Teachers' perceptions and team-teaching

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Challenging Assumptions Looking In, Looking Out

CHALLENGING
LOOKING IN
LOOKING OUT
ASSUMPTIONS

In 1987 the JET Programme established team-teaching by Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) and native speaking assistant language teachers (ALTs) in Japan. At that time, it was believed that, through team-teaching, teachers could develop their teaching skills and create more effective classes for their students. However, team-teaching does not always bring the benefits imagined. For example, team teachers may not always work together effectively, and students also may not benefit from the interaction between the JTE and ALT in the way the literature on team-teaching suggests they should. Therefore this paper examines how JTEs and ALTs perceive team-teaching and how they actually co-operate in their team-teaching classes in Japanese upper secondary schools. Research conducted through interviews and observations revealed significant differences between teachers' perceptions and the nature of their co-operation in practice. This paper discusses the finding and explores implications for English language education in Japan.

1987年にJETプログラムによって、日本の中学校、高等学校に導入された外国人英語教員（ALT）と日本人英語教員（JTE）によるティーム・ティーチングは、日本人英語教員の英語指導力と生徒の英語学習能力を高めることを目指してきたと考えられる。 しかし、ティーム・ティーチングの理論が提言する通りに、日本人英語教員と外国人英語教員が生徒の英語学習能力を高めるために、効果的な授業を作り出そうと、お互いに協力し合う関係を築いているとは限らない。 よって、本論では、日本人英語教員と外国人英語教員へのインタビューと授業の観察に基づいて行なったリサーチから、ティーム・ティーチングの協力に関する認識と実際の指導に関する協力には乖離が生じていることを明らかにする。 さらに、リサーチのデータ分析により浮き彫りにされた日本の外国語としての英語教育が抱える問題点とその解決方法を提示していく。

Twenty years have now passed since team-teaching by Japanese teachers of English (JTE) and native-speaking assistant language teachers (ALT) was introduced into English language teaching in Japanese secondary schools through the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme. This collaborative method of teaching is intended to provide a supportive environment for team teachers, but sometimes entails a complicated relationship between teaching partners. This has an effect on teaching behaviours. Therefore, this study explores the differences in teachers' perceptions of team-teaching and the nature of their co-operation in practice.

Literature review

Co-operation in team-teaching

Goetz (2000) defines team-teaching as a group of two or more teachers working together to plan, conduct, and evaluate learning activities for the same group of learners. Co-operation in team-teaching takes place at three stages of the teaching process: before, during, and after the class.

Benefits of team-teaching for teachers

Team-teaching also brings teachers benefits in the field of teaching methods. Shaw (1976) claims that:

> Team-teaching not only increases the range of abilities and information available in the team but also ensures that each team member will be exposed to the ideas, knowledge and opinions of other team members. (p.371)

This enables teachers to "develop and enhance their own teaching approaches and methods" (Goetz, 2000, p.8) and to produce "more creative teaching" (*Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 2002, p.544). It is important to consider how team teachers can develop their teaching methods through team-teaching. According to Buckley (2000), team teachers have the opportunity for improvement at three points:

> 1) While planning, teachers can share ideas and polish materials before the class presentation.

> 2) Teachers learn new perspectives and insights from watching one another teach.

> 3) Poor teachers can be observed, critiqued, and improved by the other team members in a nonthreatening, supportive context. The self-evaluation done by a team of teachers will be more insightful and balanced than the self-evaluation of an individual teacher. (p.11-12)

Buckley therefore argues that it is possible for teachers taking part in team-teaching to improve their approaches and methods before, during, and after each class.

The JET Programme and its methodology

According to Brumby and Wada (1990), team-teaching by the JTE and ALT encourages communication and interaction between ALTs and students, JTEs and students, and among students themselves; and students can thus learn to communicate in English. For the above reasons, team-teaching by the JTE and ALT is seen as the best possible way of inviting the second language community into a monolingual classroom culture in Japan.

The JET programme also aims to change JTEs' teaching styles from the widespread use of the grammar-translation method, to teaching emphasizing direct communication in English. According to Hiramatsu (2005), team-teaching in the JET Programme creates opportunities not only for Japanese students to develop their communicative ability, but also for JTEs to change their own teaching methods from the grammar-translation method to a communication-based teaching approach.

Divisions of responsibilities between the JTE and ALT

Equal rank is important for partnership in team-teaching. According to the literature on team-teaching by JTE and ALT partners, the JTE and ALT can divide their responsibilities in the team-teaching situation. Brumby and Wada (1990) state that team-teaching is total co-operation between the JTE and the ALT whereby they take equal responsibility in planning and teaching their lesson. They also suggest that the JTE and ALT should have an opportunity for judging whether things are successful or not, and suggesting reasons, after the class.

According to Brumby and Wada (1990), the ALTs' main role in the class is to provide good examples of natural language use for students. They also emphasize that JTEs' active participation in communicative activities is far more important than their analysis and explanation of the English language, because if students can see and hear a conversation between the JTE and ALT, it increases the students' motivation to learn English for communicative purposes. As for the role of JTEs in the class, JTEs are expected to communicate and interact actively with ALTs and their students.

However, considering the background of JTEs who have had taught English according to the grammar translation or other teacher-centred methods, it is not easy to immediately replace the grammar-translation method with team-teaching based on communicative language teaching. Therefore, this study examines how JTEs and ALTs perceive team-teaching and how they actually co-operate with each other to develop and improve their own teaching methods and to produce more creative teaching approaches in English as a foreign language classrooms in Japan – before, during, and after class.

Research methods

Participants

This research involved interviews with 7 JTEs and 3 ALTs, and observations of 6 team-taught lessons in two different public upper secondary schools in the northern part of Japan in 2004. All the participants have been given pseudonyms. The names are as follows:

School A:

JTEs: Tanaka, Kitajima, Aoki, Suzuki, Miyamoto

ALTs: Owen (Jamaican), Richard (American)

School B:

JTEs: Ono, Takahashi

ALT: Bruce (British)

The types of team-taught lessons that were observed are as follows:

School A:

Team 1	Tanaka (JTE)	Owen (ALT)	Richard (ALT)
Team 2	Kitajima (JTE)	Owen (ALT)	
Team 3	Aoki (JTE)	Richard (ALT)	
Team 4	Miyamoto (JTE)	Suzuki (JTE)	Owen (ALT)

School B:

Team 5	Ono (JTE/main teacher)	Takahashi (JTE/sub-teacher)	Bruce (ALT)
Team 6	Takahashi (JTE/main teacher)	Ono (JTE/sub-teacher)	Bruce (ALT)

In Teams 5 and 6, Ono and Takahashi were the principal teachers. The appendix provides further details of the backgrounds of the schools and the ten participants.

Methods of data collection and analysis

This research employed a qualitative approach to interviews and observations. The data from this study is limited by its relatively small size; however, according to Holliday (2002), "the qualitative approach enables the researchers to look deep in the quality of social life, compared with quantitative studies, which focus on counting occurrences across a large population" (p. 6). The purpose of this research is to attempt to explore each teaching situation in some depth rather than to report on broader social patters. As Nisbet and Watt (1980) say, "interviews reveal how people perceive what happens, not what actually happens" (p. 13). Through the combination of the interviews and my own observations, several contradictions emerged between teacher perceptions and the practice of team-teaching. As Bell (1987) points out, "a skillful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do" (p. 70). This is a considerable advantage of qualitative research, so this method was chosen as the best means by which to explore the complex and interwoven aspects of each team-teaching situation.

Each interview was tape-recorded, and all classes were video-recorded. The interview data was content-analyzed by question. Observation data was analyzed in relation to the question used in the interview analysis.

Interview analysis

The main research question was:

Q: How do you and your partner co-operate in team-teaching?

Co-operation

This study analysed how team members co-operate 1) in planning the lesson, 2) during the class and 3) after teaching. Equality or equal ranking is important for partnership in team-teaching. This research investigated how to achieve total co-operation in team-teaching.

Co-operation before the class

8 out of the 10 participants feel that it is necessary to plan the lesson with their team partners before the class. According to the participants' comments, their views on how to plan the lessons mainly fall into two types: 1) ALTs mainly plan the lessons, 2) JTEs mainly plan the lessons.

1) ALTs mainly plan the lessons

When ALTs mainly plan the lessons, JTEs tend to depend on ALTs. Richard says about Team 1, "After Owen and I plan the lesson, we will go to Mr. Tanaka before the class, show him what we've planned, and then he gives us feedback immediately … This is a good idea." Tanaka recognizes that he tends to depend on the ALTs, and he feels that he should change this. He says about his position: "I think I am an assistant for Owen and Richard." For him, it seems that the assistant does not have to make much of a contribution. This could make him very passive in the team-teaching situation.

2) JTEs mainly plan the lesson

The three teams have two common characteristics: (a) JTEs regard ALTs as assistants rather than co-teachers, (b) JTEs tend to plan the lessons based on the course books. Aoki, who works with Richard, distinguishes between ALT and JTE roles as follows: "JTEs should make a lesson plan, because they (JTEs) understand what students need to learn… JTEs are professional, and ALTs are assistants."

When Aoki makes his lesson plan, he normally refers to the teacher's manual for the course book. He says, "Lots of activities are written in the teacher's manual, and I cannot do team-teaching without using them." Richard says about his partner, Aoki, "We will do mostly work from a book, and Mr Aoki will plan the lesson."

Ono comments on the lack of time for discussion of the class with his ALT (Bruce). He says, "Because of taking a lot of time to prepare for team-teaching, I quite often go to the class without having prepared." Bruce says, "We use the textbook as the basis for the class, so there isn't really much planning needed." It seems that Ono simply follows the pattern of the coursebook, and he does not feel that he has to discuss lesson plans with Bruce before each class.

Co-operation during the class

All participants described how they co-operate together during the class. During the class, Owen and Richard change the lesson plan depending on the classroom situation. They share common responsibility with their partners during the class.

On the other hand, Tanaka and Aoki show a lower degree of partnership behaviours than Owen and Richard. Tanaka says about his work in team-teaching "We divided the work to answer the questions. It's good for students to be taught by many teachers." He has the same work as Owen and Richard, however, during the task itself, students tend to ask individual teachers for help. Aoki says about his consultation with the ALT, "When students do the activities, we have time to talk about what we should do next, for example, we can say, 'Please set the CD player.'" For him, the important thing seems to be to ensure that his class proceeds smoothly.

Ono, Takahashi, and Bruce have different roles in their team-teaching situation. Their tasks are clearly divided into three. Ono also commented on their roles, "The ALT's role is to demonstrate pronunciation. The sub-teacher's role is walking around and teaching the students." Bruce's role is to focus on pronunciation. Bruce says about his role in team-teaching, "I just do what I am told." He is very passive during the class. There seems to be an unspoken agreement among Ono, Takahashi, and Bruce not to interfere in other teacher's teaching roles. Ono says, "I do not try to interfere with the main teacher when I fulfil the role as sub-teacher."

Co-operation after the class

1) Feedback

Owen, Richard, and Tanaka mentioned feedback about the class. For Owen, feedback comes not only after the class, but also in planning the lesson. In planning lessons, Owen talks to his team teachers in order to improve the future lessons, reflecting on what he has discovered from previous

lesson situations. He also mentioned that he gave the students a questionnaire about the class. Having considered the students' feedback, he and his team teachers discuss how to plan future lessons. In his team-teaching situation, he positively attempts to improve the lessons, and to share responsibilities with his team teachers. However, Owen's partner, Tanaka, reports that ALTs plan the lesson, and that he does not ask them to change their plans. After teaching the first lesson, he comments to the ALTs on what he felt about the class. In terms of lesson planning, Tanaka does not collect and reflect upon feedback as Owen does.

2) Evaluation

Four participants mentioned evaluation. In Team 3, Bruce says that ALTs' situation is different depending on the schools: "The grade for their work, I'm not involved with that. Other ALTs, who are team teachers, are involved, so each situation is slightly different." Essentially, Bruce does not have to co-operate with JTEs, and he works as an individual, seeing himself as an assistant.

Equality

Three participants mentioned equal ranking in team-teaching; however, they also say that there are not always equal responsibilities among team-teachers in their real-life situations. Bruce perceives equal ranking among team teachers. However, his actual situation is different from his perception of equality; Ono believes that there should be a ranking among team teachers and clearly regards Bruce as an assistant. For him, Bruce's position (ALT) is the lowest. Ono

says: "There is a ranking among teachers: main teacher, sub-teacher, and ALT."

Owen emphasizes personality as a significant factor in team-teaching, as it demonstrates flexibility and respect for differences in personality among team members rather than focusing exclusively on fixed equal ranking.

Observation analysis

This part summarizes the findings of the team-teaching class observation. Six different teams were observed before the interview. These teams have already been mentioned in the research method. For observation, three teams were chosen for analysis. The criteria for selection of the three teams are explained below.

Team 1 is unusual in its internal arrangements, and thus a rewarding subject of study. Normally, one JTE and one ALT conduct team-taught classes in Japanese secondary schools, so it is very helpful to see how two ALTs and one JTE co-operate to teach students. Teams 2 and 3 are very similar, so only one of these teams, Team 3, has been chosen for analysis. In the Team 4 class, the students mainly concentrated on preparing for their own projects, making it difficult to compare with the other teams; thus Team 4 has been eliminated from this observation analysis. Teams 5 and 6 involved the same team members, with the 2 JTEs changing their roles from the main to the sub-teacher, thus Team 5 has been chosen for analysis. Thus, the following section analyzes observations of the following three teams:

School A

Team 1	JTE (Tanaka)	ALT (Owen)	ALT (Richard)
Team 3	JTE (Aoki)	ALT (Richard)	

School B

Team 5	JTE (Ono)	JTE (Takahashi)	ALT (Bruce)

The number of teams in the observation analysis is limited. This study, however, chose three different types of combination of JTEs and ALTs: two ALTs and one JTE (Team 1), one JTE and one ALT (Team 3), and two JTEs and one ALT (Team 5). In addition, students in each team studied three different fields: an English Course (Team 1), a General Course (Team 3), and a Fishery and Technology Course (Team 5). The variety of team situations examined is intended to help illuminate key issues concerning each team situation, and discover possible suggestions to improve team-teaching in the future. The appendix outlines the information regarding the teams who were described as part of the study.

Co-operation in the class

In Team 5, while Ono (JTE) mainly conducted the class, Bruce stood next to him and paid attention to him throughout the class. Ono sometimes asked Bruce to read the course book aloud for pronunciation, and Bruce followed his cue. Takahashi stood at the back of the class. Bruce and Takahashi stood by and watched the class from a fixed place unless Ono requested them to do differently.

In Team 3, Richard played a more mobile role than Bruce and Takahashi in Team 5. Richard not only responded to Aoki's requests, but attempted to find his roles voluntarily. When Aoki conducted the class, Richard started to move from the front to the back of the classroom while looking around the students. If Richard found that some students did not understand the activity, he approached the students, and helped them to be able to understand it. Richard was flexible as to the class situation. Aoki seemed to conduct the class precisely according to the lesson procedure. One student pointed to one item, *hot chocolate,* on a menu written in the course book, and said to the class loudly in Japanese, "Hot chocolate sounds strange! Is that melting chocolate?" Nobody responded to her question. The ALT, Richard, did not understand her Japanese. The JTE, Aoki, could have answered the question; however, he frequently checked his watch, and tended to concentrate his roles.

In Team 1, the two ALTs, Owen and Richard, supported each other in order to help students understand the class. When Richard mainly led the class and the students did not respond enthusiastically to the proposed class activity, Owen encouraged them to participate. Owen joined a student groups for the activity like a friend, sometimes on his knees, with his eyes at the same height as the students. Richard often facilitated understanding with gestures. This kind of support was quite often seen in the classroom. However, Tanaka did not join Owen and Richard. He was normally standing next to Owen, Richard, or the blackboard and watching the class. At Owen's request, Tanaka led the class just once at the beginning of the class.

It is possible to estimate the degree of co-operation before the class by observing the co-operation in the class. Team 3 talked often to each other during the class. Each time they started a new activity, Aoki talked to Richard about it. Richard attempted to understand what Aoki said, but frequently had to ask again. He sometimes looked confused. It seems that Aoki and Richard did not have enough time to talk about the lesson plan before the class. Team 1 did not talk about the lesson plan during the class at all. The lesson was organized well. It seems the lesson plan was worked out beforehand, and therefore it was not necessary to talk about it during the class. There was no consultation in Team 5. However, Team 5 simply followed course book patterns, and tasks were clearly divided among the three teachers. Bruce's role was simply to read the course book aloud for pronunciation in the class, but it seems that he was not instructed beforehand about this. On one occasion he seemed to misunderstand a signal from Ono and prepared to read at the wrong time.

Discussion and suggestions
Discussion
This section discusses perceptions of team-teaching and cooperation in practice.

Co-operation
The findings reveal a lack of equal co-operation among team members, possibly due to limitations of time and energy, as suggested by Buckley (2000). It could also be argued that student-centred teaching methods are still new to JTEs, and

that planning team-taught lessons causes more work or a feeling of insecurity. Secondly, there usually seems to be one teacher in the team who is familiar with the teaching method used or has more experience, with the other teachers depending on the leader. Thirdly, the findings confirm that there is a ranking among the team teachers.

According to the observations, co-operation rarely occurs. Team teachers do not share responsibilities equally in classrooms, possibly related to a lack of co-operation before the class.

According to comments made in the interviews, some teachers have time for feedback after the class, which is tagged as being important by Brumby and Wada (1990). However, if there is a lack of co-operation when planning and conducting classes, it becomes difficult to get meaningful feedback from those who have not contributed to the lesson.

Equality
This study finds there is a fixed ranking among the team teachers, with a fixed idea of who is the *assistant* and what their role is. This study also finds that some teachers have a fixed image of themselves: *I am an assistant*. If such a fixed ranking is created among team teachers, or if the teacher regards herself as an assistant, this seems to affect their contribution to the team.

According to Goetz (2000) and Buckley (2000), team-teaching provides a supportive environment for teachers. However, this study finds that team teachers do not always make an equal contribution before, during, or after the class, proving it to be difficult to create these supportive

environments. Moreover, Warwick (1971) suggests that team-teaching reduces the isolation of the classroom; however, in some team-teaching situations, there is fixed ranking within the team, and as a result, this creates isolation among team teachers. There is one exception to these findings. This study finds total co-operation only between two ALTs (Owen and Richard). The two ALTs attempted to support each other and shared responsibilities equally before, during, and after the class.

Closing observations and suggestions for the future

Buckley (2000, p11-12) suggests that team teachers should complement each other and help each other's teaching improve before, during, and after each class. However, according to this study, instead of complementing each other, one or more of the team-teachers tends to become dependent on the other(s). If such a pattern of dependence is created among team teachers, they lose the opportunity to develop their own teaching abilities. Furthermore, if there is a fixed ranking among team teachers, the individualities of the less-dominant teachers are subordinated in the team. Therefore, it is difficult for team members to teach more creatively in such situations.

This study found that two of the ALTs supported each other equally, because they could discuss the lesson frankly. On the other hand, the JTEs kept a distance from the team with regard to teaching. Many Japanese teachers have a strong sense of individual responsibility for their lessons, and are also loath to be seen to interfere in other teacher's classes. In such an atmosphere, JTEs who are not used to methods for team-teaching might feel undermined or uncomfortable. Therefore the JTEs may sometimes become dependent on the ALTs, or create a ranking among team teachers. The idea of collaborative discussion among team teachers is not reflected in their lessons.

There is clearly often a difference in understanding between JTEs and ALTs regarding the aims and practice of team-teaching. Based on these findings, it is necessary to revise the content of seminars and workshops for team-teaching. Workshops for JTEs and ALTs should be conducted more frequently and continuously. The key to successful team-teaching by JTEs and ALTs is to open the lines of communication among team teachers to allow frank discussion to take place and as a result to improve teaching methods and create more effective lessons for students.

In order to create effective team-teaching, teachers can plan the lesson or reorganize the lesson plan during the class based on the students' difficulties and questions. During the class, the JTE's role as the bridge between students and the ALT is important for the future of team-teaching in Japan. In team-teaching classrooms involving JTEs and ALTs, JTEs will sometimes encounter situations in which only they can discover what difficulties students feel in their learning process and why, from the point of view of JTEs as non-native speaking teachers (NNSTs). In Team 3, if the JTE (Aoki) listened to and answered the student's question about *hot chocolate*, and also explained to the student and ALT at the same time why it seemed odd in a Japanese context, they could all have benefited and learned something. This type of role for JTEs helps build interaction between the ALT and students, the ALT and JTE, and the JTE and students. With the question regarding hot chocolate, the JTE could also ask the class *If you do not understand the foods*

on the menu at a restaurant, how do you ask the waiter? In this case, the ALT as a native speaking teacher (NST), could help the students learn useful expressions. Such discussions can help students understand how course book vocabulary can be used in real-life situations. This flexibility can contribute to planning future lessons as well. However, the most important and difficult thing is for JTEs and ALTs to grasp the opportunities of discovering the students' questions or difficulties during class. The roles of JTEs as NNSTs and ALTs as NSTs should be more focused for future research concerning team-teaching in Japan.

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Appendix

Backgrounds of schools

School A

School A is located in a major city in the northern prefecture of Japan, and this school has two courses: a general course and English course. Students in the English course study not only the English language more intensively, but self-expression in English and cross-cultural understanding. About ninety percent of the students hope to go on to higher education after they graduate. Generally, there is one ALT working in each upper secondary school; however, in school A, there are two ALTs, because of the English course.

School B

School B is a type of vocational upper secondary school, and offers two courses: fishery industry and information technology. This school is situated in a rural area. After graduation, most students work in the field of fishery and technology, with few if any students going to university or junior college.

Backgrounds of participants

JTE Participants

In school A, 7 out of 14 JTEs carried out team-taught lessons with ALTs, and for this study 5 out of the 7 JTEs were interviwed. Aoki was the most experienced teacher, and had taught English in Japan for more than thirty years. Tanaka was an experienced teacher, working as an English teacher in Japan for about twenty years. Miyamoto and Suzuki were younger teachers with ten and fifteen years experience respectively. Kitajima, a substitute teacher, was new, with only one year of teaching experience.

In School B, 3 JTEs conducted team-teaching with the ALT, Bruce; interviews were carried out with two of these teachers. Ono was a very experienced teacher having taught English for about thirty years. Takahashi, like Kitajima, was a very new substitute teacher.

ALT participants

In School A, Owen was a second-year ALT, and Richard was a first-year ALT on the JET Programme; both were relatively experienced teachers. Owen had two years experience of teaching English as a foreign language to adults in Chile; he had also taught Spanish in an upper secondary school and university in Jamaica, and had tutored a university undergraduate course in Political Science. Richard had no experience of teaching languages as a foreign or second language. However, he had worked as a substitute teacher in middle and high schools in the USA, teaching a number of subjects such as Maths, Physical Education, Environment Science, and Spanish. He had tutored Philosophy, Maths, and Astronomy for university undergraduates as well.

In School B, Bruce was a first-year ALT. He had no experience of teaching before working as an ALT and had only been working a few months as an ALT at the time of this study.

Teams for observations

Team 1

All the students are female and belong to the English course in School A. There are about forty students in the classroom. At the front of the classroom, there is a blackboard. Students are sitting in six rows, each of about five or six students. The three teachers (2 ALTs and 1JTE) mainly stand in front of the students with the blackboard behind them. The students are looking towards the teachers. While the students are doing their activities, the teachers are walking around them.

Team 3

The students belong to the general course in School A. The number of students in the classroom is about forty. The ratio of males and females is about equal. In the case of team 1, students are sitting in six lines made up of six or seven students. The position of the blackboard is in front of the class. The teachers mainly stand in front of the students with the blackboard behind them except when students are doing the activities. Students are sitting and looking towards the teachers.

Team 5

All the students are male and belong to the fishery and technology course in School B. There are about 40 students in the classroom. The order of their seats and the position of the blackboard are almost the same as with Teams 1 and 3. The JTE (main teacher) and the ALT stand with their backs to the blackboard, and the other JTE (sub teacher) stands at the back of the classroom, and while students are doing activities, they are walking around.