Creating Supplementary Readings: JTE and ALT Roles

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Reading materials that extend Japanese high school English textbook units can augment students' grasp of unit contents (Suzuki & Collins, 2007) and encourage reading for communication purposes (Gee, 2001). For team teachers, however, creating supplementary readings can be challenging. Textbooks and traditions perpetuate the notions that (a) the goal of reading is to build knowledge of English itself and (b) materials creation for four-skills classes is outside the purview of assistant language teachers (ALTs). This paper introduces an original planning sheet that supports Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) and ALTs in collaborating to create readings. Narrative data from teacher interviews, a sample reading and worksheet, and a sample student writing outcome illustrate how a team at one school is shifting views of reading and norms of collaboration.

高校の英語の教科書のユニット内容を拡大適用するリーディング教材は、生徒のユニットの内容理解を向上させるだけでなく（Suzuki & Collins, 2007）、コミュニケーションのためのリーディングも促進させる（Gee, 2001）と報告されている。しかしながら、チームティーチングを行う教員にとって、補助教材を作成することは困難である。現在の教科書や教育伝統は、①読解の目標は教科としての英語の知識を構築すること、②4技能のための教材作成は、ALTの仕事ではない、という2つの概念を持続させてしまっている。この負の概念を払拭するために、本研究では日本人教員とALTが協力して教材を作成することに役立つ独自の計画案を紹介する。教員インタビューの談話データ、サンプルリーディングとワークシート、そして生徒の作文結果を基に、ある学校における教員グループがどのように読解やチームティーチングの見解を変化させていったかを検証する。

THE CURRENT Course of Study for Foreign Languages released by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT; MEXT, 2009) features a 3-year series of classes called English Communication I, II, and III, intended to integrate all four communication skills. Textbooks for these classes, however, continue to emphasize reading almost to the exclusion of writing, speaking, and listening (Nishino & Watanabe, 2008; Yamada & Hristoskova, 2011). Through their involvement in teacher development in English (TDE) programs for Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) and foreign assistant language teachers (ALTs), the authors have noted that many are interested in establishing a more motivational atmosphere (Dörnyei, 2001) in reading units, as well as advancing a range of student reading skills (Collins, 2013).

One way for JTEs and ALTs to meet these objectives is to establish a routine of extending a specific Japanese high school English textbook unit with a communication activity. When students read with the activity's communication purpose in mind, they are more motivated to deepen and broaden their grasp of a unit's contents (Gee, 2001; Suzuki & Collins, 2007). Supplementary readings can

support students' participation and success in the activity, especially when teachers take advantage of them to shift from the decoding processes they commonly employ when covering core textbook readings (Snow, 2007). At the same time, supplementary readings enable students to incidentally develop a deeper sense of the forms and meanings of a unit's target vocabulary items by increasing their exposure to those items (Hatch & Brown, 1995).

Participants in the TDE programs mentioned above, however, report that a number of challenges prevent JTEs and ALTs from effectively collaborating on designing units and creating supplementary reading materials (Collins & Nakamura, 2007). Some hurdles are practical in nature; many JTEs report, for example, that they lack the time needed to create effective readings. Other obstacles are rooted in JTEs' perceptions of their own shortcomings: Some admit to having low confidence in their English writing skills, depending on ALTs to create materials that reflect "natural" English usage, or both (Collins & Nakamura, 2007). On the other hand, ALTs may be unfamiliar with the topics featured in high school English textbooks and often lack experience writing within limited word lengths for readers with specific vocabulary levels and grammatical knowledge.

More fundamental challenges may also go unrecognized and therefore undiscussed within JTE-ALT teams. These include gaps between perceptions of the purposes and processes of L1 reading and those of L2 reading—gaps that are perpetuated by the long-established teaching approach known as *yakudoku* (literally, read and translate). Perennial doubt about ways ALTs can contribute to student learning in four-skills classes constitutes another stumbling block (Collins, 2012).

This paper outlines the efforts and outcomes of a team of JTEs and ALTs who worked with the authors of this paper to overcome the obstacles above. By collaborating on the goals, contents, and use of supplementary readings, the teachers were able to help shift their students' perceptions of reading, redefining and establishing new norms of teamwork in the process.

Perspectives From the Field

L1 and L2 Reading: A Dichotomy in Purposes

Building on Tomasello's (1999) position that "linguistic symbols are social conventions for inducing others to construe, or take a perspective on, some experiential situation" (p. 118), Gee (2001) stressed that language "is about communicating perspectives on experience and action in the world, often in contrast to alternative and competing perspectives" (p. 716). In addition, language enables us to form and nurture affiliations within social groups, institutions, and other cultures; Warschauer (2003) described the benefits derived from these affiliations as "social capital" (p. 316).

Unfortunately, it seems that the perception of L2 reading as "situated," that is, rooted in perspective and socially constructed within a context (Gee, 2001), is seldom fostered in Japan's secondary school English classes. Underpinning current teaching practices are the traditional assumptions that the main functions of language are to objectively comprehend and convey neutral information (Gee, 2001) and that English is a body of knowledge to be internalized (Hanks, 1991), rather than used as a tool for communication. As a result, the *yakudoku* approach continues to dominate the required four-skills classes. Students are tested on their memory, rather than their comprehension, of readings. As Snow (2007) warned, the use of readings to teach vocabulary and grammar not only misleads students as to the purpose of reading, but also may give them a distaste for the experience of reading in an L2.

JTE-ALT Collaboration: Overcoming a Paradox

One way MEXT has attempted to counter the assumptions underpinning the *yakudoku* approach has been the introduction of team teaching. MEXT (2002) defined team teaching, somewhat unhelpfully, as "any time two or more teachers work together to guide an individual learner or group of learners toward a set of aims or objectives" (p. 14). MEXT's assertion that "the presence of two

teachers teaching together ensures increased and better interaction between the teachers and the learners, and leads to improvement in the quality of teaching" (p. 15), although positive, is both sweeping and unsubstantiated.

Understandably, JTEs and ALTs continue to ask themselves and others what ideal team teaching consists of and whether their own practices meet its goals (Collins, 2012). Although a number of JTE and ALT roles have been identified over the years (Collins, 2006; Miyazato, 2009), a paradox has emerged. On the one hand, there is a tendency to grant team leader status to ALTs in conversation classes at many schools. The *native speaker fallacy* describes the assumption that ALTs are inherently better qualified to teach the language (Phillipson, 1992). On the other hand, as teachers of conversational English classes that are unconnected to the four-skills classes, ALTs are often marginalized within the overall English curriculum (Collins, 2012; Miyazato, 2012).

Both sides of this paradox undermine ALTs' chances to contribute to their school's broader curriculum and therefore to their students' overall English education. There have been calls to move beyond notions of ALTs as more legitimate "owners" and users of English than JTEs. Among them, Collins and Fine (2013) stressed the need for a "concrete, flexible, and integrated educational framework that reflects current notions surrounding the ownership of English in meaningful JTE-ALT-student relationships" (p. 76). The desire to explore ways to achieve this was the authors' motivation for working with team teachers at School S.

School S: A Case Study

A good example of the challenges inherent in collaboration between JTEs and ALTs can be found in the English department of School S, a junior and senior high school with which the authors have worked over a period of 5 years. At the time of the current study, School S had completed a 3-year MEXT-sponsored Super English Language High School (SELHi) project and had further completed an additional year of teacher development called the Post-SELHi Program. The current study was part of a department-wide, yearlong TDE program similar to the teachers' SELHi experience, with teachers joining one of four working groups: Junior 1-3, Senior 1, Senior 2, and Senior 3.

School S's four full-time and six part-time ALTs far outnumber the complement of native English speakers at most high schools in Japan. Many full-time ALTs at School S stay for the maximum 6-year contract, with some part-time teachers staying longer. Thus, rich in shared experience, professional training, and human resources, the English department of School S comes close to what might be considered an ideal environment for nurturing JTE-ALT collaboration. With this in mind, the authors asked the following research questions: What obstacles, if any, prevent the English teachers at School S from collaborating fully on supplementary readings to be used in four-skills classes? In the face of potential obstacles, what routines can JTEs and ALTs establish to boost collaboration throughout the unit planning and materials creation phases?

Data Collection

To ascertain how team teaching was being implemented as an educational tool at School S, the authors observed one JTE's solo taught four-skills class and his team-taught conversation class, eight times each. The classes were recorded on video and transcribed, and unit plans, materials, and samples of student writing were collected. Each visit included individual interviews with the JTE and ALT. Open- and closed-ended questions addressed a sequence of topics including JTE-ALT collegiality, team-teaching relationships, English as mediation, and student outcomes. At the end of the academic year, the authors also conducted interviews with three other JTEs and three other ALTs at School S about these topics and other aspects of team teaching. These interviews were also transcribed.

Collaboration: The Challenges

Class observations and interviews quickly revealed obstacles that persistently undermined School S's potential as an environment for JTE-ALT collaboration on English Communication I, II, and III plans and materials. Foremost were the ALTs' teaching schedules, which consisted entirely of English Conversation classes. The JTEs were doubtful about involving ALTs in the four-skills classes, not least of all because they were hesitant to burden ALTs with extra work—such as the creation of readings—that would fall outside their regular duties. This hesitance may have reflected the JTEs' awareness and interpretation of limits imposed by the official ALT job descriptions, especially for part-time teachers, combined with a cultural reluctance to impose upon others. Some ALTs suspected that the JTEs' reluctance emerged from a cultural sense that asking for help was equivalent to shirking responsibility. "If we make readings," said one ALT in an interview, "they feel a little embarrassed. It's almost as if, maybe, we're doing their job. But I don't see it as that way. I see it as my job."

The lack of time for collaboration, cited by teachers at several secondary schools in Japan (Collins & Nakamura, 2007), led the JTEs at School S to conclude that creating readings in English themselves was more efficient than asking ALTs for help. When ALTs were asked to assist with readings, it was typically as proofreaders, rather than writers; as one JTE put it, "Usually, Japanese teachers make the basic information, and ask [ALTs] to revise it."

Prior to the first TDE meetings, the ALTs had written supplementary readings for four-skills textbook units. However, in some ways, they were ill equipped. Most of the ALTs lacked experience writing within the constraints of an L2 supplementary reading and were unsure of the level of formality required, as well as the appropriate levels of vocabulary and grammar. More fundamentally, they were unfamiliar with the goals and content of units they were supplementing. For their part, the JTEs were unsure of what ALTs needed to know in order to create appropriate readings. As one ALT reported, "You just get the topic for the reading, are told the length needed, write it, and just give it back to them. That's generally it."

Not infrequently, this resulted in drafts that met neither the JTEs' expectations nor the students' needs. "About that reading [the ALT] made," said one JTE, "I feel that it's more casual English than I expected and I thought it's good when Japanese teachers write reading materials." The result was, more often than not, frustration on the part of the ALT at the lack of consensus among and direction from JTEs. "After my first draft," said one, "it turned out the Japanese teachers hadn't talked enough with each other. So one person wanted this, one person wanted that. I was told to do one thing and then [after writing] I was told that's not what I was supposed to do."

Obstacles to collaboration existed in the next phase as well. The JTEs were hesitant to critique the English written by native speakers, so their feedback was often limited to comments that were positive but minimal (e.g., "Good") or unrelated to the English (e.g., "Picture could be bigger"). "Generally I get a 'thank you,'" reported one ALT, "but no feedback. I don't know if I've ever heard any feedback. I think there's a little shyness about it. Maybe they see it as I'm doing a favor for them so they can't offer criticism." At the same time, ALTs were hesitant to make significant changes to the structure and content of first drafts JTEs had made, typically limiting themselves to corrections of spelling and grammar. This supports the notion that many JTE-ALT working relationships are laden with issues of face, expertise, and ownership of the language (Fine, 2012), which may be manifested in a reluctance to offer constructive criticism and feedback. Thus, even at School S, where the teaching environment seemed ideally suited for JTE-ALT teamwork, collaboration was challenging.

Collaboration: Meeting the Challenges

Out of the four teams involved in this project, the authors chose the Senior 2 team at School S for closer analysis. The team consisted of

four full-time JTEs and two full-time ALTs; part-time JTEs and ALTs did not attend sessions, but received materials from the Senior 2 leader. Between them, the team taught four-skills English six periods a week to 12 classes of between 46 and 49 students.

Over the course of the TDE Program, they worked with each other and the TDE instructors to establish a routine for collaborating on unit plans and teaching materials to be used by the JTEs in their solo taught four-skills classes. Their textbook was *Power On English II* (Jimbo, N., et al, 2009), and their target was Unit 7, "Putting the Forests Back." The unit's four-part reading passage described a reforestation project carried out in Columbia. Much of its vocabulary fell outside the 2,000 high frequency words that make up between 80 and 95% of most texts (Nation, 2002).

As the first important step, the JTEs and ALTs met and completed a planning sheet created by the authors (see Appendix A), to analyze the content, organization, and message of the reading. This process enabled the teachers to set two reading-centered communication goals for their students. First, they wanted students to practice identifying and organizing key information, in this case, the Unit 7 text, according to a cause-problem-response-outcome flow. Their second goal was for students to experience synthesizing content and target language from more than one source.

The JTE-ALT team then decided on a task that would support students in achieving the above aims. On Day 1 of the unit, JTEs would announce that students were to write text for an imaginary NGO website persuading the public to donate to a reforestation project. Days 1 to 9 of the unit would be devoted to reading the passage and mastering the vocabulary and grammar structures needed to write their text. The textbook unit, however, introduced only one reforestation project, and the team realized that, without supplementary readings, all of the students would be writing about the same project on Day 10. This situation would both undermine the students' autonomy and limit the ALTs' responses to their writing.

Armed with the planning sheet and a solid understanding of the unit's communication goals and student task, the ALTs set about creating five readings. All students, working in groups of four or five, would be asked to tackle Supplementary Reading A (see Appendix B), a general overview of reforestation. The word length, including the title, was 259 words, slightly longer than any one of the four parts of the unit reading. The ALTs made sure to recycle target vocabulary items and grammar structures from the textbook unit, which are in all capital letters and italicized, respectively, in Appendix B for teacher reference only. Three terms not previously encountered in the textbook unit were also glossed, and helpful illustrations with captions were included. Finally, the reading was formatted to look like an authentic online article.

The ALTs then created Supplementary Readings B-E, which covered reforestation projects in Brazil, China, Japan, and Malawi. These readings, which also recycled vocabulary and grammar from the unit, were formatted to appear as if they had come from four different sources. Although all students would read Supplementary Reading A, each group would autonomously choose which additional article to read. Special consideration was taken in the organization of the readings. Each mirrored the textbook unit's flow: introducing an environmental situation, explaining its causes, outlining a project's response to the problem, and finally sharing the project's outcomes. This allowed the ALTs to create a single, universal worksheet for these four readings (see Appendix C). The worksheet would enable students to take notes on the cause-problem-response-outcome flow of their chosen article.

Through the use of the Planning Sheet, the Senior 2 team was able to move away from a reading-only routine toward a four-skills approach that recognized reading as situated within a real world context. By requiring them to set a communication task, the planning sheet also pushed teachers to examine how best to support and evaluate students' mastery of the textbook contents and language. Finally, by following the criteria, ALTs could create supplementary

readings that extended the unit and would require far less revision than readings they had created for previous units.

Still, the TDE Program required that ALTs on the team submit their supplementary readings to the JTEs for feedback. JTEs were asked by the authors to assess the readings' difficulty levels and to evaluate and give constructive feedback on whether the contents were relevant, organized, and would support students in succeeding with the postreading task.

Teachers in similar TDE programs have reported that students are more motivated to engage in tasks when they have seen the impact of their English-language message on someone outside the classroom community (Suzuki & Collins, 2007). With this in mind, the team asked ALTs who had not created the reforestation supplementary readings to respond in writing to four group writing outcomes, one on each of the reforestation projects discussed in Readings B-D. Rather than evaluate the students' English, the ALTs were asked to note how much they had learned from the students' writing and express their desire to contribute to reforestation projects in the future.

Outcomes for Students and Teachers

The team reported that student groups in all 12 of the Senior 2 classes were able to produce written texts that delivered a persuasive message to their imagined online readership. Their fluency and organization varied, and many groups had one or two students who seemed unengaged in the writing task, but the Senior 2 teachers reported in a follow-up meeting that, overall, they were pleasantly surprised by the students' evident grasp of their writing purpose and motivation to interact with readers. In the unedited student writing sample shown in Appendix D, target language the student group was able to recycle from the Unit 7 passage, Reading A, and Reading E (about a Malawi reforestation project) is in italics. Much of the target language is used effectively to support the group's message. Although every sentence displays at least one spelling or grammar error, few of the mistakes entirely impede communication. The strongest writing samples were over 300 words and included original graphics and catchphrases designed to support their meaning. Significantly, the JTEs reported how pleased student groups were when their writing was selected to be shared with the ALTs and when the JTEs read the ALTs' responses aloud to the classes.

Reflecting on their team's collaboration, it was clear that some JTEs at School S still felt unqualified to offer meaningful feedback on supplementary readings created by ALTs. In her year-end interview, one Senior 2 JTE admitted that

> giving feedback to an ALT depends on who he or she is. It depends on the character of the ALT. Most of the ALTs feel it's okay, but I'm afraid some ALTs might think, "You are Japanese. Why did you check my English?"

However, the full-time ALTs all continued to express their willingness to contribute to their JTE counterparts' solo taught four-skills classes. In his year-end interview, one ALT shared his optimism and his resolve:

> Hopefully, it'll be easier, now that we've been through this—the sort of meetings and trainings. Ways to help with readings is definitely something I will ask about next year when I find out which grade I'm teaching.

Although ALTs were unable to team teach the four-skills classes, they worked as equal partners in unit design and materials creation, especially supplementary readings. In so doing, the Senior 2 team was able to draw on the knowledge and strengths of both JTEs and ALTs, clarifying relationships with each other and, through the communication activity, with the students.

Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

It is unfortunate that the four-skills vs. conversation dichotomy still informs the curriculum at School S. However, thanks to the teachers' commitment to collaborating on communicative English units and materials, the English department has begun meeting the two main challenges they had identified at the outset. First, both their own and their students' perspectives are shifting to one of English as a communication tool. Second, both JTEs and ALTs are establishing routines and recognizing the benefits of ALT involvement in unit planning and the creation of materials such as supplementary readings. Through setting goals and communication tasks, teachers are not only shifting their own and their students' perspectives toward one of reading as situated in social practice, but also acknowledging the importance of writing, speaking, and listening in English.

It remains to be seen whether this type of collaboration can be realized in more of Japan's secondary schools. School, city, and even prefectural curricula vary widely; in some, conversation classes are not offered and ALTs visit only four-skills classes. In other schools, the opposite is true: team teaching schedules are limited to conversation classes. The authors are finding that, in both scenarios, collaboration on materials such as supplementary readings can be a rewarding experience for team teachers.

Future research is necessary to ascertain whether the influence of JTE-ALT collaboration on materials such as supplementary readings can be teased out from the many other variables that make up English language teaching practice. The TDE Program at School S required that all Senior II teachers use the team's unit plan and materials out of fairness to the students, who were all to take the same end-term exams. However, if teachers at a school are willing to compare the outcomes of two groups of students studying the same textbook unit through two different methods—one taught using the traditional approach and one using the kind of communication activity outlined here—an analysis might be done to determine whether supplementary readings have a quantifiable impact on the students' language acquisition.

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Appendix A

Planning Sheet: Considerations in Designing Supplementary Readings

Textbook title	
Unit number, title	

Step 1. Setting a communication goal: What experience / skills will students build by reading this unit?

What is the genre? Have students previously done reading in this genre?	
How are the contents organized? Have students previously experienced this organization?	
What is the writer's purpose? Message? Tone? Have students previously experienced this kind of writing?	

Step 2. Setting a postreading task: What activity will students take part in to help them build the above experience / skills?

Who will students be interacting with in the activity? What will the students' message be?	
What non-evaluative response to their message might students receive?	

Step 3. Revisiting the textbook unit reading

Organization	
How helpful is the introduction? Why?	
How well organized is the body? Why?	
How concrete / logical is the conclusion? Why?	
What information do students still need in order to succeed in the above student goal?	
Target language (vocabulary, grammar structures)	
How much of the target language is new?	
How much of it have students been exposed to / acquired before? How do we know?	

Step 4. Planning and creating supplementary reading(s)

Content	
Do the contents deepen / broaden students' understanding of the textbook reading?	
Do the genre and organization reflect those of the textbook reading?	
Target language	
How much target vocabulary have you recycled?	
Have you recycled target grammar structures only when it is the best way to express something?	
Do some items need to be glossed?	
Other	
Do the titles, bylines, fonts, and layouts feel authentic?	
Are your illustrations and graphs relevant? Helpful? Captioned?	
Have you noted your sources?	

Appendix B

Sample Supplementary Reading for Power On *Lesson 7: Putting the Forests Back.*

(Formatting, illustrations, and captions removed for this publication.)

Deforestation: Everybody's Problem

Maybe you think that deforestation in Africa, China, and Brazil doesn't affect you. Perhaps you think that the ENRICHed SOIL that is lost from the BARREN land in a poor country has nothing to do with you. So what is the problem? The problem is that there is a connection between you and deforestation in other countries. 12%-17% of *greenhouse gas comes from trees *being cut down*. What does this mean? It means that, because trees are *being cut down*, the Earth is *getting warmer*.

With the Earth getting warmer, we will see more and more *mega storms; therefore, more people will die from typhoons. Storms *have gotten stronger* over the past couple of years, and scientists say there will be more if we don't cut back greenhouse gas.

With the Earth getting warmer, we will have colder winters and hotter summers. That means it will be harder to grow food. By 2080, Japan will lose 1/5 of its ability to produce food because of the changes in the weather.

With the Earth getting warmer, we will see the LEVEL of the sea rise. The area around the *coastline will get smaller, and therefore Japan will get smaller. By 2050, scientists say the sea level will rise by 20cm. This means that some lower level areas near the sea will be under water.

Deforestation in Africa, China, and Brazil does matter because it will affect you. It will affect the weather, the amount of food we can eat, and the areas we can live in.

- greenhouse gas: 温室効果ガス
- mega storms: 巨大嵐
- coastline: 海岸線

Note. Target vocabulary items are in all capital letters. Target grammar structures are italicized.

Appendix C

Student Worksheet: Taking Notes on Supplementary Readings A-E

(Formatting, illustrations, and captions removed for this publication.)

Situation: Your NGO is in charge of a reforestation project. Your goal is to persuade people to donate to the project through your website!

Directions: Find and organize the information you need to share with your readers in the chart below. You will do two readings:

- Deforestation: Everyone's Program (Reading A)
- One more of your group's choice (Reading B, C, D, or E)

Country, areas		
Deforestation	Causes	
	Current situation	
Project	Name	
	Organizers	
	Actions taken so far	
	Results of the actions	
	Future goals	
	Money needed	

Appendix D

Sample Senior 2 Student Writing Outcome

(Formatting, illustrations, and captions removed for this publication.)

Have you heard "*Deforestation*" in Amazon in Brazil now? Now, *deforestation* happens in this area. *It is said that* 2.7 million heactares of forests are burned every year *to make space for farmlands*.

Why happened it? Amazon has many *resources* and space so, people burned the forests for space. And, as wood *can be exchanged for money*, people uses wood. In this way, a forests has been broken. In addition, the earth is said that "the *lungs* of the earth". Thus, I don't stop it we *will be influenced* in the future.

Project

There is *method* to keep progress as "*Agroforestry*"! It can stop the deforestation and *re-grow the forest*. This project sets *various crops* and *harvests* it and can make money. Perform this project *for several decades*. By doing this way, people receive money and as the *soil improves*, helps the reforestation.

But, this project needs the many money and long time. Cost is $1.2 billion dollars and it will take more than 50 *years to complete*. But, this projects influence to us. If you raise a *funds*, we use this funds for buying a tree and crops. So, Please your funds!

Note. Italics denote target language recycled from the unit passage, Reading A, and Reading E.