

## **The Role of Special Assistant Teacher to Help Special Needs Student through Instructional Interactions in an Inclusive Classroom**

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### **Abstract**

*This study aimed to determine the role of the special assistant teacher (SAT) compared to the general teacher as English teacher (ET) through instructional interactions in helping slow learner students (SLS) in the English lesson. Twenty-three grade 9 students were observed; interviews were also conducted with the two teachers and several students using semi-structured interview guides to determine types of instructional interactions and the role of SAT in helping SLS. Findings from this study indicated that both types of teachers engaged in academic and non-academic interaction with SLS during learning activities. In almost every learning activity, the role of the SAT to the SLS that, the SAT is more dominant than the ET in assisting the SLS. This dominance can lead to both dependence and independence of SLS toward SAT in learning activities.*

**Keywords:** *Instructional interactions, general teachers, special assistant teachers, slow learner students, inclusive classrooms.*

### **Introduction**

Inclusive education is one option for education that accepts the existence of differences and the abilities among children. Several conventions such as The World Conference on Special Needs Education, Salamanca Statement, and Framework for Action on Special Needs

Education have focused attention on the values contained in inclusive schools and created guidelines to implement inclusive education programs (Puri & Abraham, 2004). The goal is to provide classroom settings in which all students have challenges and opportunities and can successfully participate and learn (Tash, 2011).

Successful inclusive education practices have many aspects, one of which is the interaction between teachers and students. Recent studies focused on student–teacher interactions have shown that in successful inclusive environments, teachers may give greater attention to students with special needs compared to non-special needs students. (e.g, Kemp and Carter, 2002; Lee, Wehmeyer and Soukup et al, 2010; Nelson and Roberts, 2000; Cameron, 2014). The effectiveness of inclusive classrooms is also determined by instructional interaction patterns, the beliefs and attitudes of teachers towards students (Jordan & Stanovich, 2001), and intensive interaction (Ainscow, 2000; Daniels, 2000; Nind et al, 2003a; Kellet, 2004).

Interactions can be intensified by pairing adults with students with special needs to help the students overcome the difficulties associated with social interaction (Burdick & Theoharis, 2012). For example, the research shows the importance of teacher helpers in learning interactions in inclusive classes. The teacher helper (sometimes also referred to as paraprofessional, subprofessional, non-professional, educational aide, assistant teacher, assistant instructor, additional teacher, the assistant of schools, assistant technical, administrative aide, general aide, and assistant instructional) (Tanner, 1969) directly works with students with special needs. Use of paraprofessionals has increased (French, 2003; Giangreco & Broer, 2005), Research shows that teacher helpers have a positive impact on students (French & Pickett, 1997; Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, and Doyle, 2001), and providing increased and profits for students with special needs in terms of social advantage and academic students (Saddler, 2014). Assistant teachers increased the satisfaction and effectiveness of classroom teachers (Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, Martin, Russell and Webster, 2009a) as well as increased the motivation, attention and behavior of pupils (Howes, 2003). Besides helping students stay focused and follow orders, students' organization skills and ability to handle social behavior are fostered (Symes & Humphrey, 2011). This increases academic achievement and independence in the long term (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Brown & McIntosh, 2012).

Since the initial implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia in 2002, it has faced various problems and obstacles, including inadequate infrastructure and funding, misunderstanding by teachers of procedures and services necessary for students with special needs, and a small number of teacher assistants and aides (Sunaryo, 2015). Up to now, inclusive education still has not been fully implemented in Indonesia, due to the unavailability of standard or special criteria for its implementation. Another obstacle is that educators are under-prepared to work with students with special needs: assistants are not proactive towards students and the division of tasks and roles between subject teachers and teacher assistants specialized in performing the task rarely involve discussion and models of collaborative learning (Irenewaty & Aman, 2015).

Yet the number of children in Indonesia with special needs is growing. In 2011, the number of children with special needs reached 9.9576 million children with category disabilities and 1.18556 million with special and gifted special intelligence (Empowerment Women and Child Protection Ministry of Republic of Indonesia, 2013) and approximately 14.1% being slow learners (Lisdiana, 2013). Without action on the part of the Education and Culture

Ministry of Republic of Indonesia, the participation of school children with special needs could become smaller, affecting the quality of education in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, slow learner students have distinctive characteristics: in addition to low intelligence, slow language learners have difficulty, often caused by poor socialization, in communicating either by presenting ideas or understanding conversations of others (Triani & Amir, 2013), and students who often have short attention spans and need adaptive learning materials (Slack & Boyer, 1964). This places additional responsibilities on the lead classroom teacher. It is very important that organizers of inclusive education facilitate the presence and involvement of teacher assistants to address learning interactions of students with special needs, including slow learner students.

This paper addresses one aspect of the implementing inclusive education in Indonesia. Through a single case study approach, this research focuses on the interaction between general teachers versus special teachers with slow learner students, especially in English lessons. In learning activities, some of the serious problems that occur in inclusive classrooms in Indonesia, among others, the lack of interaction between teachers and students with special needs, which is caused by the teachers do not understand the characteristics, abilities and needs of students with special needs, so the subject matter is difficult delivered well (personal communication, March 15, 2015). Learning method is less precise, lead no interaction between teacher-student (Aziz, Sugiman & Prabowo, 2015; Imanuddin, 2015). Interaction, in an inclusive classroom between teacher-student caused by lack of communication and only one way, use form of communication is not only verbal, but non-verbal as well as by students with special needs so that there is a misunderstanding between teachers and students (Fikariyanto, 2015). The results of recent studies against students with special needs stating that the teacher-student interaction is one of the problems encountered in class greatly affect student outcomes both short-term (behavioral), and long-term (academic and independence) (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hughes & Kwok, 2007), and the lack of awareness of teachers about the importance of interaction and the interaction patterns that will make a difference to students with special needs (Bouck 2006).

It examines the difficulties faced by in building effective instructional interactions with the slow learner student and special assistant teacher given teachers' own a lack of experience in dealing with slow learner students. Whereas, interactions between teacher-student, will have an impact on the learning process and outcome for students.

Another problem that arises is the assignment by general teachers of special assistant teacher to work with slow learner student such that the role of special assistant student is larger than the general teacher in learning activities.

Given the importance of instructional interaction for a slow learner student in understanding the subject matter and social development and the absence of recent research on the interaction of slow learner student, the research question are formulated as follows:

1. What kind of interactions occurred between English teacher (ET) and slow learner student (SLS) compared to the interaction between the special assistant teacher (SAT) and slow learner student (SLS) of English lesson?
2. How does the role of SAT -- compared with the ET in instructional interactions with the SLS?

## Literature Review

### Instructional Interaction

Robinson (2005) states that interaction is a reciprocal activity that can be verbal or non-verbal (Wang, 2014). Interactive communication is indicated by touch, proximity, eye contact, the expressive form of the face, movement, posture, depending on environmental factors as well as the time required. Interaction is the responses of others that shape and guide the response of every person in the interaction process (Hargie, 2006). Part of the act of reciprocity in working together is being committed to express a particular action (Wiberg, 2005). Sardiman (2014) stated that the particular instructional interaction is the basis for communicating knowledge, skills, and values between teachers with learners in learning activities. Learners must actively work with the pedagogical resources (Olofson, Lindberg, 2012). Classroom interaction patterns typically form a pattern of the initiation, response, evaluation (IRE) (Powell & Caseau, 2004) or initiation-response and follow-up (IRF) (Cazden, 2001). Effective classroom interaction between teachers and students is closely linked to a shared understanding in an activity (Kugelmass, 2004). Interaction approaches that can be done in an inclusive classroom can be competitive and cooperative (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000).

### Generals Teachers and Special Assistant Teachers

Definition of general teachers in Indonesia, from Education and Culture Ministry of The Republic of Indonesia, in the general guidelines of the implementation of inclusive education (2011) as the teachers who teach a subject that has been determined in accordance with their competence and who has the task of creating a comfortable learning environment for all students, creating and carrying out assessments on all the students to determine the ability of the needs, preparing an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) with the teachers, and providing remedial special assistants to the students.

The same general guidelines define special assistant teachers as the teachers who have competence at least at the undergraduate level in special education, or teachers who have exceptional education special education qualification of special education in accordance with the requirements of the profession and who serve as a support to general teachers in providing special education services and compensatory interventions according to the needs of learners with special needs in inclusive schools.

In other terms, a special assistant teacher has designation or definition as teacher aides who are very supportive in helping students with disabilities in inclusive education (Calder & Grieve, 2004; Forlin, 2000; Giangreco, 2003a; Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2001; McNally, Cole, & Waugh, 2001; Sorsby, 2004; Taconis, van der Plas, & Van der Sanden, 2004; Westwood & Graham, 2003; Wilkins, 2002; Woods, Wyatt Smith, & Elkins, 2005), and are increasing in number (Pearson, Chambers, & Hall, 2003; Kingsbury, 2005; Bourke & Carrington, 2007). Assistant teachers are indispensable in inclusive classrooms that aim to facilitate the learning process in the classroom, especially for students with special needs (Hasan, Hussain, Parveen & Souza, 2015). The task of a teacher's assistant or para-educator is to assist students in various subjects, including social and life skills, mathematics, language arts, reading, health, and writing (Mclachlan, 2014). Paraprofessionals have the task of providing support and improving access to the curriculum (Burdick & Theoharis, 2012).

### **Slow Learner Students**

Slow learner students are the students who have been left behind or students with special needs when learning expectations are not compliant with their capabilities (Chauhan, 2011) or the level of achievement equal to their low IQ (Krishnakumar et al., (2006). The definition of a slow learner is a student with an IQ below the average score of 100 but still above the threshold of students with intellectual disabilities as defined by an IQ of 70 (Shaw, 2010). A slow learning child is a child who struggles to learn because of a shortage of psychological and cognitive abilities (Cooter and Cooter Jr., 2004). According to Puri and Abraham (2004), a slow learner struggles with apprehending ideas because of limitations to inductive and deductive reasoning resulting from a decreased ability to formulate general conclusions. These children may experience challenges with social adaptation and participation. Consequently, they may also experience stress and related emotional problems.

In Indonesia, the definition of slow learner according to the guidelines of the Organizers of Inclusion Directorate or PSLB (2004) is a child who has the intellectual potential slightly below normal but not including mental retardation and who typically has barriers or delays in thinking, stimulation, and social adaptation -- but still much better compared with the mentally disabled, but slower than normal, take a long time and require repetitions of academic and non-academic tasks. This definition is also confirmed by the Center for Curriculum Research and Teaching Ministry of National Education of Indonesia (2007): the slow learner is a child who has limitations in terms of intelligence potential, resulting in a sluggish learning process.

### **Inclusive Classrooms**

In an inclusive classroom, children learn together with the active involvement of those learning and teaching (Mcleskey & Waldron, 2000). The purpose is the participation of all students regardless of disability, academic level, behavior, learning style, and strengths and weaknesses (D'Amico & Gallaway, 2010). Classes are structured to accommodate diversity in learning and behavior of all children including the children with special needs, and to foster academic achievement and social success for all (Kugelmass, 2004). According to Sapon and Shevin (2007), an inclusive classroom is a great place to establish rules and practices on the basis that all people need to support and respect each other.

The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture in its general guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education (2011), committed to creating inclusive classrooms that have a good atmosphere that accepts diversity, respects differences, and can accommodate the heterogeneity of special needs students. Thus, there are several types of inclusive classrooms, namely: full regular classroom (students with special needs learn together with regular students), regular classes with a special assistant teacher (special needs students, accompanied by a special assistant teacher studying along with regular students) and special classes in regular schools (students with special needs separated from regular students, but at a certain moment included together).

### **Methods**

The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach to a single case study. Single case study research methods have been used in a variety of disciplines, especially psychology, special education, school psychology, and physical therapy in which they are used to determine the effects of planned interventions (Dattilo & Rusch, 2015). A single case study is effective for research that includes special needs because it is focused on the individual and

the data obtained can be a life experience (Horner et al, 2005). Researchers use the special education single case research method because it allows a small numbers of participants (3--10 people) (Kennedy, 2005) and because the method can track changes in individuals and organizations over time and respond to changes in their environment (Cardon & Wilcox, 2011). It has been used for teacher-initiated action research in the school; investigation of an intervention could be conducted by individual teachers according to the needs of their students (Horner et al, 2005; Kazdin 2011; Kennedy, 2005).

This single case study focuses on interactions between an English teacher and one student with special needs (namely a slow learner) and a special assistant during English lessons over one four-month semester. The research describes the meaning of interactions that occur in the process of learning of English between both teachers with the slow learner student. This research was conducted through observation, photographs, and interviews. Observation was conducted of the interactions between teachers and the special needs student while learning in the ongoing classroom. Photography was conducted by taking photos when all were interacting. Interviews were administered to all participants, both teachers and student with special needs, using a semi-structured interview that drew from an interview protocol that had been prepared, but also customized to context. The credibility of the study was improved by triangulating data by interviewing several sources related to the topic of study such as experts on the inclusive classroom, instruction, and English language, as well as by completing a checklist paper about all activities occurred in the classroom for all participants involved in the research to obtain accurate data. Analysis will be presented both as descriptive statistics on the interactions and by descriptive analyses that allow the results to be expressed qualitatively.

### **Participants**

Participants involved in the study came from an inclusive Islamic Junior High School in West Java, Indonesia. There was a total of 23 students (14 male, nine female) in ninth grade, of whom 22 exhibit typical student development (non-special students) and one is identified as a student with special needs. The student with special needs had been placed in the inclusive classroom during English lessons. This student is categorized as slow learner student whose special characteristics include an IQ around 75 - 90, low academic motivation, and according to the report of the psychologist, low focus on classroom activities. The teachers included are an English teacher (ET) and a special assistant teacher (SAT). The roles of the staff are differentiated. The English teacher is a primary teacher who teaches English language content, while the special assistant teacher who assists the English teacher with the student with special needs.

### **Setting and Materials**

Since its establishment in 2007, Islamic Junior High School in Depok, the school has graduated students six times. This is a private school with adequate facilities as well as good support as an inclusive school. Every new academic year, the school receives two classes, each of which includes at least one student with special needs. This study focuses on, a class using the moving class system, moving from one classroom to another in accordance with the subjects that have been prepared by the management of the school to provide opportunities for all students and not allow them to get bored in learning. Each classroom is equipped with a projector and computer, whiteboard, chairs and desks for each student. The lesson observed was a ninth-grade English class English class. Lessons usually have a duration of 1.5 - 2 hours. English teacher will work well in all classes, small groups and individuals. The

material used in this study is the English textbooks, teacher-made worksheets, exercise books and various Internet resources used over one semester according to the lesson plan created by the English teacher. The contents of the lessons to be learned is about recontext, narrative text, procedure, descriptive text, and a report in the day-to-day context. The special assistant teacher also made IEP outlines of the achievements that the slow learner student should accomplish. Topic or subject matter that was done by the slow learner student is the same as regular students, with a lowered difficulty level according to the abilities of the student.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher is the primary instrument in this study. Data collection included techniques observation, interviews, and photography. Observations were conducted to document the interaction between ET and SAT with SLS by observing the actions of teachers and reciprocal actions of students during the learning process. Face-to-face interviews were conducted between the researcher and the informants. The topic of these interviews was the interaction that occurs in the classroom during the learning process. Primary data for this study consisted of video and audio recording, especially recording learning interaction between ET or SAT with SLS. Teacher - student was interaction recorded using a video camera and a voice recorder. One camera was always be in the classrooms to observe learning activities involving teachers and students. Another camera followed teachers and students and an audio recording devices will followed the SLS. There were 14 total observation and a total of around 21 hours observed with recording process done for 1.5 to 2 hours during the classroom learning process for two meetings per week. The researcher selected only 12 observations out of 14 observations as data to be analyzed on the basis that these twelve complied the participants who involved in the instructional process in every class meeting. As for the rest, if there was one participant who was not present (e.g., the absence of the SAT in the classroom), the data is used as additional data. The results of this recording were transcribed to be used for more detailed data analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

During the implementation phase of the data analysis, researcher used Classroom Discourse Analysis, which examines the use of language in the context of the classroom understand the context and interplay improving classroom interaction; so as to obtain positive results and reduce factors inhibiting the participation of all students both classroom and outside learning (Rymes, 2008). Prior to the data analysis, coding categorization for a better understanding of the semantic content of utterances; the functions of the original data are grouped to allow researchers to determine the type of interaction occurring. The entire teacher - student interaction has been distributed into several categories and then the type of academic or non-academic interaction is determined. Academic interactions focus on lesson-related topics, while non-academic interactions include dialogues between teacher and student relating to managerial, status, and personal topic. Frequencies will be calculated as a percentage to see the interaction of the most widely appearing in the learning, learning to see the initiation of early initiation of interaction and interaction patterns to see the initiation forms of interaction (statements and questions), which gives effect to the understanding of the subject matter for students slow learner.

## Results

After coding and analysis process the data obtained is as follows:

**Table 1. Learning Interactions between ET with SLS**

Code	Category	Descriptions	Kind of Interaction
I-GSA-01	Interaction of ET and SLS to discuss problems or tasks together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ET asks about the purpose of the task</li> <li>- ET asks about the content of the material</li> <li>- SLS practices saying the name of the year</li> <li>- ET asks the SLS to answer questions</li> <li>- ET asks the meaning of a word</li> <li>- ET asks SLS to tell the story</li> <li>- ET ask about the content of the novel</li> </ul>	Academic
I-GSA-02	Interaction when SLS asks the ET for clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Asked about the meaning of words</li> <li>- Inquire about the objectives of the activity</li> <li>- Ask about grammar</li> </ul>	Academic
I-GSA-03	Interaction of ET to provide motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing advice and spirit</li> </ul>	Non Academic

In Table 1, the interactions that occurred between ET and SLS were on learning English. For the category of interaction that emerged after a coding, there are three categories and two types of interactions: academic and non-academic interactions.

**Table 2. Categories and Types of Learning Interaction between SAT and SLS**

Code	Category	Descriptions	Kind of Interaction
I-GPKA-01	Interaction SAT describing the task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SLS request listening task information and to write down the assignment information about the text from ET</li> <li>- Requests SLS to interpret some words</li> <li>- Asks the SLS to make a the short story</li> <li>- The SLS was asking the other students to work on the task about reorientation</li> <li>- Asks students to select one novel</li> <li>- Asks students to collaborate with each other</li> </ul>	Academic
I-GPKA-02	Interaction between SAT and SLS to complete tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SAT asks about the meaning of the sentence</li> <li>- SAT asks about the type of transport</li> <li>- SAT asks about the pronunciations of numbers and years</li> <li>- SAT asks student to tell about holiday experience</li> <li>- SAT asks the students to work on the in textbooks question</li> <li>- SAT asks student to make sentences</li> <li>- SAT asks the student to understand from the novel</li> <li>- SAT asks about the characters in the novel</li> </ul>	Academic
I-GPKA-	Interaction when SLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Asks about the use of the word</li> </ul>	Academic

03	asked for an explanation from SAT	- Asks the meaning of the word - Asks about information on food packaging - Asks about the pronunciation of numbers and years - Asks about how to do the text organization task	
I-GPKA-04	Interaction when SAT gives motivation	- Provides a passion to search for information - Providing the spirit to not be afraid of wrong - Provide a spirit to keep trying	Non Academic
I-GPKA-05	Interaction of SAT to reminding SLS to stay focused	- Focuses on pronouncing numbers and years - Focuses on looking up a word. - Focus on translating words	Non Academic
I-GPKA-05	Personal interaction	- Reminds SLS not annoy another student	Non Academic

Table 2 obtained some results on the interactions that occur between the SAT and SLS on learning English. After coding, there are six categories and three different types of academic interactions and 3 non-academic interactions emerged.

A comparison of the two tables above shows that the more interaction types, both academic and non-academic is more occurred, between the SAT and SLS when compared to the ET and SLS. The frequency and percentage in each category of learning interaction is shown in more detail below.”

**Table 3. Initiation, Frequency, and Percentage between ET and SLS**

Type of interaction	Descriptions	Initiation of Interaction	Interaction occurred
			f
Discussing problems	- Asking about the purpose of the task - Asking about the content of the material - Practicing saying the name of the years - Asking the SLS to answer questions - Asking the meaning of the word - Asking SLS to tell the story - Asking about the content of the novel	ET ET SLS ET ET ET ET	1 8 1 1 5 2 2
Clarification	- Asking about the meaning of words - Inquiring about the objectives of the activity - Asking about grammar	SLS SLS SLS	3 1 2
Giving motivation	Providing advice and spirit	ET	5
Total			31
<i>Total initiation percentage between ET and SLS</i>			

Table 3 summarizes the 31 interactions occurring between the ET and SLS. The most frequent interaction in this category was to ask about the content of the material as many as eight or 25.8%, which was initiated by ET asking the SLS. When the interaction called for an

explanation by the SLS to the ET, the most common type was asking about the meaning of the word, as many as three times or 9.7%. The ET provided advice and encouragement as many as five times or 16.1%.

**Table 4. Initiation, Frequency, and Percentage of Interactions between SAT with SLS**

Type of interaction	Descriptions	Initiation of interaction	Interaction occurred	
			f	%
Describing tasks	- SLS requests for the assignment information from the ET to be written down	SAT	1	0.9
	- Requests SLS to interpret some words	SAT	6	5.2
	- Asks the SLS to make a the short story	SAT	3	2.6
	- Asks the students to work on the task about reorientation	SAT	5	4.3
	- Asks students to select one novel	SAT	1	0.9
	- Asks students to collaborate with each other	SAT	6	5.2
Completing tasks	- Asks about the meaning of a word	SAT	9	7.7
	- Asks about the type of transport	SAT	3	2.6
	- Asks about the pronunciations of numbers and years	SAT	7	6.0
	- Asks students to tell about the holiday experience	SAT	4	3.4
	- Asks the students to work on the textbook question	SAT	3	2.6
	- Asks the students to make sentences	SAT	4	3.4
	- Asks the students to understand the novel	SAT	4	3.4
	- Asks about the characters in the novel	SAT	5	4.3
Giving explanation	- Asks about the use of a word	SLS	6	5.2
	- Asks the meaning of a word	SLS	10	8.6
	- Asks about information on food packaging	SLS	3	2.6
	- Asks about the pronunciation of numbers and years	SLS	3	2.6
	- Asks how to do the task of text organization	SLS	2	1.8
Give motivation	- Provides a passion to search for information	SAT	4	3.4
	- Provides the spirit to not be afraid of being wrong	SAT	2	1.8
	- Provides a spirit to keep trying	SAT	6	5.2
Reminders to stay focused	- Focuses on pronouncing numbers and years	SAT	3	2.6
	- Focus on looking up the word	SAT	5	4.3
	- The focuses on in translating words	SAT	7	6.0
Personal	- Reminds SLS not to annoy another student	SAT	4	3.4
Total			116	100.0
<i>Total initiation percentage between SAT and SLS</i>				<i>78.91</i>

The interviews reveal that the ET geared learning interactions with the SLS toward task description, simple questions, and brief explanations. If the class was too busy and needed more attention, then usually the ET immediately asked the SAT to handle the SLS in order to provide a more detailed explanation.

Table 4 categorizes 116 interactions between SAT and SLS. The most common interaction in the category of the SAT explaining tasks to the SLS was when the teacher asked the student

to interpret words six times or 5.2%; in the category of SAT and SLS completing tasks together, the most interaction was searching for the meaning of the word nine times or 7.7%, initiated by the SAT asking the SLS. In the category of the SLS asking for explanations from the SAT, the most common interaction was asking about the meaning of a word, which occurred 10 times or 8.6%; in the interaction category of the SAT providing motivation to the SLS, the most interaction was encouragement to keep trying, which occurred. In the most interaction occurs is the interaction of encouragement to keep trying to SLS times or 5.2%. In the category of the SAT reminding the SLS to maintain focus, the most common interaction was a reminder to focus on translating a word, which occurred seven times or 6.0%, while the category of personal interaction, the SAT reminded the SLS not bother another student four times or 3.4%. In total, interaction between the SAT and SLS exceeded that between the ET and the SLS, representing 78.91% of total interactions, meanwhile ET and SLS only 21.09%.

Interviews conducted with SAT found that when SLS had difficulty understanding something, such as the meaning of a word, or sentence, SAT usually fished with simple questions first so that SLS could think more deeply while still being directed in accordance with the material being studied. That is, the SAT always tried to make the SLS think of the subject matter without directly informing the answer. In addition, SAT provided the opportunity for the SLS to ask other students if in this case SAT has not understood the task or material being studied.

**Table 5. Initiation and Interaction Pattern between ET and SLS**

Initiation of interactions	Pattern of interactions	Form of interactions	f	Total of initiation of interaction (%)
<b>By ET to SLS</b>	Initiation, response, follow-up	Statements (information sentence)	9	17.01
	Initiation, response, follow-up	Questions (question sentence)	16	
<i>Total of initiation of interactions by ET to SLS</i>			25	
<b>By SLS to ET</b>	Initiation, response	Questions (question sentence)	6	4.08
<i>Total of initiation of interactions by ET to SLS</i>			6	
Total interaction between ET with SLS			31	21.09

In table 5, interaction initiation was most often performed by ET to the SLS at 25 times or around 17.01% in the pattern initiation, response, follow-up: initiation forms in sentences questions to the SLS, then responded by SLS and follow-up in the form of answers to the SLS.

**Table 6. Initiation and Interaction Patterns between SAT and SLS**

Initiation of interactions	Pattern of interactions	Form of interactions	f	Total of initiation of interaction (%)
<b>By SAT to SLS</b>	Initiation, response, follow-up	Statement–question (information sentence);	68	62.59
	Initiation, response, follow-up	question–statement (question sentence)	24	
<i>Total of initiation of interactions by SAT to SLS</i>			92	
<b>By SLS to SAT</b>	Initiation, response	Questions (question - sentence)	24	16.32
<i>Total of initiation of interactions by SLS to SAT</i>			24	
Total of interaction between SAT with SLS			116	78.91

In Table 6, interaction initiation was most often performed by the SAT to the SLS, which occurred 92 times or around 62.59% with the pattern of initiation, response, follow-up. That is, the SAT initiated the interaction through question sentences to the SLS, the SLS responded, and then the SAT followed up in the form of answers to the SLS.

Comparing Tables 5 and 6, SAT more often initiated interactions with the SLS, 62.59% compared to initiation by the ET. While, the interaction initiation was often performed by SLS to SAT than SLS to ET which occurred 24 times or around 16.32%.

### Discussion

The role of this study is to examine role of the SAT in helping the SLS compared with ET and SLS from some kind of interactions of English lesson by linking it to the interactions in the activity of learning of English lesson which a dynamic process between teachers and students.

Regarding the first research question, about the types of interactions that occur between the ET and SLS compared to the both academic and non-academic interactions occurred, both of which occurred more frequently between the SAT and SLS. The reason is closely connected to the classroom tasks of both teachers and students' the understanding of slow learner characteristics by students. First, As a primary teacher, the ET has the responsibility to manage the classes including accommodating the needs of every student in apprehending the lesson material according to their individual ability. ET must ensure that all students understand the material being studied, although not all students are accommodated, including SLS. Limited time, the difference of speed among students in understanding the subject matter, and less conducive classroom settings are conditions that often occur in the learning

process and that affect the attention and focus of the ET on the SLS so that interactions occur less frequently between the ET and SLS versus the SAT and SLS.

For instance, this can be seen at the beginning of the learning activity when the ET explains the subject matter in the classical, followed by an explanation on an individually who do not understand one by one. The SLS usually gets for a detailed explanation from the SAT. This condition affects the quality of interaction, especially understanding of the subject matter by the SLS. The ET realizes that detailed explanations necessary to convey material properly to the SLS take time and special attention. Yet as the primary teacher in the classroom, ET must also pay attention to general students (GS) in addition to the SLS. This condition is instead the task of the SAT as a teacher who helps general teachers in addressing to SLS. Likewise, non-academic interactions involving, motivation and a warnings to focus are most often carried out by the SAT rather than the ET. Thus, academic and non-academic interactions that take time or special attention are still provided to the SLS.

In addition, the understanding by the ET of characteristics and learning styles typical of the SLS, is still less than that of the SAT who spend every moment along with the SLS in learning activities and outside learning activities. Provision of aid and attention by the SAT to the SLS is based on the learning characteristics of the SLS, which require concrete explanations, slow explanations of even very simple things, adequate time to practice new tasks, and compensation for low academic motivation and focus on the subject matter being studied. This is in line with Shaw (2010), who claims that slow learner students have the following characteristics: their performance is better when they receive concrete rather than abstract explanations, it is difficult to apply the concept to the new situation, it is cognitively difficult for them to match new information, they require extra time for practice and careful time management, require more time in practice, as well as having low academic motivation. Based on these characteristics of SLS, then the task of the SAT as a teacher who helps the ET, there will be more interaction with SLS.

The SAT interacted with the SLS 116 times or 78.91% and while the ET interacted with the SLS 31 times or 21.09%, signifying that the SAT is dominant in handling the SLS compared to the ET. Attention and focus should be shared for all students, providing less space and time for the ET to provide in-depth explanations and academic motivation to SLS, so this is mostly done by the SAT. In addition, because of typical SLS characteristics, they not only require the attention of teachers, but also need encouragement to develop a desire to learn, shown by the initiation to conduct learning activities. This underlies the role of teachers, both ET and SAT when assisting the SLS in learning activities.

The second research question regards the role of the SAT compared to that of the ET in instructional interactions with the SLS; in addition to the previous analysis of frequencies and percentages, more detail can be seen in the initiation interaction and patterns of interaction that occur between teachers and student. This comparison reveals that the SAT more often initiated interaction with the SLS. The form of initiation statement made by the SAT is intended to ensure that the SLS understands the material that was submitted and has time to prepare an exercise if needed. Some reasons for this initiation is done by SAT because it is associated with the initiation to perform an activity. The SLS tends not or conduct any activities from the beginning of the learning process-usually just sitting down, paying attention to other students, day dreaming, or even slightly disturbing other students. Thus, the SLS needs to be kept to task by the SAT. Initiation of interactions by the ET usually occurred over subject matter elusive to the SLS, such as the meaning of English words. The form of

interaction initiations was dominated by the question, indicating that, through a question given at the beginning, the ET quickly determined the extent to which the SLS understood the material and could then answer quickly. This is associated with the distribution of time and attention by the ET should be given to the GS. Interactions with both teachers show that the SAT more often initiated interactions with rather than ET. Clearly, the SLS was more comfortable asking the SAT for help or clarification, although the SLS also requested assistance from the ET regarding the meaning of words.

The pattern that occurred between the SAT or ET and the SLS shows the results of these interaction initiations: the same interaction pattern occurred regardless of which teacher was involved. The pattern of initiation, response, and follow-up - either in the form of statement or question initiation - indicates that both the ET and the SAT initiated, followed by listening to the answers of the SLS and then providing an explanation. There are, however, differences in the interaction patterns in the statements and questions between the SAT and ET. If the ET starts the interaction with SLS in the form of a sentence statement or information, indicating that the ET does not have sufficient time to explain in detail about the matter to the SLS even after the sentence statement is followed by short questions regarding the aspect that is not understood by the SLS, there is a tendency toward questions given in the form of short interrogative sentences that go straight to answers that the SLS can instantly understand. Otherwise, if the initial interaction is in the form of a question sentence, this implies that the ET has enough time to explain the material to the SLS, albeit possibly without much detail.

In contrast to the ET, the SAS usually began interactions with the SLS with the statement, followed by questions to the SAT as a way to know whether the SLS understand the intent of the statement. According to the SAT, this practice is intended to make the SLS practice critical thinking. Likewise, if the initial interaction is in the form of a question, it will be followed a statement that gives affirmation to SLS in order to better understand the material that was submitted. Explanations are important for improving the academic ability of the SLS. Differences arising from the initial question given by the SLS to the ET will usually be answered directly by ET so that the SLS directly can quickly understand the material, questions directed to the SAT by the SLS, besides being given an explanation are usually followed the question feedback from the SAT to the SLS that aims provide practice for the SLS in applying thought to the material. These interaction patterns reflect the role of the ET and SAT.

The frequency, percentage, interaction initiation and interaction patterns quantified in this study reveal that the role of the SAT is larger than of the ET in the English lesson learning process. This activity is quite dominant performed by SAT in each learning activity. This contrasts with the results of research that teachers give greater attention to students with special needs compared to non-special needs students (*e.g.*, Kemp and Carter, 2002; Lee, Wehmeyer and Soukup et al, 2010; Nelson and Roberts, 2000; Cameroon, 2014). The interviews conducted showed that, if the ET is giving attention to the GS and the SLS requires detailed explanations, then the SAT automatically and directly takes over this teaching task. If the SAT does not take over, the SLS may lack initiative to do the work, or will not ask about the difficulties being faced; therefore, the initiation always comes from the SAT. These results are consistent with the initiation and the percentage obtained.

The SLS dominates interactions with the SLS not only in explaining the lesson, but also in providing motivation and attention. The same results are also consistent current findings on the presence of paraprofessionals, like teacher aides and assistants, primary support for

special needs students (Giangreco and Broer, 2005), reducing the interaction of the SLS with classmates and teachers (Giangreco and Broer, 2005; Giangreco, Edelman and Broer et al., 2001; Harris, 2011). Another study instead revealed that the presence of an assistant teacher in a class of students with disabilities is very helpful in improving the satisfaction and effectivity of the classroom teachers (Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, Martin, Russell and Webster, 2009a) as well improving the motivation, attention, and behavior of pupils (Howes, 2003). Besides helping students stay focused and follow orders, this supports their organizational skills and ability to handle matters relating to social behavior (Symes & Humphrey, 2011).

This study revealed that the presence of the SAT is very helpful in explaining the academic material, providing motivation, improving focus, and provide opportunities for the SLS to interact with classmates - but it cannot be denied that the dependence on the SLS to SAT is very large. The recent absence of the SAT made it so that the SLS could not learn to the maximum because of the lack of attention from the ET. Dependence of the SLS on the SAT also reduces interactions with other students and, who can influence the social development and skills of the students (Harris, 2011). In addition to academic achievement, independence is an important skill for the students to be useful in the future. For this reason, both teachers should be able to support that success. This is in line with the opinion of Mitchell (2008) that, no matter how high the quality of teacher aids, they cannot be not allowed to take the place of teachers, although the purpose of teacher aides support and assist students with special needs, it would be better to avoid the dependence on special needs students to teaching aids, and thus it is very important for teachers and teacher aides to work together in planning learning.

The role both of the teachers should be maximized, especially in the form of learning interactions, because these teacher–student interactions are vital to the academic and social development of students. This reflects the opinion that interaction helps the development of students (Pianta, Belsky, Vandergrift, Houts & Morrison, 2008), improves the academics and social behavior of students with emotional problems (Sutherland, 2000) and has good consequences for learning and academic development (Ladd, Herald & Kochel, 2006; Viljaranta et.al, 2015). The SAT has a crucial role as a teacher aide to the ET in dealing with SLS is and improving the academic and social abilities of the SLS. It is, however, crucial for the duties, responsibilities, and roles of each teacher to be preserved, preventing dependence of the SLS on one of the teachers. Co-creation of learning plans is very important and can help ensure that learning activities are both meaningful and fun for the SLS.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study involved only 23 student participants, of whom only one was a slow learner, from one school in one city. School selection was a main obstacle, because it is difficult to find inclusive schools that have both slow learner students and special assistant teachers. Although there are limitations to generalizability of these findings, its results clearly demonstrate that the role of the special assistant teacher is greater than that of the general teacher in addressing slow learner students through instructional interactions.

### **Future Research**

The findings of this study can be analyzed with future research in mind on suitable methods for the SLS in Indonesia to achieve maximal academic ability and independence according to their characteristics and limitations, which is the mutual responsibility of regular teachers and

teacher aides. They must be able to work together to create a learning plan to improve the academic and social abilities of students with special needs. Regular teachers and assistant teachers should be able to make a study outlined in the curriculum to more attractive, relevant, and accessible to all students. They faced with the problem of designing some mix of learning strategies that can be achieved by all learners (Tomlinson & Edison 2003 ; Villa et al, 2005).

For matters relating to the learning independence the SLS, it would be beneficial for general teachers to cooperate with teacher aides by making keyword cards that consist of the material being studied according to topic and sequence clear guidelines about what should be done by the SLS, and the first resource if the SLS meets with difficulties—for instance, whether the SLS should initially ask for help from classmates. Afterwards, the SLS can ask the SAT or ET by his or her own initiative, and that question can be managed through clear rules and habituation to minimize dependence of the SLS on teacher aides. The general teacher can supervise and the teacher aide or special assistant teacher can oversee the development of the SLS.

### **Conclusion**

As a primary teacher, the ET is aware of his or her duties to attend to all students and ensure that they achieve maximum academic results. Yet to achieve this, the ET must of course be able to manage the class in such a way that the needs of all students are accommodated including those of the SLS. While the SAT as a teacher helps the ET in learning activities, this study concludes that both academic and non-academic interactions occurred more frequently between the SAT and SLS than between the ET and SLS.

This study concludes that both academic and non-academic interactions occurred more frequently between the SAT and SLS than between the ET and SLS. The pattern of sentences, whether statements or questions, used to initiate learning interactions between the SAT and SLS demonstrates the commitment of the SAT to stimulating critical thinking skills, but also supports the domination of the SAT in nearly every learning process of the SLS. These results indicate that, although the role of the SAT is as a teacher who helps the SLS, the SAT is more dominant in relation to the SLS than the ET is the independence of the SLS. Of course, this dominance affects. The dependence of the SLS on the presence of the SAT affects both academic and non-academic aspects and creates a reliance on the SAT to perform tasks, solve problems, provide motivation, and help the SLS focus on the learning process. Due to this dependence, when the SAT was absent from the class, the SLS did not initiate or complete tasks, and tended not to conduct any activity at all until it was explained in detail by the ET. Even though the presence of the SAT is indispensable for the SLS to attain academic abilities, the role of the SAT should not become more dominant than that of the ET, so that the SLS can also develop self-reliance. It is very important for the SAT and ET to engage in lesson planning together in order to craft main tasks that can be used by all students, including the SLS.

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