through teacher leadership in the underdeveloped Chinese schools? The main research question is crystallized onto five sub-questions:

- 1) What are the attitudes of teachers and students towards collaborative learning in the ESL classroom?
- 2) What are the advantages and disadvantages of collaborative learning in the ESL classroom?
- 3) What are the barriers and promotion factors of collaborative learning in the ESL classroom?
- 4) What are manifestations of teacher leadership in collaborative learning?

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## 6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

In this study, qualitative research methods are applied in collecting empirical data from an upper secondary school in Guizhou Province. Qualitative research approaches generally focus on addressing peoples' perspectives. Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there (Patton, 1985). It can be used to explore substantive areas about which little is known or about which much is known to gain novel understandings (Stern, 1980). The qualitative approach also refers to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions (Strauss & Juliet, 1990).

There are many characteristics to define qualitative research, but seven features are repeatedly mentioned: naturalistic, inductive, interpretive, subjective, flexibility, openness, and process-oriented (Patton, 1985). The goal of this approach is to develop understanding, describe the realities, and produce in-depth analysis through an evolving, flexible, and open-ended research design (Crewell, 2003). The most used techniques include the interviews and surveys in the natural and social settings. The researcher, as a part of the research instrument, interprets the information, infuses personal reflections, and writes the case studies (Creswell, 2003; Lichtman, 2006; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Qualitative surveys are useful when one wants to get detailed information in through the respondents' own words. It is particularly suitable for examining the feelings, opinions and values of individuals and groups, and for surveying people who are unable or unwilling to complete analytical survey instruments. Qualitative studies are also useful when one does not

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have large numbers of people to participate. That is to say, the purpose of using qualitative surveys is to provide depth and individual meaning to the questions of interest. “Depth and uniqueness” rather than breadth and representation should be the qualitative survey motto (Fink, 2003). The qualitative data of this study was collected through qualitative surveys, which included a series of open-ended questions from different perspectives of teachers and students, respectively.

## **6.1 The Context of the Study**

In 2004, Chinese Education Department carried out New High School Curriculum Reform Program. Chinese Eastern Provinces implemented it at that time, but reform in Guizhou Province was carried out in 2010. In 2012, all provinces in China carried out the program. The core of reform is a new curriculum, new concept and new entrance examination (Chinese New High School Curriculum Reform).

Chinese Eastern provinces are developed in education and economic. While Chinese Southwest provinces are undeveloped in them. Guizhou Province is one of the underdeveloped provinces. There are so many researches about teacher leadership and collaborative learning from eastern provinces, but not from Guizhou Province. At the same time, China has been adopting a simple exam and evaluation system after the foundation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. For students and parents, scores are their hope, even everything. The teachers use traditional teaching methods in ESL teaching activities in order to improve students’ scores. When some teachers face various organizational ways of teaching, they do not dare to change the role of teacher, even teacher leadership at random. They are afraid that they cannot control the classroom order well and think that other teaching activities will disturb it.

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Therefore, English teachers in Guizhou Province still use traditional teaching methods to teach English in the classroom. The real teaching method is concentrating on teacher-centered. Most of the teachers use lecturing method, that is to say, teachers usually stand at the platform, speak something constantly and write key points on the blackboard. Students obey the administration and authority of teachers, sitting in the classroom quietly, taking notes mechanically and repeating reading or remembering the English words or sentences. This hidebound and inefficient cramming education was often used in English education which leads to nervous and negative classroom atmosphere. Most teachers also get tired of traditional teaching methods and have low teaching efficiency, even lack the sense of fulfillment, especially in undeveloped provinces (Sugar, 2012).

### **6.1.1 Weng'an No.2 High school background**

Weng'an No.2 middle school is a key comprehensive school from 1958. The school now has 72 classes from Grade 10 to 12. There are 4600 students and 236 teachers. 80% students continue their college or university every year. In 2010, Weng'an No.2 middle school has come into reform times. The school has already performed a good curriculum reform platform, where teaching content and teaching methods are changing from traditional methods to innovated teaching methods. Until now, the school gets some significant results (Over 100 students are admitted into the key universities and 500 students are admitted into universities every year. Weng'an No.2 High School is also judged as the title of excellent school every year in Guizhou).

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### **6.1.2 Some reform changes in Guizhou Province and Current situation of collaborative ESL classroom**

There are some changes in the ESL classroom after the reform:

#### **1) Classroom roles are transformed.**

The cramming method of teaching is the primary way to teach before reform. Teacher-centered is the principal characteristic in the classroom. Teachers often stand on the platform and talk all the time in the classroom. Students sit and take notes all the time. Exams and exercises are the main primary to obtain scores. But now some English teachers try to transform the roles from teacher-centered to student-centered. Teachers could be the leaders to help the students solve questions in the classroom, and give students enough space to think and discuss. It also offers students a extensive and free space to image and create, which builds students' unfettered ability of study and exploration, strengthen collaborative ability among students. Every student could participate in the class. It could make English class more attractive and active.

#### **2) Teaching aids become abundant and flexible.**

Teachers have already used multimedia to teach. It is called multimedia teaching. Teachers made extensive use of multimedia and got the valuable source from it.

#### **3) Teaching context and aim are more inclined to the international world.**

In Guizhou province, there is no listening and spoken English test in the high school entrance examination. But listening and spoken English tests are in the college entrance examination. Therefore, school leaders and teachers, parents and students emphasize higher scores in the examination because of

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a heavy academic pressure. They are more likely to learn the content of the examination, e.g. English words, grammar, reading and writing. However, when they leave for high school, they must practice English listening and spoken English. It is too late to practice them for students. Usually, students cannot get high scores of the two parts of the entrance examination and they cannot speak English and understand foreigners in the daily—and future career life. However now, teachers and students will practice the two parts (Listening and Spoken English) from secondary school. It is a great modification for students to start future career life. They can connect with each other and understand each other, which put English into practice, not just for examination. They will become global talents.

### **6.1.3 Some difficulties in the reform**

However, for some schools in the cities and suburbs, the reform is not meaningful because of the time of reform is short and relatively new. From the year of 2010 onwards, Guizhou Education Department organizes training and seminars of the new high school curriculum reform. Many schools try to reform and most schools carry out it indeed. But effects are not apparent. There are several factors behind these results:

#### **1) Guizhou province has ethnic groups.**

China has 56 ethnic groups, 49 live in Guizhou, which is the second place among the provinces in China (Population Data Report of Guizhou, 2010). The minority mixed up with Han people. However, they have their own words, language, customs, and culture. They use and deliver a speech with their own language from the young age. When they come to school, they must learn Chinese Mandarin. Most schools have no English class, not mention having English reforms.

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## **2) The degree of education falls behind other developed provinces.**

Students' learning foundation in Guizhou province is lower than in other provinces because of lower economic and education. Students in Guizhou are more accustomed to using traditional methods, not new ones.

## **3) Misunderstanding of the reform among schools.**

Some schools have started to reform already, but reform just stays on the surface, not in the essence. Most teachers think that the reform divides groups and discussion in the class. Teachers' English demonstration class is the product of reform. Actually, they are "show class". What is show class? These English demonstration classes are practiced over and over again by teachers and students. Teachers tell students the question what the teacher wants to ask, and give them answers in advance instead of thinking answers independently. Therefore, when educators attend the demonstration classes, they often see a class with 100% response rate from students and total actively.

### **6.1.4 Current situation of collaborative ESL classroom**

Most of the collaborative ESL classrooms are student-centered. Teachers are the leaders. In the collaborative classroom, teachers often divide groups and give every group some questions, then talk with group members. However, collaborative ESL classroom in Guizhou Province is not developed, especially in the suburbs and rural areas. Moreover, most young teachers are more likely to organize collaborative ESL classroom. But for some older teachers, they prefer to traditional teaching methods.

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## 6.2 The Participants and the Research Process

### 6.2.1 The Participants

The target groups which were selected from an upper secondary school—Weng'an No.2 Middle School in Guizhou Province. First, a formal invitation was sent to the principal personally, and in the invitation letter, important things were mentioned, such as, research objects, and a sample of teachers and students. I could ask a request from the principal whether he could arrange them or not. Because the researcher is a staff in the school, it is easy for me to get the principal's agreement to do an investigation in the school. 15 English teachers were selected purposefully. I will pay more attention to their ages and titles and gender. Half young English teachers and half aged English teachers, half of higher titles and half of lower titles, half of male and half of the female were selected. Then 20 students from Senior 3 were selected randomly. 15 surveys were given out to English teachers. One of English teachers helped the researcher to hand out 20 surveys to these students. All of them were prepared to cooperate with the researcher.

### 6.2.2 Research process

The research procedure of this study can be outlined by the following sequential phases: *Phase 1: Preparing for the research*. My research interest both in teacher leadership and collaborative learning has continued during my studies in Finland. In my academic writing lessons, my teacher taught us to sort resources (books or journals) that related to my interest topic from the library. Then read them over and over again. After reading more literature about teacher leadership and collaborative learning, I generated the new research question which investigates how to create a collaborative ESL classroom through teacher leadership. After that, I decided to do a case study in China.

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Phase 2: Selecting and approaching the research objects. I selected Weng'an No. 2 High School. As I said earlier, collaborative learning proceeds very smoothly in eastern provinces, such as, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou. While it proceeds very tough in undeveloped provinces, such as, my hometown--Guizhou province. Another factor is that I considered the school ownership (public school), the school location (in Guizhou, an undeveloped province), and school type (a key high school from Grade 10 to 12).

I sent my research cover letters (Appendix A), asking for the research permission. Then, I made the research schedule and informed my research objects of my research plan and process. As a result, I got the permission from the school (Weng'an No.2 High School) very soon.

Phase 3: Designing the research instrument. After receiving this research permission, I explored the background of the school. Actually, I have known some background before. In order to do my research, I contacted the vice principal and visited the school website to update some information about the implementation of collaborative learning. Then I combined them. Qualitative methods were invoked as my approach which only includes qualitative surveys (Appendix C, D, E, and F). By taking teachers' views and students' views into account, I designed two qualitative surveys for teachers and students (I have previously mentioned it above).

Phase 4: Collecting the data from the field. During my summer vacation last year, I came back to China. I attended one staff meeting, and presented my requests among English teachers. They all supported me for my research. I handed out surveys to 15 English teachers. Then one leader from English teachers helped me to distribute the 20 surveys to Senior 3 randomly. The participants were given the chance to remain anonymous in the case studies. Finally, I got a 100% response rate.

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Phase 5: Processing and analyzing the data. After the data collection (From June to July 2015), I processed the survey data with content analysis. Because all surveys were written in the Chinese language, I translated the original research data into English after that.

### **6.3 Research methods**

Qualitative survey was applied in my study.

#### **Survey**

A survey is a system for collecting information about people to decide, compare or explain their knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Surveyors can collect information directly through four types of survey instruments: self-administered questionnaire, interview, structured record review and structured observation. That is to say, surveyors can record people's thoughts and actions by these four instruments (Creswell J W, 2012). I designed self-administered questionnaire, which was open-ended questionnaire.

Because I planned to explore my research from different perspectives, I designed two kinds of surveys for teachers and students respectively. There are 7 questions that are overlapped (Appendix C and E). Student's question (SQ) 1 is overlapped with teacher's question (TQ) 2, SQ 2 -- TQ 3, SQ 6 --TQ 5, SQ 7 -- TQ 6, SQ 9 --TQ 7, SQ 12 -- TQ 9, SQ 14 --TQ 10.

In this survey, there are 10 open-ended questions to answer four sub-questions from teacher's perspective. The structure of the survey is as follows: The questions No. 1-5 focuses on the current situation of collaborative learning and teachers' and students' attitudes towards it (sub-question 1). Questions are from No. 6-9 concerned about advantages and disadvantages about collaborative learning and some factors to promote or

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hinder to it according to teachers' previous experience (sub-question 2 & 3). The last question is about the way of utilizing collaborative learning and teacher leadership (sub-question 4).

In addition, I also designed 15 open-ended questions to answer the four sub-questions from students' perspective in students' survey. The structure of the survey is as follows: The questions No. 1-6 are about current situation of collaborative learning, and teachers and students' different attitudes towards it in the English class (sub-question 1). Questions including No. 7, 12 and 15 focus on the students' motivation to use collaborative learning and some factors to promote or hinder it, (sub-question 2 & 3). The No. 8-11 and No. 13-14 are mainly explaining some ways of collaborative learning through teacher leadership (sub-question 4).

## **6.4 Data analysis**

Content analysis is a widely used qualitative research technique. Researchers regard content analysis as a flexible method for analyzing text data (Cavanagh, 1997). The first step is data management. At an early stage in the analysis process, I created and organized the research data into file folders. Then I translated all my data from Chinese into English. Secondly, I went through my raw data several times. I immersed myself in the details, and tried to get a sense of the transcripts as a whole (Lewis, S. 2015). Thirdly, I classified three codes (teacher leadership, collaborative learning, and ESL) for my research. After that, I expanded the categories as I continued to review my database (15 surveys from teachers and 20 surveys from students). In the process of giving categories, I tried to use participants' original words or special to give categories. Moreover, I combined these categories into several

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themes. In the end, I used them to write my narrative with direct interpretation (Lewis, S. 2015).

## 6.5 Ethical solutions

Research that involves human subjects or participants raises unique and complex ethical, legal, social and political issues. Research ethics is specifically interested in the analysis of ethical issues that are raised when people are involved as participants in research (Nancy, 2015). Three basic principles should be considered in my study.

Firstly, Respect for persons: I should get the permission of the people who I would be studying to conduct research involving them. Individuals should be treated as autonomous agents. The investigator must ensure that the subject has received a full disclosure of the nature of the study, the risks, benefits, and alternatives, with an extended opportunity to ask questions. Persons with diminished autonomy (e.g. prisoners, students, children, etc.) are entitled to protection. They should not be coerced to participate in a research (Belmont report, 1979). Before I collected my data, the aim of the study and who would have access to the data collected was stated clearly by the principal with whom I contacted. The participants, both teachers and students were made aware of that their participation in the study was voluntary.

Secondly, Maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harm. The investigator should give forethought to the maximization of benefits and the reduction of risk that might occur from the research (Belmont Report, 1979). In order to make sure participants' benefits, I bought some books about English education from the internet. After submitting the questionnaires, participants could get one book as a reward. In addition, all the surveys that I

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collected from teachers and students were kept secretly, because it is related to confidentiality and privacy. After I collected these data, I put them together in a safe bag. Nobody, even including principals, could see them. Most of the time, teachers and students would answer the surveys honestly in order to make sure the effectiveness and authenticity of these data. In their answers, there are some “sensitive but fine things” to schools or governments. If school leaders or government leaders should know them someday, it would make participants troublesome.

Thirdly, justice is also important (Belmont Report, 1979). When I selected participants, I considered equitable is the key in my study. Therefore, I used the random selection from name list of the school. For example, some students with high English level, some students with low English level, some teacher with high titles, while some teachers with low titles. I used the random selection from name list.

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## 7. RESULTS

The results of this study indicated how to create a collaborative ESL classroom through teacher leadership in China, including, teachers' and students' attitudes, advantages and disadvantages, barriers and promotion factors of collaborative learning with teacher leadership. In addition, the research presented the ways of utilizing collaborative learning through teacher leadership in the ESL classroom.

### 7.1 Teachers' and students' attitudes towards collaborative learning in the ESL classroom

The following parts will answer research problem 1 in the thesis.

#### 7.1.1 The attitudes of teachers

Teachers' attitudes are numerous under the background.

*"I support collaborative learning. Because collaborative learning could make ESL classroom more interesting and active, which let every student participate in the class, and also enhance students' enthusiasm for English learning. Students could discuss with classmates, communicate with classmates, and improve with classmates, which could improve team spirit."(T3)*

*"Whether I use collaborative learning or not, which depends on the real situation of my class. My two classes have a low-English level; therefore, collaborative learning becomes very hard in my class. I have ever tried collaborative learning in exercise part several times, students are very euphoric and active, but they receive little learning effects because of their limited English level. At last, I have to go back to traditional lecture methods. At least, it could help them improve their scores, even a little progress."(T2)*

*"I hate collaborative learning because it wastes time. My class is the top class in senior 2. We have a big academic pressure. In college entrance examination, no ability tests except all exam questions in the paper. I used traditional lecture methods for several decades*

and also got a massive success from it. I believe only in the way of sea tactical issues, can my students obtain high scores in college entrance examination and are admitted into key universities. "(T1)

These 15 English teachers showed their personal attitudes frankly. I made a summary table for various types of attitudes, and then calculated the frequency of teachers' attitudes as follows:

TABLE 2: The frequency of teachers' attitudes

Items	Frequency
Support collaborative learning	6
Hate collaborative learning	4
It depends on real situation	5

### 7.1.2 The attitudes of students

For students, they hold different attitudes towards collaborative learning. Let us take a look at what some students had to say about collaborative learning:

*"My English is very poor. I cannot understand what My English teacher said. I often fall asleep in the English class because of no interest in English. Therefore, I do not care whether she leads us to do collaborative learning" (S5)*

*"I became very interested in collaborative learning. I was very happy and active in the collaborative ESL classroom."(S3)*

*"I enjoyed all the English activities from collaborative learning. Also, my classmates often helped me a lot. I found I could get progress in English! "(S9)*

*"My English often gets 120 (totally score is 150 in English). I like collaborative learning in English class. It is a great chance to practice Spoken English because we are usually very shy to speak Spoken English with Chinese students. "(S13)*

*"I know nothing about collaborative learning."(S4)*

*"I think collaborative learning is right for me. I can get different solutions from my classmates and build team spirit in my group."(S6)*

*"With the increasing of study workload, I give up collaborative learning. "(S11)*

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*"I hate collaborative learning or some innovated methods like that. Please stop it! It is only wasting my time. If my English teacher could teach me how to get high scores in college entrance examination, I will thank goodness."(S16)*

20 students expressed their honest attitudes about collaborative learning. I summarized the attitude types with the frequency.

TABLE 3: The frequency of students' attitudes

Items	Frequency
Indifferent to collaborative learning	4
Like collaborative learning	7
Know nothing about collaborative learning	3
Give up collaborative learning	4
Hate collaborative learning	2

## **7.2 The advantages and disadvantages of collaborative learning in the ESL classroom**

Research problem 2 will be answered in the following two parts (the advantages and disadvantages of collaborative learning) in my thesis.

### **7.2.1 The advantages of collaborative learning**

As I mentioned previously, collaborative Learning means that two or more people are engaged in a common task and they capitalize on one another's resources and skills, from participating cooperatively in group activities,

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group problem-solving, and group discussions by sharing experiences (Chiu, 2000).

TABLE 4: The advantages of collaborative learning

Advantages	Examples
<p>1) Collaborative learning can active the learning atmosphere in the ESL classroom. Collaborative learning is essentially primarily student-cantered. The role of teachers to students has changed. Students do not listen to teachers and take notes all the time anymore. Teachers do not talk a lot anymore, either. Instead, students will discuss with group members, solve problems and help with each other's, which could tackle the task of common effort.</p>	<p>"The traditional class was very quiet, and everybody was busy to takes notes from the blackboard. I felt it very boring, and some of my classmates lost their interest in English gradually. Collaborative learning active the learning atmosphere in the ESL classroom."(T4)</p> <p>"When I became an art student in Senior 2, my young English teacher often lead us to learn with collaborative learning. She gave me the chance to discuss and deal with problems with my classmates. I still felt very proud even though it is very tough to tackle it by ourselves."(S12)</p>
<p>2) Collaborative learning can stimulates student interest in English learning. It is not only protecting students' curiosity and interest for knowledge, but also improving the whole group member's skills. It also makes students become more confident.</p>	<p>"I appreciate the feeling of presenting among the class. My teacher praised me because of my excellent presentation."(S14)</p> <p>"I really enjoy our discussion in my group. We can learn from each other."(S15)</p> <p>"I remember the results that we make it, never forget it."(S9)</p> <p>"I think collaborative learning can expand our mind. We can think independently."(S3)</p>

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- 3) Collaborative learning can improve students' learning efficiency. As I mentioned it as above, students could develop the skills of English listening, Spoken English, English reading, and English writing through those contests. It is fascinating, and high efficiency.
- "English competition motivates my students to learn English and finally makes progress." (T7)
- "When comes to exercise part, I always divided groups and made a competition. One group answered, another group revised the answers and shared their different ideas. Finally, I announced the right answers and rewarded the students who responded the right one. As a consequence, students tended to think the problem independently. As time passes, students can remember and understand every English point with these teaching activities." (T3)
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- 4) Collaborative learning can develop a healthy personality for students. There are many "only-child" in China. Sometimes some of them are selfish, arrogant and introvert. When they are deal with common task together, they share their successful experience and help with each other, which improve students' sense of trust and team spirit. In addition, collaborative learning makes them become more kind, friendly, open-minded and tolerant of different ideas. Also, gain their self-confidence.
- "When I took up a task with my group peers, I felt happy. Our group likes a family. We often help with each other" (S12)
- "Behalf of our group, I presented results several times. I gain confidence from collaborative learning." (S15)
- "When our team members' answers or solutions are imperfect, many of us will help him or her immediately." (S3)
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- 5) Collaborative learning can build a positive relationship between teachers and students. The traditional relationship between teachers and students are extremely tense and strictly under the influence of thousands of social hierarchy. Teachers always order students to take action. Now
- "I like my English teacher. She likes my older sister. She is a bit kind and always helps me." (S13)
- "I feel fair and equality from my teacher." (S6)
- "My teachers always accept our advice earnestly and humbly. Teachers are not strictly teachers. They are friends to
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teachers often encourage students to address collaborative task together, and teachers also provide them with some help and advice with respect.	us,”(S14)
6) Collaborative learning can cultivate well-rounded students. Collaborative learning fosters students’ ability for leadership, for example, the ability to analyse and problem-solving, the ability to criticize.	<p>“One of my students has formidable skills, for example, leadership, problem-solving and criticizing, and almost like a leader in the class.”(T8)</p> <p>“I am the leader of my group. My capacities of leadership and problem-solving are improved by a long time study of collaborative learning.”(S13)</p>

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The answers were supplied by teachers and students. I quoted some teachers’ and students’ answers directly using examples, and then sorted out key words from the above table. Lastly, I calculated the frequency of their answers.

TABLE 5: The frequency of advantages in collaborative learning

Items	Frequency
Activating learning atmosphere	30
Student-centered	24
Teachers’ roles have changed	23
Students’ discussion	24
Group work	26
stimulating interest in English	30
Increasing confidence	28
Improving level of Spoken English, English listening, English writing	29

Improving learning efficiency	27
Building a healthy personality (more kind, friendly, open-minded, self-confidence, etc.)	26
Share experience and skills	25
Increasing sense of trust and team spirit	23
Building a positive relationship between teachers and students	20
Cultivating well-rounded students	25
Building leadership of students	27
Improving the ability to analyse, problem-solving, and criticize	26

## 7.2.2 The disadvantages of collaborative learning

Although many advantages of collaborative learning are presented above, Collaborative learning has two distinct sides. It must also be acknowledged that collaborative learning has some disadvantages.

TABLE 6: The disadvantages of collaborative learning

Disadvantages	Examples
1) Teacher leaders' workload after school will be heavier. Before every collaborative class, teacher leaders should design the whole class in detail, such as, preparing teaching materials and aids very carefully, dividing groups scientifically, building fair evaluation mechanism, planning	<p>"My teaching task becomes more difficult. I must design the whole class and prepare everything in advance, e.g. collecting some relevant information about the teaching content, setting tasks for students. I am too tired." (T10)</p> <p>"When to present contents in PPT or video, what kind of ways can stimulate students' interest, English play, English</p>

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discussion topics, etc. As a teacher, you must have the abilities to predicting accidents. Superficially, collaborative learning can reduce the workload of teachers. It seems that teachers only stand in the classroom to lead and guide. As a matter of fact, teachers' workload after school becomes heavier.

music, or English speech? All those details that I must consider. Most students will lost interest after a long time, and become lazy and muddle. "(T3)

"I am a mom. If I spent much time in collaborative learning, who would care my child and my family?"(T12)

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- 2) Collaborative learning makes students with high English proficiency better and better, makes students with low English proficiency worse and worse. Some brilliant students' frequency of presentation is higher than other students with low English proficiency in the class. Therefore, the entire discussion will be controlled by several students. Some students are afraid of answering questions or presenting their views due to their low English proficiency. They are more accustomed to watching or listening to others'.
- "Sometimes, we have different opinions; everyone wants to hold their views. We cannot reach an agreement."(S16)
- "My English is poor. When we have a discussion, what I should say. I have no idea. Anyway, we are the team. Other peers with high English-level will present results."(S8)
- "I am scared of making mistakes when I present among the class."(S19)
- "I made progress from collaborative learning. I practiced my spoken English and English grammar from the collaborative process."(S9)
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- 3) Teachers' teaching task cannot be finished timely through collaborative learning. According to the Standard of New Curriculum and the Leading Outline of NCEE (National College Entrance Examination), Chinese students from senior 1 to senior 3 must finish eight textbooks that are New Senior English for China, from Student's Book 1 to Book 8.
- "We have eight books. It is an urgent task. If we try collaborative learning, I believe teaching task will not be finished before NCEE."(T14)
- "Collaborative learning requires students to prepare study materials before class, have a discussion in the class, have a meeting and do collaborative homework after school. In fact, our students have not enough time to do it."(T1)
- "NCEE is the key turning point in my life career. I have severe stress from it. Therefore, I often studied by myself
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	when my group peers discussed.”(S10)
4) Collaborative learning makes students get far away from the core pathway. Average English level of students in Guizhou is lower than other provinces, and they have no comprehensive knowledge hierarchy. Hence, when they do collaborative learning with classmates, they cannot get the key point of teaching contents and exam. Consequently, students cannot acquire knowledge after collaboration, which is called “Invalid class”.	<p>“We cannot find any solutions to the task when we are in collaborative learning. We only pretend to discuss.”(S20)</p> <p>“I think our knowledge is limited. I cannot acquire real knowledge from our discussion.”(S1)</p> <p>“Sometimes we get the results which are not the right language points.”(S16)</p>

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These are the main disadvantages summarized from teachers’ and students’ open-ended questionnaires. Many examples are presented in Table 6 and the frequency of disadvantage is shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7: The frequency of disadvantage in Collaborative learning

Items	Frequency
Teachers’ workload become heavier	30
Wasting much time	28
Making students with high English level better and better, making students with low English level worse and worse	26
Teaching task cannot be finished timely	31
Collaborative learning makes students get far away from the core pathway.	21
Students’ limited knowledge reduces the quality of discussion	23

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## 7.3 The barriers and promotion factors of collaborative learning in the ESL classroom

In the following section, the barriers and promotion factors of collaborative learning will be presented with some specific examples. Obviously, they are answers to research problem 3.

### 7.3.1 The barriers of collaborative learning

The barriers of collaborative learning are analyzed from examples.

TABLE 8: The barriers of collaborative learning

Barriers	Examples
1) Exam-oriented education and NCEE are priorities in China. School leaders think little of collaborative learning because of the big stress from NCEE. The competition among schools is the scores of competition and the Acceptance Rate in NCEE. Therefore, schools would like to take effective measures to improve students' scores. Furthermore, students have less spare time due to many courses (Appendix G and H). Therefore, most students are more willing to do exercise with every minute, instead of collaborative learning.	<p>"I am very exhausted of my study. I study 10 hours every day. I have no choice but to do more efforts for my examination."(s16)</p> <p>"I am eager be admitted into a key university. I cannot let my mother and father down. I must study hard!"(S1)</p> <p>"I often study till 24.00. I feel exhausted."(S7)</p>
2) Guizhou Province lacks English language environment. As everybody knows, English is a way to communicate. However, in Guizhou Province, most of the	"The only aim of my English learning is the examination. In the future, I will not use English anymore, because I will find a job in China."(S8)

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students' English is "Mute English". "Mute English" is that students can do excellent English papers, but not speak fluently English or understand others. It is mainly because Guizhou Province is underdeveloped and lack of real English learning environment. Many students feel that English is useless for them in the future career apart from English exam.

"I want to practice my Spoken English, but few foreigners."(S12)

"I like English very much. I have already studied English for 9 years, but I cannot speak Spoken English very fluently. I am eager to communicate with foreigners in our daily life."(S9)

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- 3) Guizhou is a multi-national province. China has 56 ethnic groups, 49 live in Guizhou, which is the second place among the provinces in China. Different ethnic groups have their own language and words. When they go to school, they begin to learn Chinese Mandarin. It is extremely tough for them to spread Chinese Mandarin and eliminate dialectal differences, let alone English or collaborative learning in ESL classroom.

"In my class, some students who are the minority are weak in Chinese Mandarin and English. It is hard to explain to them because they cannot understand somehow."(T15)

"I am a Miao people. I speak my Miao language. When my English teacher taught us, I cannot understand her. When she explained to me, even I cannot understand Chinese Mandarin, let alone English."(S20)

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- 4) Traditional lecture methods are deep-rooted in both teachers and students' heart. They never tried collaborative learning. Traditional lecture methods have a long history, which enables students to develop a habit after a long-term experiment. They can get knowledge from it. While collaborative learning has existed for a short time, teachers and students all query about new things. Under the influence of exam-oriented education and the

"Collaborative learning is a new thing, I am not sure it will help me a lot. I have no time to experiment it."(S4)

"We have a heavy pressure from examination. Nobody knows whether collaborative learning is a good way to improve their grades or not."(S17)

"I have used traditional lecture methods for 20 years; I think it is the best way to

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<p>pressure of NCEE, teachers and students do not dare to try the new teaching methods. Talented as these students may be, they are unwilling or unable to collaborate with their peers in group activities.</p>	<p>get higher scores.”(T1)</p> <p>“I used to try collaborative learning in my class, but I found it is only a new thing for students.”(T11)</p>
<p>5) Students’ average level of Spoken English and English listening is low. In Guizhou Province, students’ level of Spoken English and English listening are lower than other provinces. When teachers allocate a task to every group, most students cannot understand others, and they cannot express their views in English, either. As time passed, many students lost their interest in collaborative learning.</p>	<p>“I want to say something, but I cannot speak it in English.”(S18)</p> <p>“It is hard for me to do a task in English.”(S11)</p> <p>“I have a lot of things to say, but I cannot remember the English words.”(S17)</p> <p>“I could not understand what my teacher said If she did not translate it into Chinese.”(S1)</p>
<p>6) Students’ learning self-consciousness and learning initiative are poor. When collaborating with classmates in one group, some students with low self-consciousness maybe chat with others or play phones. It has a big influence on others’ study or discussion. Besides, some students never think or discuss in the collaborative learning. Laziness makes them wait and enjoy the fruits of others’ work.</p>	<p>“My group peers always chat with others. It will disturb us.”(S7)</p> <p>“When we discuss, some of my group members never discuss with us. They never do homework after class, either” (S12)</p> <p>“I cannot help playing cellphones when collaborating with peers or my teacher is not there.”(S18)</p>
<p>7) English teachers lack teaching experience and professional skills. Because they did not receive a good English education, and few English teachers had a chance to study abroad. In the ESL</p>	<p>“We have a massive work to do. Moreover, school leaders do not allow teachers to study further education. Because they are afraid that it will affect results of entrance examination. ”(T7)</p>

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classroom, part of English teachers still teach English class in Chinese, instead of teaching English in English, because they cannot speak fluent English. At last, not every teacher has an opportunity to participate in new curriculum reform training.

"I was admitted into a key university to study my Master's Degree. But my leader did not encourage me to study."(T5)

"I teach English in Chinese. Because It is hard to explain some difficult points to them. My English cannot support these challenges."(T6)

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8) Teachers are short of teacher leadership in their teaching activities. Teacher leadership help teachers prepare teaching materials, design teaching activities, set time of every instruction step, divide groups, assign tasks, supervise students' discussion, give directions to students, evaluate students and groups, etc.

"What is teacher leadership? I am not sure I get the right understanding of it."(T13)

"When my students discuss or do a task with each other, I worry that I cannot manage them."(T14)

"Teacher leadership is necessary. But we did not use teacher leadership in the collaborative ESL classroom because of limited time."(T11)

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9) Large size class teaching in Guizhou Province also hinders collaborative learning. As everyone knows, China has a large population. In the year of 2015, according to statistics, Guizhou Province has a large population of 35.08 million (Population Report). Middle school students are 2.5986 million (Population Report). In Weng'an No. 2 middle school, the average number of student is more than 70 students in every class.

"For me, dividing group is a big problem. How can I deal with it? I have 65 students in my class."(T8)

"When our teacher divided groups to us, I am very happy, because it cost 40 minutes. I can relax from it."(S5)

"There are too many groups, I cannot control them. I cannot pay attention to everyone."(T9)

"My students cannot hear what I said when they chat with each other."(T15)

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- 10) Unscientific teacher evaluation mechanism. Students' scores in NCEE and college admission rate, instead of students' morality, are the evaluation criteria of whether teachers and students are excellent or not, which are regarded by the government, the society and schools, hence, whether teachers or students are still eager to take measures to improve scores in NCEE.
- "The only criterion for evaluating teachers is students' grades." (T3)
- "I have no idea why to evaluate us according to students' grades. It is unbelievable and unfair." (T8)
- "My teacher said that I was not an excellent student, because of my bad scores." (S19)
- 

I calculated the frequency of barriers in collaborative learning as follows:

TABLE 9: The frequency of barriers

Items	frequency
Exam-oriented education	27
Big stress from NCEE	28
Students' limited study time	25
Guizhou lacks English language environment	20
Students' misunderstanding of English	16
Guizhou has 49 ethnic groups	12
Traditional lecture methods are deep-rooted.	23
Students' average English skills are low.	26
Students lack learning initiative	24
Chatting with classmates	25

play cellphone	25
Lazy work	28
Teachers lack teaching professional skills	19
Teachers lack overseas learning experience	16
Teachers are short of teacher leadership	30
Large size class	26
Unscientific teacher evaluation	22

### 7.3.2 The promotion factors of collaborative learning

TABLE 10: The promotion factors of collaborative learning

Promotion factors	Examples
1) NCEE must be reformed.	<p>“In my opinion, NCEE should have added more test contents, such as, Spoken English and moral quality.” (T12)</p> <p>“NCEE is not the only criterion to evaluate someone. It must be changed.”(T9)</p> <p>“Some students cheated in NCEE. It is unfair.”(T4)</p> <p>“How can they evaluate our abilities through paper?”(T18)</p>
2) Building a real English environment.	<p>“Our government should employ English volunteers and English teachers from English-speaking countries in order to practice English.”(T3)</p> <p>“I hope our school leaders can encourage us to exchange in the overseas.”(T6)</p> <p>“If I can practice Spoken English in my</p>

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	daily life, I will be more interested in English”(S14)
3) Opening a free language class for minority students.	<p>“Our government can organize language volunteers from the local schools or society to teach minority students Chinese Mandarin and English after school.”(T5)</p> <p>“I hope I have a private language teacher so that I can practice with him or her.”(S20)</p>
4) Keeping a balance between traditional methods and collaborative learning.	<p>“Traditional lecture methods also improve my scores.”(S1)</p> <p>“All teaching methods have their advantages. We can make full use of them.”(S2)</p>
5) Taking active steps to improve students’ English level. When students participate in collaborative learning, teachers can give some rewards to them who gain improvements. Students will feel confident and gain a sense of achievement. You also praise some who failed, which made their depressed feelings confident. Moreover, competition also increases the passion for collaborative learning.	<p>“We should encourage students to speak English in the school.”(T2)</p> <p>“School leaders can force students to practice Spoken English. Maybe it is a not nice way, but an effective way.”(T15)</p> <p>“Reward mechanism motivates students to join all kinds of collaborative activities.”(T7)</p> <p>“I feel confident and gain a sense of achievement when my teacher rewards me because of my hard working.”(S6)</p> <p>“I failed, but my teacher encouraged me a lot. I recovered my confidence.”(S15)</p> <p>“I like English competition, which can stimulate my passion for English learning. Our group often obtained excellent performance.”(S3)</p>
6) Teacher leaders should monitor	“Students lack learning initiative and

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students all the time.	passion. It is better to monitor them in the class.”(T6)  “When my teacher is here, my peers are careful. But when she is not here, our peers start to chat.”(S17)
7) Improving teachers’ specialized knowledge and teaching skills.	“The government should support us to attend training about collaborative learning”(T5)  “School leaders should encourage teachers to study abroad for further education.”(T4)
8) Strengthen teacher leadership in the ESL classroom.	“Support students when they do collaborative learning.”(T9)  “We can design class together, and learn from each other.”(T8)
9) Reduce the size of class.	“30 students in every class will be better.”(T14)  “Creating more high schools to share students.”(T13)
10) Building a fair and multiple evaluation system.	“School leaders should add evaluating criterions”(T2)  “Students’ moral quality, team spirit, and other comprehensive abilities could be the assessmentcriterion.”(T10)

The frequency of promotion factors is following.

TABLE 11: The frequency of promotion factors

Items	Frequency
NCEE must be reformed	26
Building a real English environment	23

Opening a free language class for minority	11
Having a balance between traditional methods and collaborative learning	24
Taking effective steps (e.g. competition, reward)	28
Monitoring students	22
Improve teachers' specialized and teaching skills	27
Training for teachers	30
Strengthen teacher leadership	32
Reduce the size of class	25
Building a fair evaluation system.	22

#### **7.4 How to utilize collaborative learning through teacher leadership in the ESL classroom**

As mentioned previously, teacher leadership is not a formal role, responsibility or set of tasks. It is more a form of agency where teachers are empowered to lead development work that impacts directly upon the high quality of teaching and learning. Teacher leaders are chiefly concerned with securing enhanced instructional outcomes, generating a positive relationship with staff and students, and creating the enabling conditions for others to learn (Murphy 2005, p. 15). Therefore, the answers of research question 4 help us to deal with the ways of utilizing teacher leadership with collaborative learning in ESL classroom as follows:

TABLE 12: Steps of utilizing collaborative learning through teacher leadership in the ESL classroom

Utilization	Examples
<p>1) Teacher leaders should demonstrate collaborative learning to students with detail. To avoid some misunderstanding, teacher leaders should introduce the core idea of collaborative learning, and then describe the availability, operation, advantages and disadvantages to students.</p>	<p>“Collaborative learning is strange for me. I never heard it before. I hope my teacher can give some instructions to me.” (S20)</p> <p>“I heard collaborative learning from the internet.”(S4)</p> <p>“I never heard collaborative learning before, but I guess it is interesting.”(S5)</p>
<p>2) Teacher leaders should divide groups scientifically and legitimately before collaborative learning. Because of big-size class, it is too difficult to divide groups in the class. Teachers should divide groups in advance.</p>	<p>“We must make sure how many groups and then select a group leader for each group among the whole class.”(T8)</p> <p>“When we select the student leader, he or she should occupy with some skills, such as leadership, high English-proficiency, problem-solving and broad thinking.”(T3)</p> <p>“We should distribute students into every group averagely. Students’ English level, perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds should be considered.”(T5)</p> <p>“Besides, the proportion of boys and girls must be divided averagely in one group.” (T7)</p>
<p>3) Teacher leaders should assign the tasks according to students’ different English level.</p>	<p>“In order to develop individual strengths and talents, we should design different tasks in advance.” (T4)</p> <p>“Students’ different English level should be considered when design tasks.”(T2)</p>

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<p>4) Teacher leaders should monitor students' learning process of collaborative learning. During the process of collaborative learning, it seems that students have autonomy to discuss with each other, but they cannot study without teacher leadership.</p>	<p>"Some students are lazy. They do nothing but enjoy others' outcomes." (T12)</p> <p>"We must supervise and urge them to study by themselves." (T6)</p> <p>"Some students always chat with group peers, which have an influence on a discussion." (T1)</p> <p>"We can help students to solve problems when they meet difficulties." (T7)</p> <p>"We must compromise students' different opinions." (T4)</p>
<p>5) Teacher leaders should build a fair evaluation mechanism for students</p>	<p>"Every student should be treated equally." (T6)</p> <p>"Students who made progress or worked hard should be rewarded, even though their grades were still low." (T13)</p> <p>"We should emphasize students' learning process and attitudes, instead of results" (T15)</p>
<p>6) Teacher leaders should give feedback to students.</p>	<p>"Teachers' feedback and comments lead them to go to the right way." (T5)</p> <p>"We should give equal feedback to students." (T2)</p>

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I calculated the frequency of the ways in which a collaborative ESL classroom can be created in Table 13.

TABLE 13: The frequency of creation

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Items	Frequency
Introducing and demonstrating collaborative learning	20
Dividing groups scientifically	22
Assigning tasks respectively	23
Monitor students' learning process	19
Building a fair evaluation mechanism for students	24
Give feedback	18

## 8. DISCUSSION

There are four sections in the following text. The first part discusses the results from qualitative research. The second part discusses reliability and validity of the study. The third part discusses generalizability and limitations of the study. The fourth part discusses the challenges of the study.

### 8.1 Examination of the results

In this research, I demonstrated how to create a collaborative ESL classroom through teacher leadership in a Chinese school. Remarkably, the qualitative data supported the research results. Four research questions in this study were solved: teachers and students' attitudes towards collaborative learning in the ESL classroom. The second one concentrated on the advantages and disadvantages of collaborative learning. The third described the barriers and the promotion factors of collaborative learning in the ESL classroom. The fourth presented manifestations of teacher leadership in ESL collaborative learning,

To start with, although they had diverse educational backgrounds, six teachers mentioned that they were willing to support collaborative learning in the ESL classroom. However, some teachers highlighted some problems, for instance, the limitations of NCEE, the pressure from school and the government. In this study, four teachers were against collaborative learning. An additional five teachers held that their willingness to try collaborative learning would depend on their students' performance in the classroom. When it comes to students' attitudes, seven students were open to collaboration, especially students who had low English proficiency. In addition, four students were indifferent to collaborative learning, because they never cared for their teachers' teaching methods. Four students had to

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give up collaborative learning because of NCEE pressure; three students knew nothing about collaborative learning. Interestingly, two students object to collaborative learning because of their superior English level. Talented as they might be, they were unwilling to collaborate with their peers in collaborative learning due to NCEE. Additionally, they all demonstrated some strong feelings, such as “hate” and “waste my time.”

Secondly, advantages and disadvantages of collaborative learning are the answers to research problem 2. Slavin (1987) thought that collaborative learning can narrow the achievement gap amongst students. D.W. Johnson and R.T. Johnson (1998) mentioned that collaborative learning has five key elements: positive interdependence, face-to-face, promotive interaction, individual accountability, social skills and group processing. These elements are well proved by the research results. Some answers were highly frequent, such as, stimulating interest in English, improving learning efficiency, group work, increasing confidence, improving English level, building students' leadership, etc. The average level of Guizhou is lower than other parts of China. Therefore, collaborative learning is not suitable for the actual situation of Guizhou. Some disadvantages came from the data, such as, increasing teachers' workload, wasting much time, teaching task cannot be finished timely, the quality of collaborative learning is not high, etc.

When comparing the results from the case study, I found that ESL collaborative learning implemented not very well in Guizhou Province. There are some barriers. Moreover, the barriers to collaborative learning appeared Guizhou characteristics, such as, NCEE, forty-nine ethnic groups, many “left-behind” children, poor English language environment, large size class (over sixty students), unscientific teacher evaluation mechanisms, and less teacher leadership utilized in collaborative learning, etc. I found that both teachers and students hold the same point views about the barriers, such as, NCEE, large population, long history of traditional lecture methods, low

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English level and motivation of students' learning, deficiency teacher leadership and professional skills. When referring to promotion factors, I found teacher leadership was essential for collaborative learning. The difference is that students are not aware of the concept of teacher leadership. They only know that "the power of the teacher, teachers lead or guide us". In addition, the efforts of the government, the school leaders and teachers are significant. They should spare no effort to encourage and support collaborative learning in the ESL classroom. Last but not least, teachers should improve their teaching skills and maximize teacher leadership.

York and Duke argued that there was an important positive impact of teacher leadership upon individual and organizational outcomes. Teacher leadership is essential to school and individual improvement and is one worth exploring, as it has been argued that the "evidence of such effects, particular in the levels of classroom practice and student learning are sparse" (York-Barr & Duke 2005, p. 282). The results of this study revealed some active steps to utilize teacher leadership in collaborative learning, such as, dividing groups, leading, guiding, evaluation, assigning tasks, motivation, monitoring, feedback, etc.

## **8.2 Reliability and Validity of the study**

Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as "real-world setting, the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2002, p. 39). Qualitative research, broadly defined, means "any investigation that produces findings not arrived at with the aid of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 17). Instead, the kind of research that produces findings arrived from real-world

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settings where the "phenomenon of interest unfold naturally" (Patton, 2002, p. 39). Now I will present definitions of reliability and validity.

The term 'Reliability' could be a concept used for testing or evaluating qualitative research. If the idea of testing is a means of information elicitation, then the quality of the qualitative study is the most important test (Golafshani, 2003). A good qualitative research can make us "understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing" (Eisner, 1991, p. 58).

Validity in qualitative research means "appropriateness" of the tools, processes, and data. Whether the research question is valid for the desired outcome, the choice of methodology is appropriate for answering the research question, the design is valid for the method the sampling and data analysis is appropriate, and finally the results and conclusions are valid for the sample and context (Lawrence, 2015). This concept is no longer a single, fixed or universal concept, but "rather a contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects" (Winter, 2000, p.1). Creswell & Miller (2000) suggest that the researcher's perception of validity in the study and his/her choice of paradigm assumption would have an impact on the validity. As a consequence, many researchers have developed their concepts of validity. Also, they often generated or adopted what they believe to be more appropriate terms, such as, quality, rigor, and trustworthiness (Davies & Dodd, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seale, 1999; Stenbacka, 2001).

In my study, I have investigated my topic and collected data in a Chinese high school. In addition, my perspective and previous teaching experiences have affected my whole research process, while I would be aware of this situation critically, and make them visible to readers. I have attempted to achieve this by providing textually rich, expressive and precise descriptions, discussing theoretical and practical notions, providing a detailed description of the methodology the study, making an in-depth analysis and

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interpretation of the results, and making an attempt to abandon some of my culture bias (e.g. losing face for Chinese) (Xin, 2013). Additionally, my central research question is valid for the desired outcomes. The choice of method (qualitative research methods) is appropriate for answering the research question, the sampling (fifteen teachers and twenty students) and data analysis (content analysis) is appropriate, and finally, the results and conclusions are valid for the sample and context in my thesis.

### **8.3 Generalizability and Limitations**

Most qualitative research studies examine a specific case or phenomenon in a certain population or ethnic group, of a focused location in a particular context. Therefore, the generalizability of qualitative research findings is usually not an expected attribute (Lawrence, 2015). However, some researchers approve of the approach of analytical generalization (Kvale, Brinkmann & Newbury, 2009). Where one judges the extent to which the findings of one study can be generalized to another under similar theoretical, and the proximal similarity model, where generalizability of one study to another is judged by similarities between the time, place, people and other social contexts (Trochim & Cincinnati, 2005).

The limitations of this study can be categorized as follows: The limitations of the school type and grade: At first, the case study was applied to the public school. The results of the study might be not available in the private schools. Secondly, the study was implemented in a high school only. Therefore, the results of the study might be not applicable in the primary schools or secondary schools. Thirdly, the limitation of provincialism: The research only presented one case study in an undeveloped area, Guizhou Province. Since China has many different provinces, collaborative learning with teacher leadership in other parts of China can be very different. Lastly,

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the participants are native Chinese language users in China. Thus, both teachers and students answered questionnaires in Chinese. Therefore, final data I collected is in Chinese. I translated them into English at a later time. Many old and typical Chinese languages are employed in the questionnaires. When I translated them into English, some of the original intended meanings and unique contexts might be lost. Lastly, I am not a native English speaker, either. When I translated the questionnaires and wrote my thesis, my Chinese thinking and logic affected the way in which I communicate my thoughts, conclusions and how I interpret the translated data me. Consequently, my thesis read academically as more “Chinese”, than “English”.

I do have some recommendations: if other researchers plan to share and investigate the same field, I recommend researchers who do conduct research in other undeveloped provinces in different countries around the world in the future. They may also choose more varied types of schools, including primary schools, secondary schools and high schools.

#### **8.4 Challenges for further research**

The thesis presented the subsequent challenges for further research. Firstly, my study only investigated one high school of Guizhou. Today more and more Chinese schools are inclined to try to practice collaborative learning through teacher leadership in the ESL classroom. I hope that further data will be collected from various schools (including primary schools, secondary schools, and universities, even in the applied schools) and different parts (undeveloped areas and developed areas) in China in order to test and improve this framework. However, there are many kinds of schools in which larger class sizes are the norm. It is harder to gather data from every type of school and thirty-four provinces in China. It is a giant project.

Secondly, China does not have the best foreign language teaching or learning environment to practice collaborative learning in the ESL classroom, especially, in some of the undeveloped provinces. Most of the time, English teachers there may apply half Chinese and half English to their teaching because of teachers' and students' low English comprehension levels. Therefore, when researchers do more intensive study about it, they must collect data from different provinces separately.

Lastly, China is in possession of a centralized governmental system, wherever in a private company or business, the military or the public schools. It is not feasible for each teacher to have a position of leadership, except some specifically chosen teacher leaders. Sometimes, in order to deal with the inspection from top leaders or reform, the school leaders often give leadership to every teacher at the particular time. Therefore, when educational research is conducted in these research objectives, some schools may present a kind of false appearance. Finally, you may collect untrue data from there. In the end, Chinese schools' different background and culture may cause a misunderstanding to collaborative learning with teacher leadership.

In a word, the study investigated the implementation of creating a collaborative ESL classroom through teacher leadership in the research school in Guizhou, China. It is crucial to examine the background, advantages and disadvantages, the barriers, and promotion factors of collaborative learning through teacher leadership in Guizhou. I hope that the study will contribute to the continuing discussion and further understanding of creating a collaborative ESL classroom through teacher leadership in other parts of China.

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## APPENDICS

### Appendix A: Research Cover letter (English version)

#### Appendix A: Research Cover letter (English version)

Date: 10 May, 2015

#### LETTER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Ref. Ms Li Xiao's research permit request

This is to certify that Li Xiao is a full time student in our Master's Degree Programme of Educational Leadership as of autumn 2014 and has completed all the studies as required, cumulatively circa 60 ECTS by the end of spring term 2015.

Li Xiao is planning to write her Master's thesis on the topic *Creating a collaborative ESL classroom through teacher leadership – A case study in Guizhou Province, China*, for which purpose she is contacting you to gain access to research data in your institution.

The research topic is fully acknowledged by our institution and the thesis is part of the Master's Degree Programme.



Mika Risku

Director

Tel. +358-400-247 420

Email: [mika.risku@jyu.fi](mailto:mika.risku@jyu.fi)

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The permit to pursue data collection for the master's thesis has been given by the 1<sup>st</sup> advisor of the thesis on 10 May, 2015.



Signed by 1<sup>st</sup> advisor

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## Appendix B: Research Cover letter (Chinese version)

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### Appendix B: Research Cover letter (Chinese version)

关于：肖莉研究许可请求信

证明信（中文版）

兹证明肖莉为于韦斯屈莱大学2014级教育领导学专业在读硕士研究生。该生已于2015年春季学期彻底修完硕士专业第一学年课程（60个学分）。

肖莉的硕士论文将针对“通过教师领导力在中国二外课堂中创建合作型课堂---以中国贵州省为例”进行研究。为此，她将联系您获得硕士论文数据。

该研究题目被我院认可，也是硕士专业课程的一部分。

特此证明。



于韦斯屈莱大学

教育学部教育领导研究院

院长：Mika Risku

电话：+358-400-247 420

邮箱：[mika.risku@jyu.fi](mailto:mika.risku@jyu.fi)

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采集硕士论文数据于2015年5月10日经第一导师许可。

第一导师：



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### Appendix C: Open-ended questionnaire for teachers (English version)

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am the Master's degree student from the Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. The topic of this open-ended questionnaire is how to create a collaborative ESL classroom through teacher leadership. The following questionnaire consists of 10 questions. It will take you around 25 minutes to answer the questionnaire. Your answers are used only for research purpose and your name will remain anonymous. Your answers are of great importance to my research. Thank you for your participation!

Li XIAO

[lixiao@student.jyu.fi](mailto:lixiao@student.jyu.fi)

Institute of Educational Leadership

University of Jyväskylä, Finland

1. What's the current situation of collaborative ESL classroom in Guizhou province?
2. Chinese Education Department advocated educational reform at the present time. Are there any changes in ESL classroom? Whether it also carried out English educational reform? Do you think that the Guizhou province has taken the English educational reform or not, why or why not?
3. What do you think about the collaborative ESL classroom according to your teaching experience?
4. What kind of role does teacher play in ESL classroom? Could you please give me a practical example?
5. What are the attitudes of teachers and students towards collaborative learning in ESL classroom?

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6. In your opinion, In ESL classroom, whether collaborative learning among students could improve the ability and efficiency of study or not? Why or why not?
  7. How to motivate teachers and students to feel more confident in using collaborative methods? If they are not confident, how to inspire them. If they are already motivated, how to inspire them to do it further?
  8. Could you analyze the advantages and disadvantages of collaborative learning in ESL classroom according to your teaching experience?
  9. What kind of factors hindered and limited the developing of collaborative learning in ESL classroom? Please analyze them according to your teaching experience.
  10. In your opinion, how to utilize the power of teacher with the collaborative learning in the classroom? How can successful collaborative learning be created and applied to ESL classrooms through teacher's power?

Thank you very much for your answers!

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## Appendix D: Open-ended questionnaire for teachers (Chinese version)

亲爱的老师:

您好!我是芬兰于韦斯屈莱大学的教育领导研究院的在读硕士生肖莉。我的研究问卷主题是“如何通过教师领导力创造英语合作型学习教学课堂”。以下问卷一共由10个问题组成,将花费您大约25分钟的时间,问卷是匿名形式的,您的答案仅作为研究使用。您的回答将对我的研究具有重大意义,感谢您的参与!

肖莉

[lixiao@student.jyu.fi](mailto:lixiao@student.jyu.fi)

教育领导研究院

芬兰 于韦斯屈莱大学

1. 目前贵州省的英语合作型课堂的现状是怎么样的?
2. 现在中国教育部提倡教学改革,在英语课堂中有什么变化吗?是否也进行了英语教学改革?您认为英语改革深入贵州了吗?为什么?
3. 根据您的教学经验,你认为什么是英语合作型教学课堂?
4. 在英语合作型课堂中,教师处于一个什么样的角色?能不能举例
5. 您认为老师和学生对于英语合作型课堂的态度是怎么样的?
6. 在您看来,在英语合作型课堂中,学生之间的合作学习是否能提高他们的学习能力和效率?为什么?
7. 请您从您的教学经历分析一下如何激励老师和学生更加自信地在英语课堂中执行合作型学习?如果他们不执行合作型学习,如何激励?如果他们已经执行合作型学习了,如何激励他们执行得更好?
8. 请您从您的教学经历分析一下合作型学习在英语教学中的长处和弊端。
9. 请您从您的教学经历分析一下阻碍和限制英语课堂中合作型学习发展的因素是什么?
10. 在您看来,如何在课堂中结合教师的领导力和英语合作型学习?在英语教学课堂中,教师领导力是如何被运用在合作学习中?合作型学习时如何成功被创造,并且通过教师的力量运用在英语课堂中?

非常感谢您的回答!

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## Appendix E: Open-ended questionnaire for students (English version)

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am the Master's degree student from the Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. The topic of this open-ended questionnaire is how to create a collaborative ESL classroom through teacher leadership. The following questionnaire consists of 15 questions. It will take you around 25 minutes to answer the questionnaire. Your answers are used only for research purpose and your name will remain anonymous. Your answers are of great importance to my research. Thank you for your participation!

Li XIAO

[lixiao@student.jyu.fi](mailto:lixiao@student.jyu.fi)

Institute of Educational Leadership

University of Jyväskylä, Finland

1. Are there any influences on your English class after English reform?
2. Does your English teacher still use traditional teaching methods in the class after English reform? Or will they use some innovated and efficient teaching methods? Please give me an example.
3. Have you heard collaborative ESL classroom from your English teacher before?
4. Did your English teacher listen to your own opinion of collaborative learning patiently and carefully?
5. What's the different reflection about collaborative learning from top class and poor class? Could you please give an example?
6. What's your teacher's attitude, your classmates' attitudes and your attitude towards to collaborative learning in ESL classroom when compared with traditional teaching methods?
7. Do you enjoy collaborative learning leaded by your teachers? Do you

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think it would improve your learning efficiency? Could you tell me some practical examples?

8. Whether teachers will emphasize individual learning outcome or group learning outcome after collaborative learning or not? Will your teacher publicly praise those students who make a great progress by using collaborative learning in ESL classroom?
9. Whether the teachers encourage students to use collaborative learning or not? How are the students motivated by teachers? Which session of the textbook will be used?
10. Whether your teacher monitors students' collaborative learning or not, like taking notes, helping them solve problems and giving feedback to them.
11. How did your teacher divide your classmates into groups when using collaborative learning? Did your teacher develop your individual strengths and talents when your teacher assigns tasks?
12. Could you analyze some factors to promote or hinder collaborative learning from you students' perspective?
13. Will your teacher give some instructions explaining the collaborative learning?
14. How can successful collaborative learning be created through the power of teacher? Please talk about your own opinion.
15. Could you give some suggestions to improve the efficiency of collaborative learning in ESL classroom?

Thank you very much for your answers!

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## Appendix F: Open-ended questionnaire for students (Chinese version)

亲爱的老师:

您好!我是芬兰于韦斯屈莱大学的教育领导研究院的在读硕士生肖莉。我的研究问卷主题是“如何通过教师领导力创造英语合作型学习教学课堂”。以下问卷一共由15个问题组成,将花费您大约25分钟的时间,问卷是匿名形式的,您的答案仅作为研究使用。您的回答将对我的研究具有重大意义,感谢您的参与!

肖莉

[lixiao@student.jyu.fi](mailto:lixiao@student.jyu.fi)

教育领导研究院

芬兰 于韦斯屈莱大学

1. 英语改革后对你们的英语课堂有没有影响?
2. 你的英语老师仍然在教学中使用传统教学吗?还是他们会使用一些比较创新、高效的学习方法。请举例。
3. 以前有没有在老师那里听说过合作型课堂?
4. 你们的英语老师会不会认真耐心倾听你们对于合作型学习的个人看法和观点?
5. 在进行合作型学习时,“尖子班”和“差班”有没有什么不同的反应?请举例。
6. 请谈谈当与传统教学相比时,你的老师和同学,包括你自己对于合作型学习课堂的态度是怎么样的?
7. 你喜欢老师引导你们进行合作型学习吗?你认为会不会提高你们的学习效率?能不能举你的个人例子。
8. 在合作型学习时,老师会强调个人学习成果还是小组学习成果?老师会公开表扬在合作型学习中取得进步的学生吗?

- 
9. 你的老师是否鼓励学生们进行合作型学习？学生们是如何被鼓励的？一般老师会在教材的那个部分让同学们进行合作型学习？
  10. 你的老师会是否监督学生之间的合作学习？比如记录你们学习过程，帮助你们解答问题以及给你们一些反馈。
  11. 当你们在进行合作型学习时，老师会如何分组？当老师在分组布置任务时，会不会尽可能地发挥每个人的长处和才能？
  12. 你能不能从学生的角度，分析一下一些促进或者阻碍合作型学习的因素？
  13. 你的老师会给你们解释和演示合作型学习吗？
  14. 教师的领导力作用是如何成功创造合作型学习的？请谈谈你的观点。
  15. 你能不能提一些有助于提高二外教学课堂中合作型学习效率的建议？
- 非常感谢您的回答！

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**Appendix G: Summer time schedule for students in Weng'an No.2 High School**

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
7:10-7:50	reading	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
7:50-8:20	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
8:20-9:00	No.1	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
9:00-9:10	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
9:10-9:40	No.2	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
9:40-10:00	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
10:00-10:40	No.3	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
10:40-10:50	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
10:50-11:30	No.4	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
BREAK							
14:10-14:50	No.5	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
14:50-15:00	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
15:00-15:40	No.6	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
15:40-16:00	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
16:00-16:40	No.7	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
16:40-16:50	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
16:50-17:30	No.8	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
BREAK							
19:00-19:50	No.9	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break	Same
19:50-20:00	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break	Same

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20:00–20:50	No.10	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break	Same
20:50–21:00	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break	Same
21:00–21:50	No.11	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break	Same

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**Appendix H: Winter time schedule for students in Weng'an No.2 High School**

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
7:30-8:00	reading	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
8:00-8:30	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
8:30-9:10	No.1	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
9:10-9:20	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
9:20-10:00	No.2	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
10:00-10:20	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
10:20-11:00	No.3	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
11:00-11:10	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
11:00-11:50	No.4	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
BREAK							
14:10-14:50	No.5	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
14:50-15:00	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
15:00-15:40	No.6	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
15:40-16:00	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
16:00-16:40	No.7	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
16:40-16:50	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
16:50-17:30	No.8	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break
BREAK							
19:30-20:20	No.9	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break	Same
20:20-20:30	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break	Same

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20:30-21:20	No.10	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break	Same
21:20-21:30	Break	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break	Same
21:30-22:20	No.11	Same	Same	Same	Same	Break	Same