Ideal Team-Teaching of the English Language in the specific case of the JET program

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According to Warwick (1971:18), no team-teaching forms an exception to this rider.

[It is] team teaching is a form of organisation in which individual teachers decide to pool resources, interest, and expertise in order to devise and implement a scheme of work suitable to the needs of their pupils and the facilities of their school.

From this, we can see the importance of the triangular relationship between team teachers, pupils and the school in conducting team-teaching The term "school factor" is used by Warwick to mean a factor controlled mainly by school administration. This is because Warwick is discussing a team-teaching project in a single school rather than a national level project However, in case of the JET program, we must keep in mind the additional importance of the national and the municipal levels of administration because it is a national project designed to improve the communicative ability in foreign language, mostly English, of Japanese students through the introduction of the method of team-teaching with the help of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) hired through the government. Thus framework of this team-teaching is decided not only within a school. For this reason, I would replace the term "school factor" by 'administration'.

In addition to these three factors, the cultural factor is important in the case of a foreign language classroom. Since language is one of the most important symbolic systems in any culture, in the foreign language classroom, or English classroom in this case, "the activities and cultural influences cannot be separated from what is learned" (Mckay, 1992:47). Keeping this in mind, I would like to look into the following four factors in this essay; in addition, I will suggest an ideal model for team-teaching in the English language teaching situation in Japan.

(1) Cultural Factors

As seen in *Figure A*, the cultural factor cannot be controlled by the other three factors, but it is the only factor which exerts influence on all the other three. It cannot exist by itself, but rather in correlation with the others. When designing a team-taught lesson of the English language, we need to keep in mind our culture, meaning the 'public will' here which reflects the will of the country at large, including its customs, culture, and society. Especially in team-teaching which involves team teachers from different cultures, which is also the case with the JET program, knowing the culture of the Japanese Teacher of Language (JTE), the Assistant English Teacher (AET) and the students will be helpful for everyone to lessen possible misunderstandings which could

prevent the lesson from being successful.
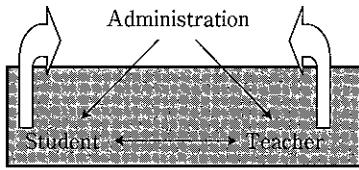
① ☐ Lesson ② ▨ Cultural Influence
③ → Direct Influence ④ ⌒→ Indirect Influence

Figure A, "model of the factors which construct a lesson, their interrelation"

(2) Administration

Administration is a factor which will include both the school administration and the national or municipal level of administration. Although this factor directly influences the conditions of the lesson, we should keep in mind that this is an indirect component of the lesson; it does not exist inside the classroom and does not have direct contact with the two main actors in the lesson, the student and the teacher. On the other hand, in team-teaching, teacher and student directly influence each other in terms of mutual contact and co-operation, and the team-teaching is facilitated through the language activities between them (Wada, 1988:3).

Focusing on the school administration factor, Warwick lists the following in his explanation of the team-teaching model:

(1) Team-teaching theory;
(2) Initial planning and preparation;
(3) Overall framework of scheme;
(4) Structuring of time-table and staff/pupil grouping;
(5) Experimentation with different forms of time-tabling and groupings;
(6) Changes in materials and treatment;
(7) Changes in classroom procedure and structure;
(8) New buildings.

We can see that these factors fit into the school administration factor except for points 1, 7 and 8. Looking into these three exceptions, although they could be factors controlled by the administration, they could also fit into the category that would be operated by the teacher. Focusing on point 1, although it is equally important for the administration to have their own definition of what they conceive as team-teaching theory, it is also important for team-teaching theory to be part of the teachers' obligations. In the case of point 7, making these changes is mainly a role that the teacher will take on, despite the possibility that it may be indirectly controlled by the administration. Regarding point 8, although teachers can have an indirect effect in changing the building into a new one, the right of direct decision-making belongs to the administration.

Besides the school administration, in the case of the JET program we can see the importance of national and municipal levels of administration in promoting more effective teaching. This is because the JET program is a national project and its framework is designed by the government. In addition, led by the Ministry of Home Affairs, i.e., one of the three hosting organisations of JET, since the working conditions of AETs differ according to different municipalities, it is also vital to know the framework of the role of the municipal administration in order to maximise the effectiveness of team-teaching within the current restrictions.

(3) Teachers

Teachers are "products of their culture and live within the framework of values and symbols that are part of that culture" (Spindler, 1974:153). Even in the case where the team teachers are from a simi-

lar cultural background, individual differences, such as "personality differences, as well as those of age, training and experience, make the requisite degree of co-operation between teachers difficult if not impossible" (Freeman, 1969:38) From this, we can see the importance of the cultural factor in running more effective team-teaching, especially in the case of the JET program, because the scheme requires the co-operation of team teachers, i.e., JTE and AET, who are from different education systems. Since this creates different expectations and assumptions in learning, the core relationship between the three, i.e., the JTE, the AET and the student, is more likely to suffer misunderstanding because of their not sharing a common cultural background. In conclusion, to create a productive team-taught lesson for the students, the AET, the JTE and the student need to be aware of these different expectations and behaviours amongst them. For that to happen, thorough communication between team teachers will be vital. Referring to the ten categories identified by Freeman, which must be considered when setting up team-teaching, in order to play down both cultural and basic individual misunderstandings, the following factors will be very important:

(1) The role and status of the teacher;
(2) The relation between the staff and the student;
(3) Methods of teaching;
(4) Use of resources, including space.

In addition, I believe it is also vital for both the team teachers to understand the students, both as individuals and as a group. This is especially important in the case of Japan where people tend to act differently when in a group and on their own.

(4) Students

According to Warwick(1971:29), team teaching takes as its starting point the needs of the pupils. Since team-teaching stresses its concern with "developing the potentialities of the individual pupils" (Freeman, 1969:16), it is very important to focus on what the students expect from team-teaching. Since the Japanese people have a tendency to orient themselves into an organisation in order to define themselves, as seen from the example of the 'Gonin-gumi' system, in order to operate a lesson effectively teachers and the school have to regard learners as a group, and their behaviour patterns and values have to be seen within the wider culture. Furthermore, this 'learner as a group' factor will be a determinant in deciding the classroom atmosphere, and thus it gives teachers a clue towards finding a suitable type of interaction between the students. Lastly, as regards the strength of the JET program, according to the Monbusho questionnaire, there were very few responses from the students to the question "Do you enjoy the team taught lessons with the JTE and AET?"
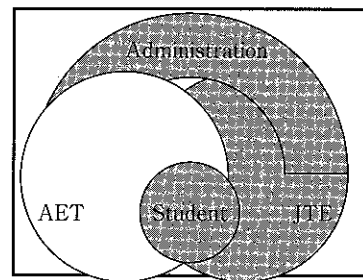
① ▨ Japanese Culture   ② ☐ Culture of the AET

Figure B, "Model for Ideal Team-Taught lesson"

Conclusion

Keeping these four factors in mind, the ideal team-teaching style in the JET program is one where both the JTE and the

AET have equal power and pool the same amount of resources into the lesson[1]. Although both team teachers are influenced by Japanese culture, ideally this style of team-teaching should give students the opportunity to have access to both teachers' cultures. Also, the lesson should be organised in such a way as to respond to the needs of the students. Lastly, as regards the administration, although there is an underlying influence from the side of the administration this should not exceed that of the teachers. This is because, since the teachers are the ones who have direct contact with the students, they are the nearest to the needs of the students. Too many restrictions by the administration will weaken the greatest strength of team-teaching which is its flexibility. However, that does not mean that total freedom should be given to the teachers. Despite the fact that there are some able teachers who can make maximum use of the system, it is often the case that many teachers are confused about how to deal with this unconventional and newly introduced teaching style It will increase the workload of the teachers while at the same time many of the AETs are in the position of being under-worked. We should also think about this balance concerning the workload of the two.

[1]See *figure B.*

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