

Team Teaching and its Possible Effects on Student Attitudes and Motivation

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Introduction

This paper reports the results of classroom research designed to pilot questionnaires attempting to measure the effects of team teaching on secondary school students' attitudes and motivation. Two questionnaires were administered, one at the beginning of the term, the second at the end of the term. The interim consisted of team taught lessons once a week. These team taught classes were centered on the textbook's target language as well as basic grammar and vocabulary review. The results of the two questionnaires will be analyzed and compared; some conclusions about the possible effects team teaching with a native speaker has on students' attitudes and motivation will be drawn.

It is the assumption of teachers everywhere that attitudes and motivation affect learning. The folk wisdom is that students who evince positive attitudes and high levels of motivation are better learners. In this area of language learning where emotional factors interact with cognitive ones, the research would seem to back up the intuitions of teachers (see, for example, Gardner and Lambert, 1979).

The foreign language classrooms of Japanese secondary schools are experiencing some important changes now. Among these are revised textbooks, new guidelines from the Ministry of Education, the induction of new teachers more familiar with communicative approaches to FLT, and the placement of native speaker Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in secondary schools nationwide.

Thousands of ALTs are dispersed throughout the country, living in Japanese communities and team teaching in schools. By far the single largest group are participants in the JET Program. It has been said repeatedly by the overseers and advisors of the program that even if ALTs do not

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make effective language teachers they still will have an effect on FL education and an impact on internationalization at the local level. By placing thousands of foreigners in communities and schools all over the country--places where very few foreigners have been let alone worked and lived--the JET Program (and similar, smaller-scale work schemes) must be having an effect on Japanese education and local life. But just what sort of effect or effects are taking place? Does such exchange exert a positive force in the lives of the participants?

The one place where it is hoped that the ALT will have a pronounced but positive effect is the secondary FL classroom. Quite a bit has been written about the cross-cultural, cross-linguistic interaction of Japanese teachers and ALTs and the problems that arise during the process of team teaching. ALTs have also produced a quantity of anecdotes and reminiscences about their personal experiences in Japanese schools and classrooms. And experienced team teachers have had much to say about effective ways to team teach a foreign language to Japanese students. But what do Japanese students think about the team teaching experience? Is it useful to them in their personal development as students of a foreign language? Are they enjoying learning English any more because ALTs come to their classes?

Iwami (1992) reports that college preparatory senior high school students gave positive responses in a questionnaire evaluating team teaching. According to Brown (1993), commercial high school students responded in an overwhelmingly positive way to a supplementary, content-based *Kadaikenkyu* course taught solely by the ALT. And Thomas (1993) relates how a college preparatory senior high communication course in which debating skills were team taught produced an overall positive effect on students' attitudes toward and confidence in using English. The current study was designed to find out if a more general form of team teaching also could have a positive impact on students' attitudes and motivation toward learning English and engaging in cross-cultural interaction.

Description of School, Class and Students

Participants in the study are second year, general

education (*Futsuka*) students at Fukui Senior High School. (Fukui S.H.S. is affiliated with Fukui University of Technology and acts as a feeder school for the university; its students attend courses with one of three focuses: vocational, general education, and college preparatory.) The study's students receive five English classes per week. Three of the periods are traditional reading and grammar classes using the textbook *New Creative English II* (Hasumi et al., 1992). The other two comprise the communication component and use a conversation textbook, *New English Master Junior Course Vol. I* (Turney & Miller, 1992). Participants in the study are all in the same class; the total number of students in the class is thirty-seven, with nine girls and twenty-eight boys.

The Classroom Research Procedure

At the beginning of the Term II (September - December), the first questionnaire was administered to the class. The native speaker ALT was not present in the classroom at the time. The questionnaires were completed anonymously; no efforts were made to track individual responses. Such steps were taken to assure students that their most frank views were desired and that their individual responses would not be identified.

The first questionnaire (see Appendix A) consisted of forty-one questions, most of them closed with some open-ended. (For reasons of space, the open-ended questions of both questionnaires and their results have been omitted from this report.) The questions were designed to obtain a snapshot profile of the group's overall attitudes toward and level of motivation for learning English and interacting with a foreigner. In order to avoid difficulties in comprehension, the questionnaire was administered in Japanese.

The results of the first questionnaire contain a few surprises. Unsurprisingly the students overall expressed a low level of interest and motivation toward English (a requirement) [see 6, 10]. They also indicated that they have a rather low self-image in terms of their FL learning [7]. Unexpected, however, was the level of frustration many of the students said that they felt as a result of their lack of

progress [9]. Another unanticipated result was that thirteen respondents felt that grammar was their weakest point, and ten indicated that speaking was their strongest [12, 13]. Perhaps another unusual result was the large number of students who said they felt perturbed when speaking with a foreigner because the interlocutor cannot or will not speak Japanese [18]. Also, the ALT was surprised to learn that the students held a rather lukewarm interest in western cultures (such as the U.S. or U.K.) [23-24]. Finally, based on the responses to questions 29 and 30, it is safe to conclude that most of the students held a positive attitude toward team taught classes, notwithstanding their indifference to (or even dislike of) English study and their low self-image as FL learners.

The interim consisted of once weekly team taught classes. The results of the first questionnaire were used to guide the subsequent team teaching. Because students had expressed a preference for games and activities, games that required group competition were frequently used. The games were planned to practice structures and vocabulary that either correlated with the textbook lessons or reviewed/revised/recycled structures and vocabulary expected of second year high school students. Three books proved especially useful for planning such activities: *Play Games with English 1* (Granger, 1993), *Play Games with English 2* (Granger, 1993) and *Five-Minute Activities: A Resource Book of Short Activities* (Ur & Wright, 1992).

The follow-up questionnaire (see Appendix B) is comprised of seventeen questions, again a mix of closed and open-ended ones. It was administered during the last week of classes. Once again, the ALT was not present when students did the questionnaire. This questionnaire was written to give a slice of information that indicated about where the students were at in attitudes and motivation at the end of the semester. The intention was to track changes in the overall group. For this purpose, many of the questions in the second questionnaire can be correlated with the ones in the first.

The results of the second questionnaire would seem to indicate that the students attitudes and motivations changed

for the better. Given the high level of appreciation students had expressed for team taught classes and English practice games, some of this change might be attributed to the once weekly team teaching. For example, to the question at the beginning of the term, "How do you feel about studying English?", no students replied "I like it very much.", four said "I like it somewhat.", thirteen answered "I like it a little.", and seventeen chose "I hate it." However, at the end of the term, when asked "This term how did you feel about studying English?", four said that they liked it very much, nine that they liked it somewhat, fifteen that they liked it a little, and eight that they hated it. And if question 5 of the second survey is compared to question 10 of the first, as expressed by the students, there was an appreciable increase in motivation to learn English. Finally, the responses to question 9 of the second survey, if viewed in light of those to question 18 of the first one, would seem to indicate even the limited interaction of a team taught class with an ALT has a positive cross-cultural effect.

Conclusion

For a naturalistic approach to classroom research and inquiries about team teaching, questionnaires such as the ones piloted for this report prove ideal. They can be a valuable source of information about students' attitudes toward teachers, ALTs, and teaching materials. While perhaps clarifying the commonly felt link between having native speakers in the FL classroom and increased student interest, more importantly such research can guide future action for teacher and ALT training, syllabus and materials development, and lesson planning. For example, if a questionnaire indicates extreme student dissatisfaction with textbooks and textbook-based lessons, might not team teachers ask themselves if team teaching could be used to improve such lessons? Of course, questionnaires are only one source of information; moreover, the data collected from them should never be put into a narrow causal framework of interpretation. Also, questionnaires and classroom research must be catered to the situation. The conclusions drawn from this classroom study may not hold for classrooms in different

schools--for example, the so-called FACT (fisheries, agriculture, commercial and technical) vocational schools; and serious academic students might find team taught classes a distraction. Still, given the power of knowledge that such classroom research can give to the teachers, the ALTs, and the students involved, it can be wholeheartedly recommended.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire 1

1. How long have you been studying English?
 - a. 0-2 years (number of responses: 0)
 - b. 3-6 years (34)
 - c. more than 6 years (0)
2. Do you take English lessons outside of school?
 - a. yes (3)
 - b. no (31)
3. If yes, where?
 - a. at a *juku* (4)
 - b. at a language school (0)
 - c. with a private tutor (0)
 - d. other (0)

[Note: one no respondent circled answer a.]

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4. Do you do English self-study?
 - a. yes (0) b. no (34)
5. If yes, how?
 - a. books (1) b. books with tapes (0) c. language program on radio (0) d. language program on T.V. (0) e. other (0)

[Note: one no respondent circled answer a.]
6. How do you feel about studying English?
 - a. I like it very much. (0) b. I like it somewhat. (4)
 - c. I like it a little. (13) d. I hate it. (17)
7. How good are you at learning English?
 - a. very good (0) b. good (0) c. o.k. (7) d. bad (18)
 - e. very bad (9)
8. Up to this point, how much progress do you feel you have made in English?
 - a. a lot (0) b. some (2) c. a little (13)
 - d. negligible (15) e. none whatsoever (4)
9. Do you feel frustrated at the amount of progress you have made in English?
 - a. yes, very much (6) b. yes, somewhat (13)
 - c. yes, a little (10) d. no, not at all (5)
10. How high is your motivation level to learn English?
 - a. very high (0) b. high (1) c. so-so (13) d. low (18)
 - e. very low (2)
11. What is the most interesting thing about English class?
 - a. the teacher (1) b. the textbook (1) c. the ALT (26)
 - d. other (7)
12. What is the least interesting thing about English class?
 - a. the teacher (1) b. the textbook (27) c. the ALT (0)
 - d. other (6)
13. What is your strongest point at learning English?
 - a. grammar (1) b. translation (6) c. vocabulary (3)
 - d. reading (5) e. composition (2) f. listening (4)
 - g. speaking (10) h. other (3)
14. What is your weakest point?
 - a. grammar (13) b. translation (2) c. vocabulary (3)
 - d. reading (0) e. composition (10) f. listening (2)
 - g. speaking (4) h. other (0)
15. What skill would you most like to improve?
 - a. grammar (8) b. translation (5) c. vocabulary (2)
 - d. reading (1) e. composition (7) f. listening (3)

g. speaking (9) h. other (0)

[Note: one respondent gave two answers.]

16. Do you know any English-speaking foreigners personally?

a. yes (8) b. no (26)

17. How often are you required to speak English in order to communicate with a foreigner?

a. daily (2) b. very frequently (0) c. frequently (2)

d. occasionally (3) e. hardly ever (9) f. never (17)

[Note: one respondent gave no answer.]

18. How do you feel when you have to interact with an English-speaking foreigner?

a. extremely nervous and shy (5) b. a little nervous and shy (8)

c. a little perturbed because the foreigner can't or won't speak Japanese (14) d. no problem, like I'm talking with a Japanese person (5)

e. other (2)

19. Do you wish that you could interact more often with an English-speaking foreigner?

a. yes (16) b. no (18)

20. If yes, why?

a. because I'm interested in getting to know people from other cultures (3)

b. because I desire conversation practice (4)

c. both a and b (8) d. other (1)

21. Do you think that there are important, significant differences between Japanese and Americans preventing effective, comfortable cross-cultural communication?

a. yes (0) b. no (5) c. not sure (29)

22. Are there differences between Japanese and Britons?

a. yes (0) b. no (4) c. not sure (30)

23. How strongly do you identify with America, its culture, and things American?

a. strongly identify (3) b. identify somewhat (6)

c. identify a little (19) d. indifferent (6) e. dislike (0)

24. How strongly do you identify with Britain, its culture, and things British?

a. strongly identify (2) b. identify somewhat (7)

c. identify a little (17) d. indifferent (8)

25. Did you have classes with a native speaker at junior high school?

a. yes (31) b. no (3)

26. If yes, how often?

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- a. 1-2 times per week (17) b. 1-3 times per month (12)
c. 1-3 times per year (0) d. 1-3 times per year (1)
e. other (1)

27. Have you had such classes at senior high?

- a. yes (34) b. no (0)

28. If yes, how often?

- a. 1-2 times per week (34) b. 1-3 times per month (0)
c. 1-3 times per year (0) d. 1-3 times per year (0)
e. other (0)

29. Of the following, which do you prefer?

- a. English classes with JTE using Japanese only (3)
b. English classes with the JTE using a mix of Japanese and English (11) c. English classes with an ALT using English only (2) d. team taught classes with a mix of Japanese and English (17) e. team taught classes in English only (0)

[Note: one respondent gave no answer.]

30. How often would you like to participate in team-taught classes?

- a. all classes with just the JTE (2) b. most classes with just the JTE (9) c. most classes team taught (16)
d. all classes team taught (4) [Note: 3 no response]

31. Do you plan to study English beyond senior high?

- a. yes (17) b. (17)

32. If yes, why? (You may give more than one reason.)

- a. because it is required at the *senmon gakkou*, college, or university (14) b. because I enjoy learning it and about other cultures (2) c. because I will need it for overseas travel (3) d. because I will need it for my career (1) e. other (1)

33. Do you feel that you are an internationalized person?

- a. very much (1) b. somewhat (0) c. a little (5)
d. not at all (29)

Appendix B: Questionnaire 2

1. This term, how did you feel about studying English?

- a. I liked it very much. (2) b. I liked it somewhat. (9)
c. I liked it a little. (15) c. I hated it. (8)

2. This term, how did you feel about team taught classes?

- a. I liked them very much. (2) b. I liked them somewhat. (14)
c. I liked them a little. (14) c. I hated them. (4)

3. Of the following, which did you prefer this term:

- a. English classes with the JTE (5) b. English classes with the ALT (27) [Note: 2 no response]
4. Would you like team taught classes
- a. more often (8) b. the same as this term [1/week] (20)
c. less often (4) [Note: 2 no response]
5. How high is your motivation level to learn English?
- a. very high (0) b. high (1) c. so-so (19) d. low (11)
e. very low (3)
6. What was the most interesting thing about English classes this term?
- a. the JTE (1) b. the textbook (1) c. the native speaker (14)
d. the activities in the team taught classes (15)
e. other (2) [Note: 1 no response]
7. What was the least interesting thing?
- a. the JTE (3) b. the textbook (28) c. the ALT (1)
d. the activities in the team taught class (0)
e. other (0) [Note: 1 no response]
8. How much interaction did you get with the ALT?
- a. a lot (0) b. some (1) c. only a little (23)
d. none or next to none (9) [Note: 1 no response]
9. How did you feel when you had to interact with the ALT?
- a. extremely nervous and shy (2) b. a little nervous and shy (16)
c. a little perturbed because he wanted me to speak English (9)
d. no problem like talking with a Japanese person (6) e. other (0) [Note: 1 no response]
10. Do you wish you could have interacted with the ALT more?
- a. yes (27) b. no (7)
11. If yes, why?
- a. because I wanted to know the ALT personally (5) b. because I wanted to know more about US culture (8)
c. because I wanted to practice my English (6) d. other (8)
12. Did you experience any cross-cultural problem when you interacted with the ALT?
- a. yes (0) b. no (10) c. not sure (24)
13. How strong is your identification with America, its culture, and things American?
- a. strongly identify (3) b. identify somewhat (9) c. identify a little (13)
d. indifferent (4) e. dislike (2)
[Note: 3 no response]

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