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## Dynamics in a Mandarin lesson in a British secondary school: Asymmetric power and teacher-student rapport management

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### Keywords

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Asymmetric power;  
conversation analysis;  
dynamics;  
Mandarin lesson;  
teacher-student rapport.

### Abstract

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This study investigates the conversation between a teacher and a group of students in a Mandarin lesson at a secondary school in London. The specific task for that lesson was to nominate a team leader for the presentation of a Chinese city. By applying conversation analysis, this study reveals the asymmetric power between the teacher and students and how the teacher managed the teacher-student rapport in the class. This study also presents the dynamics in the class and the linguistic features of the conversation; the teacher eventually exerted reward, coercive, expert and legitimate power during the lesson. The study focuses on how the teacher-student rapport was challenged concerning students' identities, educational goals, sociality right and obligations. Furthermore, this study reveals that the teacher's questions were more referential than initial and presents how an experienced teacher managed the class and achieved the educational goal.

### Article Info

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## 1. Introduction

In conversation analysis, classroom talk is usually regarded as a type of institutional talk (Markee & Kasper, 2004), of which the theme is closely concerned with the educational goals and roles as well as the institutional rules and constraints with which people involved in must comply (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Sarangi & Robert, 1999). Due to these characteristics, conversations between teachers and students are usually asymmetrical as teachers often present some authority and exercise control over the class (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Gunnarsson et al., 1997) and this asymmetrical relationship has drawn a great deal of attention from researchers over the last few decades (Cazden, 1988; Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Lemke, 1990; McHoul, 1978; Mehan, 1979; Nystrand, 1997). Though the teacher-student relationship was traditionally regarded as an unequal relationship, several studies into classroom discourse have found that students posed several challenges to teachers (Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Lemke, 1990; Mehan, 1979). The conflict between teachers and students has attracted much interest from researchers, particularly the unexpectedly chaotic and disorderly nature of self-selection in the context of classroom talk (Emanuelsson & Sahlstrom, 2008). For example, in classes where students are learning Chinese as a second language, Li (2013) explained how a teacher tried to maintain her authority while responding to a learner's challenging reactions but failed in achieving the pedagogical goals. In another Mandarin learning class, Li (2019) investigated a conflict classroom talk between a teacher and a group of students. This study concluded that students broke the asymmetry between student-teacher rapport and made themselves heard, which in turn was highly valued by the teacher. By using analytic conversation methods, Fagan (2012) examined the discursive practices of a novice teacher dealing with unexpected contributions from students and difficult questions. By employing the same approach, Fagan (2013) also investigated how an experienced teacher managed learner contribution by focusing on the positive sides of the learners, which contributed to classroom interaction, language teacher cognition and language teaching practices. Focusing on turn-taking, Waring (2013a; 2013b) examined how a teacher managed chaotic contributions from self-selected students while achieving educational goals. Lee (2007) examined interactions in teacher-student discourse and specified how the teacher responded and acted to contingencies while moving the interactions forward, contributing to the pedagogical work in the practical enactment of classroom teachers.

To enrich the research on the asymmetric relationship between teachers and students, this study investigates a Mandarin class in a secondary school in London to demonstrate how a Mandarin teacher finds the balance between himself and the students whilst achieving the educational goal successfully. More specifically, by applying conversation analysis, this study examines the dynamics in a teacher-student discussion to present how the teacher manages teacher-student rapport and how both the teacher and students achieve the goals for that lesson, which was to find a team leader for the group. In the last few decades, Mandarin learning in British secondary schools has grown rapidly and started to establish its place in the Modern

Foreign Languages curriculum. However, research on learning Mandarin as a second language at the secondary school level is much needed (Diamantidaki et al., 2018). To fill this gap, it is hoped that this study will be pedagogically relevant for all educational professionals.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Power and rapport management theory

The teachers' role in the class is crucial as they monitor students' learning, evaluate their performance and facilitate their progress. Traditionally, teachers hold more power in the class as they take control of it (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Brown and Gilman (1972) defined power as something that exists between at least two persons: "one person may be said to have power over another in the degree that he is able to control the behaviour of the other" (p.225). Often, power is particularly found to be operationalised in teacher-student relationships (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Derived from the five main bases of power as proposed by French and Raven (1959), Spencer-Oatey (2008) pointed out that teachers typically have four types of power over students: (1) reward power (the teacher has control over students' positive outcomes, such as good performance, a right answer, and so on); (2) coercive power (the teacher has control over students' negative outcomes); (3) expert power (the teacher has some special knowledge or expertise which students need or want), (4) legitimate power (the teacher has the right to expect certain things of students and an obligation to carry out certain things because of their role and circumstances). The referent power, one wants to be like him/her in some respect, may exist between the teacher and students but is not typically found.

Power is significant in the study of social relationships (Brown & Gilman, 1960; Brown & Levinson, 1987) and numerous theoretical frameworks have been proposed concerning relationship management, such as the six politeness maxims (Leech, 1983); politeness principle (Lako, 1973); conversational contracts (Fraser, 1990); and politeness model (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987). Within these theories, Spencer-Oatey (2008) proposed the rapport management theory to help understand the concept of the relationship in a way aiming to provide insights into the relational ups and downs of social interaction (Spencer-Oatey, 2015). Specifically, this theory consists of three interrogational components: (1) face sensitivities, (2) interactional goals, and (3) sociality rights and obligations (see Figure 1). In this theory, face sensitivities are concerned with people's sense of worth, dignity and identity, particularly issues associated with respect, honour, status, reputation and competence (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Face sensitivities closely relate to three types of identities: the individual identity (self as an individual); the group or collective identity (self as a group member); and the relational identity (self in relationship with others). Each of these identities has certain attributes or characteristics such as particular beliefs, personality traits and physical features. As people generally have a fundamental desire for others to evaluate them and their attributes positively, acknowledging their negative qualities can be regarded as threatening their sense of identity and

can be regarded as face sensitive. However, which attributes are face sensitive can vary from person to person. Sociality rights and obligations are usually associated with the expectations of others. Spencer-Oatey (2008) claims that perceived sociality rights and obligations mainly derive from legal/contractual requirements (usually based on a business or contract, such as employees' behavioural codes); explicit/implicit conceptualisations of roles and positions (concerning the rights/obligations of the role relationship, such as equality-inequality, distance-closeness); and behavioural conventions (related to behavioural styles, protocols, social group norms and traditional rules etc.). If these expectations are not fulfilled, interpersonal rapport can be affected. Interactional goals also influence interpersonal rapport as people usually have specific goals when they interact with others, such as a relational goal and a task-focused goal. Failure to achieve these goals could pose a threat to rapport and cause frustration, annoyance and so on.



Figure 1: The basis of rapport

## 2.2 Speech acts

The social relationship has been investigated from the perspective of speech acts, such as "requests" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1985; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990; Lim & Bowers, 1991), "apologies" (Holmes, 1990; Olshtain, 1989), "directives" (Holtgraves et al., 1989) and "disagreements" (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989a). The language used in speech acts can be generally analysed in five domains: the illocutionary, discourse, participation, stylistic and non-verbal (Spencer-Oatey & Xing 1998, 2004, 2008). However, this study mainly focuses on the illocutionary and discourse domains as the two domains can better reveal the dynamics in teacher-student interactions in this case study.

More specifically, the illocutionary domain concerns the rapport-threatening / enhancing implications of performing speech acts, such as orders, requests, apologies and compliments (Brown & Levinson, 1987). There are three ways to examine speech acts strategies in this perspective. The first is to examine the main semantic components of the speech act, such as the essential components and non-

essential components in utterances. The second approach is to examine the linguistic directness and indirectness of the speech act, especially in requests and disagreements. For example, "Wash the dishes!" signals the speaker's direct force, while "Can you wash the dishes?" is a request to do something, and "What a lot of dishes there are!" only provides some hints to a request. The third approach is to analyse the upgraders/downgraders in a speech act. Upgraders strengthen the force of the utterance and are also called maximisers, boosters, and intensifiers. For example, in the phrase "I'm terribly sorry", "terribly" intensifies the speaker's force. In contrast, downgraders mitigate or weaken the force in the speech act and are also called minimisers, hedges, and downtoners. For example, in the request "Can you tidy up your desk a bit?", "a bit" plays the role of a downgrader to mitigate the force of the request.

The discourse domain concerns the content and structure of an interchange, such as topic change and information sequencing. The most commonly found phenomenon in classroom interactions is Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) (Mehan, 1979) or "triadic dialogue" (Lemke, 1990). This sequence begins with the teacher's question, which is followed by the students' answer, and then the next turn is taken by the teacher to offer feedback, seek clarification and so on. Some observations focus on the initial question and reveal the types of questions teachers usually raise as well as to what extent they are pedagogically effective (Long & Sato, 1983; Brock, 1986; Dillon, 1990; Lynch, 1991). For example, by analysing the classroom speech of six teachers, Long and Sato (1983) investigated the use of two types of questions: display questions (asking students to display or provide knowledge of the information already known by the questioner) and referential questions (requesting or seeking information that is not already known by the questioner). In that study, the researchers found significant differences in terms of the effectiveness of questions and concluded that referential questions are more effective in generating students' output. In the second turn of the IRE, what students would say contains multiple possibilities and thus is unpredictable to a great extent, although the class is very well designed and monitored by the teacher (Lee, 2006). This characteristic embedded in students' second turn determines the contingency in the third turn. In other words, how the teacher takes the third turn is contingent upon the prior turn of the students. More research has been conducted about the role and function of the third turn, which implicates the teacher's uptake of the students' responses displayed in the second turn (Lee, 2006). The third turn in teacher-student interaction is traditionally categorised into two blanket terms: feedback and evaluation (Barnes, 1976; Cazden, 1986; Carlsen, 1991; Wells, 1993; Nassaji & Wells, 2000). However, some researchers have claimed that the complexity and importance of the third turn are more than just evaluation or feedback (Young, 1992; Wells, 1993; Hall, 1997; Nassaji & Wells, 2000). Taking giving feedback as an example, sometimes teachers not only just comment on whether students' answers are correct, adequate or relevant to the topic, but also focus on how accurate or convincing their response is. Indeed, even for the correct answer, teachers may often ask students to elaborate, reformulate or defend their answers further. To capture the various functions of the third turn

of the IRE, Nassaji and Well (2000) identified six potential categories: evaluation (to comment, whether positive or negative); justification (to defend the given answer or seek reasoning for the answer); counter-argument (to oppose the answers or disagree with participants); clarification (to seek further information to make the object clearer); meta-talk (to talk about language used to identify and resolve communication problems) and action (to plan, direct, and so on). This typology offers the possibility to investigate the primary knower in the relationship during the interaction. For example, if the teacher makes an evaluative follow-up move after the student's turn, the teacher is regarded as the primary knower of the information. If the teacher instead adopts another approach, such as requesting or counter-argument, the role of the primary knower shifts to students while the teacher plays the role of the manager, who decides on the direction and pacing of the discussion. However, although this six functional scheme provides a potential coding system that presents diverse cases of the third turn in an analytically stable and predictable manner, it is evaluated as being "finite and mutually exclusive" (Lee 2007, p.183) as it may not authentically or truly reflect the interactions, especially in conflict talk where participants confront each other and where multiple layers of meanings can be involved (Heap, 1982; Atkinson & Delamont, 1990). As Sharrock and Anderson (1982) claimed, "the method is a means to discovery, but it is also a constraint" (pp. 172-173). That is to say, a categorical system may inevitably abstract and coerce the data into individual cases for the purpose of consistency, as each case resembles the other as an instance of the proposed categorical formulation. This system is more likely to obscure and gloss over local exigencies embedded and enacted in the turn-taking interaction (Sharrock & Anderson 1982; Lee 2007).

Therefore, to exploit local contingencies and fully appreciate the participants' reflexive undertaking of what goes on and instead of abstracting the turns into stable and finite categories, this study incorporates the entire interaction between the teacher and students from the outset. To demonstrate the dynamics and contingencies enacted by the teacher and students in the class, this study analyses the linguistic features (e.g., tones, pitches and turn-takings) and the language strategies (e.g., semantic components, directness/indirectness; downgraders/upgraders) used in conversations. This study also uses the rapport management framework to facilitate a comprehensive account of the data to understand how the teacher-student relationship was managed in the Mandarin classroom observed in this study, where teacher and students were working on a specific task to achieve institutional goals.

### 3. Method

Data obtained for this study came from two Mandarin lessons which were audio recorded. Permission from the school was obtained for the collection of data via emails between the head of Modern Foreign Language and the researcher, and the aim of this study was explained in front of the teacher and students before data were collected. Consent forms were collected from the students and teacher prior to the recordings taking place, as well as from parents

if the students were under 13 years of age. Pseudonyms are used instead of participants' names in this study. The recordings were conducted by using a voice recording application on the researcher's mobile phone, which was put on the teacher's desk at the front of the classroom. There were a few times that the quality of the recording was not as good as expected due to the movement of the teacher and students, but this did not have a significant impact on data analysis. There were 28 students in total, with approximately five students in each group. The first lesson was for students to discuss a Chinese city they would like to present and to select a project manager/team leader. The second lesson was for the teams to report back on their work and their choice of team leader. Data analysed for this study were taken from the second Mandarin lesson where the teacher led the lesson. A particular conflict conversation between the teacher and a group was chosen for the data analysis as it involved rich linguistic features and dynamic teacher-student interactions. The excerpt was about 5 minutes long, and the language used in this class was English. Conversation data were transcribed referring to the transcript symbols developed by Atkinson and Heritage (1984) and Paul ten Have (2007).

### 4. Analysis

The data below presents an entire conversation between the teacher and "Group 1", which is divided into six extracts. Extracts 1- 4 refer to identifying the project manager for the group. Extract 5 refers to the way students worked with each other, while extract 6 is the teacher's conclusion for the groups' discussions.

(T=teacher, S1: student 1, S2: student 2, Ss: students).

Part 1: The first time requesting "who"

- 1 T: right group 1?
- 2 S1: eh(.) We had really >°made a decision and quick way°<to select our manager
- 3 =firstly, we asked our group if there is anyone who perhaps up to that job-
- 4 T: who asked that question?
- 5 Ss: we ALL [did it-]
- 6 S2 [WE ALL-]
- 7 T: →HOW did you ALL deci:de to >ask the same question<
- 8 Ss: [(laughing, talking, discussing)]

Before the conversation, the teacher made the enquiry about the team leader clear. As soon as the teacher turned to group 1 (line 1), student S1 took the turn. As a result, it was automatically assumed that she was the team leader as only team leaders were allowed to speak up for their teams. This was regarded as the sociality rights of the representatives. However, S1 started off by using 'we' twice rather than 'I' (lines 2 -3) in her response to claim in-group membership, which narrowed down the social gap between herself and the other group members. However, at the same time, S1 didn't distinguish herself as the team leader from the rest of the group (Li, 2019). Therefore, S1's response gave a hint

that she may not be the team leader. The teacher noticed this point immediately and interrupted S1 by questioning 'who' S1 was referring to (line 4). By doing so, the teacher was requesting clarity of the concept of 'we' in S1's response.

In the next turn, group members self-selected and answered that 'we all did it' to support S1's answer (lines 3-4), which improved inter-group rapport (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). However, concerning the usage of 'we', S1's 'we' may refer to two persons from the group or may mean all group members, while the self-selected students claimed 'we' as all group members (line 5). However, the teacher expected one representative from this group to stand out. Concerning the usages of the first-person pronoun, some studies have claimed that it is largely affected by power and solidarity in relations (e.g., Brown & Gilman, 1960; Brown & Levinson, 1987). In this case, S1, other group members and the teacher all had different interpretations of 'we'. Due to the ambiguities of the pronoun, the teacher raised his tone (line 7) and steered the questions into more detailed and hopefully more manageable ones to clarify their answers (line 7) by emphasising the words 'how', 'all' and stretching the word 'decide'. However, students fell into chaos (laughing, talking, discussing) (lines 8-9). Lee (2007) once noted that in response to teachers' requests and counter arguments, when students are primary knowers, they are more likely to self-select to respond and thus their reactions are less predictable, as displayed in this scenario.

#### Part 2: Paraphrasing the question

9 S2: [becau::se]  
 10 T: NO  
 11 T: YOU MUST  
 12 HELLO  
 13 (.)EXCUSE ME  
 14 (.)<the others are not allowed to CONTRIBUTE>  
 15 >you have to be< QUI:ET  
 16 (2.0) Excuse me (.) Zac (.) Zac →HELLO  
 17 (.) that's not what we are doing no::w  
 18 We are really talking about  
 19 >we're listening to each other<  
 20 S1: [because-]  
 21 T: [SO:] could you tell me how: everybody asks the same question  
 22 >Did one person come up this question-?<

As the situation was out of control, the teacher used the single word 'no' with very emphatic force (line 10), followed immediately by the obligation 'you must' (line 11) then calling out 'hello' (line 12) and 'excuse me' (line 13). These words usually act as alerts in requests to get people's attention (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) and they are particularly found in requests to introduce the next utterance (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983). In the following turns, the teacher further emphasised what the 'others' should and should not do (i.e., 'to be quiet') (lines 14-15). In the next turn, an array of stressed words - 'others', 'allowed' and 'contribute' - indicated the teacher's strong and direct request (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), which not only challenged the base of the teacher-student rapport but also exhibited the teacher's authority to control the whole class (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). These strong and

commanding linguistic features are unlikely to be found in students' utterances as a result of the unequal power that teachers and students possess (Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

However, it seems that the students did not pay attention to the teacher. Waiting for two seconds for the students' attention, the teacher then made another request by pointing at one student named 'Zac' (line 16). The teacher stated once again what Zac should not do (line 17) and should do (lines 18-19). This time, the teacher posed a striking contrast between Zac and the rest of the class by using 'we', which threatened to undermine the teacher-student rapport. In fact, by identifying Zac, the teacher was trying to secure the attention of the whole class, as what they said to Zac in lines 17-19 was similar to lines 14-15. At that time, the rapport between the teacher and students was adversely affected. Glossing over the unexpected learner contribution from S1 (line 20), the teacher then reiterated the question that was asked previously in line 7 (lines 21-22). However, this time, the request was accompanied with the preparator 'could you tell me' to express the teachers' willingness and to mitigate their request. This mild indicator was the first sign of the softening of the teacher-student relationship (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

As we can see from part 1, the teacher wanted to find out who was the team leader of the group. As they didn't get an answer, the teacher parsed the "who" question into the open questions 'who' (line 4) and 'how' (line 7). The second time, the teacher further paraphrased the same question into a yes/no question (lines 21-22). These questions challenged the teacher-student rapport as reflected by the students' reactions and the teacher's linguistic features. Brown and Levinson (1987) and Spencer-Oatey (2008) have discussed how requests can disrupt rapport and make people feel irritated or annoyed.

#### Part 3: Reformulation of the question

23 S1: It's almost obvious question  
 24 >because someone doesn't want to be project manager<  
 25 >then (.) OF COURSE that's not gonna to work out<  
 26 isn't it?  
 27 T: NO  
 28 >my question i:s< >my question i:s<  
 29 <how did this idea> of PEOPLE <dropping out> come [about]?  
 30 >did they nominate themselves? <  
 31 >did somebody say< who doesn't want to be

Listening to the teacher's request, S1 took the next turn and commented 'it's almost an obvious question' and ended with a rhetorical question (lines 23-26). Her utterance in lines 24 and 25 was in a much quicker speed than line 23, which indicated that she was in a hurry to get the answer correct. Unfortunately, her attempt was not a correct answer as the teacher gave rather terse feedback in the form of the word 'NO' (line 27). The teacher then steered the students back to the previous question by repeating twice the phrase 'my

question is' (line 28). This time, the teacher reformulated the question to 'how did the idea of people dropping out come about' (line 29) and called for specific information which focused on one particular component, namely 'people' (line 29). By formulating the question in this way, the teacher pointed to what was problematic in S1's response and offered clues about the answer by giving options such as 'they' or 'somebody' to clarify the 'people' (lines 30-31). This was the third time that the teacher asked the students for the referent of the word 'who' (line 4; lines 21-22; lines 29-31).

It is a common phenomenon in classroom settings that teachers' questioning sequences often draw from the students' reply, particularly when students' replies fail to receive a positive response from the teacher (Lee, 2007). In this case, the teacher reformulated his question into several focused components, which were contingent on the student's answer, from which the teacher learned what the issue was and what kind of resources was necessary for the students to find the correct answer.

#### Part 4: The satisfied answer

32 S2: For me, it's not like we are up to the task  
 33 we:: we asked everyone else to say who-  
 34 T: °okay° we mean both of you  
 35 >[both] of you asked who doesn't want to  
 be<  
 36 Ss: [Yeah]  
 37 [Yeah]  
 38 S2: [Oh no] >we said we feels like< Oh yeah  
 39 S1: and we ask them -why  
 40 they said that they are more SHY::  
 41 >they didn't have had much experience<  
 42 then we did democracy (.) kind of the thing-  
 43 Ss: [heh heh heh]  
 44 S1: [we both said]  
 45 =WE BOTH said WHY:: we want to be project  
 manager  
 46 and we [have to vote-]  
 47 Ss: [WE DID-]

Next, S2 took the turn and negated what S1 said at the beginning, 'not like we are up to the task' (line 28), and then agreed with the teacher that 'we asked everyone else' (line 29). Once again spotting the pronoun 'we', the teacher cut in with mild recognition - 'okay' - acknowledging their acceptance of the answer (Beach, 1993). The teacher further gave explicit comment by clarifying 'we' means 'both of you' (line 30) but not the rest of the students claimed as 'we all' (lines 5-6). That received a couple of answers and confirmation from students (lines 36-37). S2 first said 'no' but immediately agreed with the teacher. Hearing S2's controversial answer, S1 took the next turn and illustrated how they two (S1 and S2) worked with the rest of the group by giving explanatory references to different types of people: 'shy' and people who 'lack experience' (lines 40-41). Finally, S1 used a 'democratic' method (line 42) and asked the group to 'vote' (line 46).

Until then, the teacher guided the students towards the desired direction in a step-by-step manner by looking into the details of the referent 'we'. The teacher may have already known where they wanted to lead the students, and each turn the teacher took shows their reflexive elaboration of students' responses in an effort to unfold students' answers.

#### Part 5: The second question of "how" they worked with each other

48 T: okay  
 49 did you two not to decide to talk how you  
 could encourage the others  
 50 bring their skill em (.) find it as an opportunity  
 to do something?  
 51 or did you just see it as a - comparative thing  
 52 S2: NO  
 53 we make sure everyone (.) has its task about  
 things  
 54 we find each other [the jobs]  
 55 S1: [just because-]  
 56 T: So you have jobs for shy people [in your  
 group]  
 57 S1: [Yeah]  
 58 S1: So >just because we have a project  
 manager<  
 59 doesn't mean that everyone else couldn't  
 get voted-  
 60 T: okay (.) so you have noted (.) you have shy  
 people  
 61 so you agree to the job that it's suitable for  
 [shy people]  
 62 Ss: [°yeah°]  
 63 T: °okay°  
 64 T: [°okay°] I'd like to know what they are  
 65 T: °okay° that's interesting  
 66 because I didn't have time to know who was  
 talking to as a project manager  
 67 >but thank you < <for your INPUT>

As soon as the word 'people' was clarified, the teacher steered their questions to seek more information about the second question of 'how'. In other words, how the two students (S1 and S2) were selected (lines 49-51). This time, the teacher asked his question by giving two example cases: how they 'encouraged the others' or if they 'see it as a comparative thing'. In the next turn, S2 stated how they worked with others (lines 53-54), which was acknowledged by the teacher (line 56). That conveyed the teacher's support and approval, which had a positive effect on teacher-student rapport (Brown & Levison, 1987). In lines 58 and 59, S1 gave more details on why others should not be ignored, which was also agreed by the teacher (lines 60-61). By then, the teacher's tone was much smoother than before and there were also positive echoes from students (line 62), another positive indicator of the teacher-student rapport.

In lines 63, 64 and 65, the teacher employed 'okay' three times, which is typically found near the end of a sequence to deliberately move away from the discussion (Beach, 1993; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). These utterances were modified by the hedging expression 'I'd like to' (line 60) to express wishes for more details, which is usually a potential sign of

positive rapport (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Blum-Kulka, 1989). The teacher also complimented the students' contributions 'that's interesting' (line 65) and expressed appreciation for these contributions in saying 'thank you' (line 67) (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986). Although the teacher expressed confusion which required students' further explanation in the future (line 66), he enhanced teacher-student rapport by conveying approval and positive feedback (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

#### Part 6: Rapport improvement

- 68 T: RIGHT  
 69 so no:w it's time for me to say  
 70 You would have noticed that I am um: (0.3)  
 71 I've been quite harsh on PEOPLE  
 72 >because that's what supposed to be<  
 73 >we have to see how:<  
 74 you worked with each other and selected the leader  
 75 >because in real life<(0.3)  
 76 >when you are leading a project<  
 77 you will find you have problems with the different people in your business  
 78 you may realize different people have different perspectives about you  
 79 at the same ti:me  
 80 they are going to be directing your successes  
 81 okay  
 82 I really appreciate the dynamics in discussion  
 83 and that you keep your project moving ahead

The final part of the conversation was the teacher's conclusion about the group's discussion. In this section, there were not as many linguistic features as in the previous parts since most of his utterances were in soft tones. This part fully embodied the teacher's control over the class and their role as a guide for the students. The teacher first acknowledged that they had been 'very harsh on people' (line 71) and then stated reasons for why they had done this purposely, which was to teach students how to work with each other to achieve shared goals for their future career. Now, it became clear that the Mandarin lesson was not just a lesson to learn the Chinese language and culture but to equip learners with teamwork skills, a higher and universal skill for their future, which taps into the core of education (Bortins, 2010). Specifically, by conducting activities in this Mandarin lesson, the teacher intended to increase students' awareness of the importance of teamwork skills. At the end of the lesson, the teacher expressed their appreciation again and encouraged the group, which was a good ending for the dynamic discussion.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Power and rapport management

In this class, the teacher executed the four types of power (French & Raven, 1959; Spencer-Oatey, 2008) and successfully delivered a Mandarin lesson. Specifically, when the students were out of control and couldn't give satisfactory answers, the teacher raised their voice, added stress to key words

and encouraged the students in order to control the group. These actions embodied the teacher's coercive power. When the teacher got the answers with respect to who was the group leader as well as how they chose the leader and how they worked with each other, the teacher praised them and appreciated their work, displaying reward power. During the entire conversation, the teacher expected the students to find the leader to complete their goal for that lesson, which shows legitimate power. The teacher guided students by asking different questions, which shows that the teacher knew which direction they wanted to guide students, indicating expert power. In this class, the teacher challenged students by questioning them to find out exactly what happened in the group. Although, the power between the teacher and students was asymmetrical (Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Blum-Kulka et al., 1985; Olshtain, 1989), the students spoke aloud about their ideas and thoughts and thus presented dynamic group work by proposing that there were two leaders instead of one. Furthermore, the teacher managed the teacher-student rapport very well during this lesson. At the beginning of the class, the teacher asked a question in response to the students' answer and then stimulated the discussion by making further requests, which threatened the students face sensitivities and their obligations (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). When the students finally gave the expected answers, the teacher acknowledged their work and gave positive approval, which improved their rapport and also encouraged students to contribute more (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). At the end of the class, the teacher praised the students' dynamic discussion and gave the reason why he had been harsh with them in order to bring out the dynamics within the group and equip them with teamwork skills for their future. During the conversation, the teacher-student rapport went through different stages, starting from intense to highly intense and then progressively mitigating and finally positively evaluating the discussion. This shows the experienced teacher's control of the class to achieve the educational goals.

### 5.2 Speech acts

In terms of the speech acts, the teacher used more direct language to ask questions, give feedback and evaluations during this lesson. The teacher's utterances were more in a high voice and in stressed tones, which were not commonly found in students' utterances. Students' utterances showed less linguistic features than the teachers. The reason for this may be that the students are less powerful compared to the position of the teacher (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). The questions the teacher asked were more referential to seek information from students than the initial questions which simply asked students to display or provide certain information (Long & Sato; 1983). By doing so, it encouraged students to generate more output (Long & Sato; 1983; Brock, 1986; Dillon, 1990; Lynch, 1991). Comparing both, the teacher's discourse is full of character and authority.

### 5.3 Limitations

Conversation analysis provides insight into what is happening in classroom communication, which further offers "a slow-

motion detailed analysis of interaction that often occurs in real time in lightning speed" (Waring & Hruska 2011, p.453). However, there were several limitations of this study's use of conversation analysis, which can be improved upon in future research. Firstly, no facial expressions or gestures were recorded in this study due to the way the data were collected. Data would be richer if it were recorded by video instead of only by audio. However, if this is the case in future research, this needs to be agreed by students and approved by relevant parties, such as the school authorities and the students' parents. Secondly, it may be worth analysing the whole recording of the Mandarin classes to investigate the teacher's pedagogy in teaching Mandarin as a second language in the school. Thirdly, it may be interesting for future research to find out whether the students' background (i.e., gender, nationality) contributes to the dynamics in classroom interaction.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper investigated a conversational interaction between a teacher and a group in a Mandarin lesson in a London secondary school. The main objective of this lesson was to find a leader to represent the group work. The entire conversation was divided into six parts according to the content of the discussion. Specifically, in the first part, the teacher raised the first question asking for identity "who" the leader was in that group but didn't get an answer. In the second part, the teacher requested the same information about the leader of the group while trying to control the class as the group got out of control. In the third part, the teacher reformulated the "who" question by giving students detailed options: "did they" and "did somebody". It was not until the fourth part that students S1 and S2 gave the answer that not one person but two of them were selected as the group leaders. Then, in the fifth part, the teacher and students worked on the second question concerning "how" the leaders were selected and "how" they worked with the other members of the group. The final part was the teacher's feedback and evaluation of this group work.

This study explored the asymmetrical power relationship between the teacher and students and examined the teacher-student rapport management. It found that though the teacher's power and control over the class were high, the teacher in this case allowed the students to argue and discuss their ideas in order to help students give satisfying answers. In doing so, the students were encouraged to challenge the teacher's authority and spoke out their thoughts and decisions that it was not just one chosen leader but two of them. In this class, it was important for students to find out who their leaders were and how they worked together to achieve the target for that class but more important was the dynamics in the discussion and how students worked with different types of members within the group. Therefore, this Mandarin lesson was not just a language lesson, but also a lesson for students to gain teamworking skills for their future careers.

By applying conversation analysis, this study looked into the linguistic features and the language strategies in their speech acts, such as the tone changes, the turn-takings, how

the questions were raised and answered. It found that the teacher used different strategies to guide students to answer the questions in-depth, such as by parsing, paraphrasing and reformulating. It also found that the teacher's language displayed more characteristics and authority compared to students. The majority of questions raised by the teacher were the referential type which is more effective in generating information from students. More importantly, all these language features served to one purpose, that was to educate pupils and lead a successful lesson.

In conclusion, this study enriches the research concerning students challenging teachers' power and also learning Mandarin as a second language at secondary school.

## Appendix: CA transcription notations

[ ]	Overlapped talk.
(. )	A short untimed pause within or between utterances.
(2.0)	Timed silence within or between adjacent utterances by a tenth of seconds
(bla bla)	An uncertain hearing of what the speaker said
((words/laughter))	Scenic description and accounts such as background, skipped talk or non-verbal behaviour.
-	Halting, or abrupt cutting-off of sound
=	Latching that indicates no interval between adjacent utterances
'	Phrase-final intonation (more to come)
.	Falling intonation, e.g., sentence final
:	Lengthened vowel sound (extra colons indicate greater lengthening)
°words°	Relatively quieter than the surrounding talk
words	Stressed syllable
CAPS	Very emphatic stress.
\$words\$	Spoken in a smiley voice.
> <	Utterance is delivered at a quicker pace than surrounding talk.
< >	Utterance is delivered at a slower pace than surrounding talk
?	Yes/no question rising intonation.

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