The Study of Team Teaching in English Education to Second Language Learners

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Abstract

This paper is written primarily for the English teaching staff at the Toyota National College of Technology (Toyota Kosen) to examine team teaching at several institutions for higher education. The system of team teaching at Toyota National College of Technology and other team teaching systems that are being practiced by Nagoya Women's University, Okazaki Women's Junior College, Nagoya Institute of Technology, Fujita Health University, and Nagoya Communication Arts Junior College will be discussed. Information will also be shared about programs presently being used at Chukyo University and Yokohama City University. It is hoped we can improve by comparing and learning from what others are doing.

1. Definitions of technical terms

1.1 Definitions of teach

The MacMillan Essential Dictionary for learners of American English defines “teach” as “1 to help students to learn something in a school, college, or university by giving classes 2 to help someone to learn a skill by showing them how to do it 3 to change the way that someone behaves or the way that someone thinks or feels about something”.

1.2 Definitions of team

In the same dictionary “team” is defined as “1 a group of people who play a sport or game against another group 2 a group of people who work together”.

1.3 Comparison of teams

A team when dealing with sports can be any number of people both actively involved in the game or behind the scenes taking care of tasks that are vital but not seen by the casual observer. With the game of tennis one or two players are on the court at the same time. In baseball there are nine players on the field at the same time. Both baseball and tennis are sports but both have different rules, uniforms, techniques, and specific

sets. Team teaching will differ as the number of teachers, number of students, teaching methods and material change.

1.4 Skills

There are certain skills that are necessary in all sports, and certain skills are more important in one sport than another. Team teaching in the English classroom will have general ideas and practices that are applicable to all team teaching situations; and some drills and exercises that are designed specifically for English language students, and more specifically for certain skills. It is important for the team to know the game, the players, the strengths necessary to create a team capable of winning, and how to work effectively with the other teachers in this endeavor.

2. In the classroom

2.1 What is the team?

In teaching with a partner or partners I would argue that no two teams are exactly the same. Every teacher has a style or styles that are found to have worked best for him or her. Do your methods enhance the teaching of the other partners’ or are they not complementary? If problems exist or develop are there ways to solve the situation as quickly and efficiently as possible? More importantly are the members of the team willing to work together to solve the problems that develop? Have the members of the team worked in team teaching
situations before? How do the teachers feel about team teaching? Naturally the more open the members are to working with others, the better the team will be. The more individualistic and inflexible the teachers are the more difficult it will be to work together.

2.2 Learn from experience

Have the members of the team worked in team-teaching situations in the past? If so, how did it go? What were the problems and challenges they encountered? What went better than expected? Do the team members know other people who have been involved in teams who can give advice for what worked for them? What are other schools doing? Is it working well or not?

2.3 Teaching with one partner

For the idea of team teaching there must be more than one teacher involved in the instruction. With one other teacher all the designing of programs, execution of plans, evaluation of participants, and the evaluation of the program must be performed by one or both of you.

2.4 Teaching with more than one partner

More teachers means less work for each team member and a need for more communication between team members. It may or may not be an easier situation than teaching with two teachers. There is an old saying that too many cooks spoils the broth.

2.5 Who is in charge?

In a teaching situation with two teachers, where one teacher is full time and the other is part time, I think that it is reasonable to assume that the part time teacher is subservient to the full time teacher with the exception of leader. The JET program is a good example of this situation. The Japanese teacher is a full time teacher at the school and the foreign teacher is the assistant English teacher. In the JET program, both the full time teacher and the part time teacher are in the classroom at the same time. They are both teaching the same students at the same time when they are together. When the AET is not present there is not a team teaching situation. The Japanese teacher may ideally tell the AET what has happened in the class in the last few lessons so the instruction or review with both teachers in the classroom can take place with the same pace that has been set. What happens in the classroom depends upon how the team is organized.

2.6 Textbooks

What text or texts are to be used? Who decides the text? How often are other books considered? Can each teacher use a text they like or is there a limit to how many texts can be used?

2.7 Materials

What materials, if any are available for use in the classroom? Is there a budget for such materials? Who decides how the budget is to be spent?

2.8 Pacing

Are all teachers going to teach at the same pace? If parts of the book are to be skipped by one or more teachers is it necessary to inform the other teachers what material is not going to be covered and why? Is there a set of time when this communication should happen between the teachers?

2.9 Review of material

If the selection of materials were such that the students are using the same book with each teacher, and the teachers were going at the same pace, there would be quick repetition of the material. On the other hand, if the teachers involved were to use the book in an order which differs from each other, the material would be introduced by one teacher and then repeated and reviewed by another teacher at another time.

2.10 Material selection

How is the material that will be used in the classroom selected? Do the partners decide in the selection of the material or is the material chosen by someone else? If the material is selected by the team, do all team members work equally in evaluating the choices or is the responsibility of one or more members of the group?

2.11 Division of responsibility

Who is responsible for what? Do all teachers teach the same material? Give individual tests? Design their own program? Or is the job divided among the teachers?

2.12 Communication between team members

Several questions should be answered in a team teaching situation regarding communication. They are:

How much communication is expected between team members?

How often should team members communicate?

Are there channels for both regular communication and emergency communication?

2.13 Methods of communication between team members

Will teachers have regularly scheduled meetings? Will teachers speak to each other directly or rely on email, send
faxes, make phone calls, leave notes in mailboxes, or a
combination of the above?

2.14 Availability

Are the teachers full-time at the school, part-time at the
school, or a combination of the two? How available are the
teachers for meetings? When should meetings be scheduled?
How often will meetings take place? Must all teachers attend
all meetings?

2.15 Grading

How are the grades to be determined? How important are one
teacher’s evaluations of the students compared to another.
Are classes evaluated in addition to the individual students?

2.16 Evaluations

Do the students evaluate the individual teachers? Is there an
evaluation for the team? Do students evaluate teachers and the
team?

2.17 Attendance

What part of the grade will attendance account for? Is this
figure the same for all teachers?

2.18 Participation

Is attendance alone sufficient for credit? If participation is
also necessary what constitutes participation? Participation in
writing class is different from participation in speaking class.

2.19 Homework

How much homework will be assigned? How will it be
incorporated into the overall grade? Should all teachers assign
homework or should each teacher be allowed to determine how
much homework, if any, is necessary.

2.20 Individual work

How much work should be assigned to students to be done
individually? What percentage of the grade should be placed on
individual work?

2.21 Group work

How much work should be assigned to groups to be done
with other students? What percentage of the grade should be
placed on group work?

2.22 Testing

Is there one test for all students to take inclusive of all
learning or does each teacher make one test? Which teacher
should make the test? Who should grade the test? What
percentage of the final grade does the test represent?

2.23 Four skills

Generally speaking there are four skills in the language
classroom. They are speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
In the interest of all parties it should be determined what skills
are being taught in the course and how grading and testing will
be handled and by which of the teachers or all teachers together.

2.24 Lesson plans

Who is responsible for the design of the lesson plans? Is there
one lesson plan for each lesson, or unit? Are the lesson plans
distributed to the other teachers? If so how far in advance does
this happen? What if one or more teachers do not like to use
lesson plans, or have their lesson plans given to the other
teachers?

2.25 Syllabus

Who is responsible for the design of the syllabus? Is there
one syllabus for the entire course or does each teacher decide
on the syllabus for the material they are covering?

3 Case study

3.1 Toyota National College of Technology

The system of team teaching for English education presently
being used at Toyota National College of Technology is
inclusive for all first year students in all disciplines. Every
Thursday morning all first year students have compulsory
English education classes. The English classes for first year
students are taught by a team of seven teachers. The four full
time teachers are Japanese nationals and the three part-time
teachers are from Native English speaking countries, this year
America, Canada, and England. The part time Native English
speaking teachers only teach first year students. The textbook
in the classes taught by the Native Instructors is SIDE by SIDE
Book I with the accompanying workbook. The students are
also required to purchase other textbooks and a dictionary but
these books are not used in the classes taught by the native
speakers.

There are five disciplines at Toyota National College of
Technology: Electrical Engineering, Civil Engineering,
Architecture, Mechanical Engineering, and Information
Technology with each class being represented by a letter, E, C,
A, M, and I respectively.

On Thursday for the first half of the year the classes meet in
the above alphabetical order while the second half of the year
the order reverses and the classes are taught in the I, M, A, C, E
order. The A class is always at the same time throughout the
academic year.

In the case of English instruction with the foreign teacher
each discipline is divided into three groups with each group
go to a separate classroom to be taught by one of the three
native speakers of English. The classes are taught by the native
teacher for half of the lesson and for half of the lesson they are taught by a Japanese English instructor in the language lab. The students are divided numerically according to their order on the attendance sheet. The first student and then all students who fall third in position from the first name on the list, the second student and all following students who fall third in position from the second name on the list, and the third student and all following students who fall third in position from the third name on the list. Each teacher is responsible for lesson planning, pacing, and testing.

The foreign teachers are present at the school for nineteen or twenty Thursdays a year. All teaching and testing takes place on these designated days. The foreign teacher does not test the students during the set mid-term and final testing time for other classes.

The contract with the foreign teacher is for one academic year. Acceptable performance normally results in successful teachers being asked back for another year.

Attendance and grades are submitted at the end of each semester. These are submitted to a designated Japanese teacher who is responsible for the final grading of each student using input from both the Japanese and Foreign teacher.

There are no set meetings. The control room of the language lab is the area where the part-time English teachers have access to coffee, chairs, and air conditioning in the warm weather and heat in cold weather. The attendance book for the part-time teachers is left in this room. Every part time teacher must circle the classes he taught during the day he is present and sign his name.

There is a room for all part-time teachers to use on the second floor of the same building the language lab is located in, however, the English teachers stay in the control room.

The Side by Side 1 Teacher book, a student book, and the workbook are provided to each teacher. This year a copy of the testing program book was requested and provided for use by the teachers who chose to use it. Longman recently added this book to the material available for use by teachers using SIDE by SIDE Book1.

3.2 Nagoya Women's University

Nagoya Women's University has more than a dozen part-time English teachers working at the campus in Mizuho ward in Nagoya city. There is no set day for all English instruction. The majority of the English classes at Nagoya Women's University are taught by one teacher. This teacher is responsible for lesson planning, text selection, evaluation, and grading. There are some classes that are team taught. This definition of team is two teachers using the same materials or mostly the same materials. Here "mostly the same materials" refers to the teacher being allowed to use an extra book in the lessons if they think the main text can be supplemented or improved upon. I know of one instance when the chosen text for team teaching was Viva San Francisco! by MacMillan LanguageHouse. This book and video series incorporate a considerable amount of video into the lesson. One teacher in a team decided he would also use Passport by Oxford University Press. This selection complemented the goals of the lesson for travel English by allowing for more pair work in the classroom. This class met twice a week. Both teachers followed a similar syllabus and submitted grades for the classes they taught. Perhaps this class counted at two classes for English education as the class met twice as often as the other English classes.

Each teacher has a mailbox in the teacher's room. This room is next to the administration room and has the official attendance book that must be signed every day. There are also chairs and a tables and a drink machine that has both water and green tea.

At Nagoya Women's University all part-time teachers have a mailbox in the part-time teacher's room. Teachers are given a teacher's book, book, and workbook of the material they have selected for use in their classes.

3.3 Okazaki Women's Junior College

Okazaki Women's Junior College has two part time English teachers who are responsible for teaching classes for regular students and open college classes at the school and at selected areas outside the campus. There is one full time English teacher at the school. The part time teachers each have a mailbox in the mailbox area outside the administration office. There is a teacher's room next to the administration office where there are tables and chairs and the attendance book that must be signed everyday.

Each teacher is responsible for text selection, lesson planning, evaluation, and grading. There is only one teacher in the classroom at a time. Recently one teacher had an excessive number of students sign up for a class. There were more students than seats available. Another teacher took some of the students from this large class and added them to his smaller class. The students who were studying English were a team and one of the teachers recognized a need to help another teacher and help the team. The English instruction is much easier with two medium teams than with one big team and one small team.
All grading is performed by the teacher who is teaching the English class.

3.4 Nagoya Institute of Technology

Nagoya Institute of Technology has both full time and part time teachers working together to provide English instruction for their students. The English program includes both compulsory classes where the book is chosen for the teacher and compulsory classes where the text is decided by the teacher. There is one teacher in the classroom at a time. One interesting twist on team teaching is having the students take a class one semester with one teacher and then taking another class the next semester with another teacher. Half of the students take Technical English for one semester with a text decided by the school while the other half of the students take a class called Media English with the text decided by the individual teacher. Actually in the Media English class the teacher has the option of using materials from newspapers or magazines and not using a text.

There are two teachers who are presently using the same text in the Media English class. They have spoken about the possibility of having an activity or activities where both classes are studying the same material at the same time. If this happens then there is the possibility of combining the classes and having individual work, pair-work, group work or class work that is either seen or performed with or judged or graded by people from the other class. This idea is not limited to this one situation. Anytime there are teachers using the same material at the same time there is the possibility of expanding upon the normal confines of the teaching situation. By thinking of team and teaching you can try new ideas or make old ideas more interesting.

3.5 Fujita Health University.

Fujita Health University is attached to Fujita hospital in Toyoake city and is involved in the education of nurses and doctors. The English instruction of the medical students in the school is presently being taught by six part-time Foreign teachers on Monday morning. The material is selected by each individual teacher with the lesson planning and grading also done by each teacher. With one exception all of the English teaching is done by one teacher per class. Two years ago one teacher set up a team teaching program where a native teacher designed the program and selected the text and made the final test. This teacher taught the first half of the ninety minute class and then had a Japanese assistant teach the second half of the class. The native speaker who set up the team teaching program was an experienced teacher who had previously taught at Fujita Health University. The administration was presented with the idea and allowed the teacher to proceed.

The teachers are given the teacher’s book and a copy of the book they have chosen to use in the classroom. The teachers do not have mailboxes. There is a table in the administration area where the attendance book is located. At this institution there is also a book in which the teacher writes a basic summary of what is to be taught in the class.

3.6 Nagoya Communication Arts Junior College

The Nagoya Communication Arts Junior College is located in Sakae in Nagoya. They are involved in the instruction of musicians, computer animators, and veterinarians. The English education is subcontracted to a company in Osaka that has many contracts with similar institutions throughout Japan. The subcontracted company is responsible for both text selection and making the test. All of the schools they have a contract with use the book Get Real 1 by MacMillan. Regardless of the English ability of the students, they all use the same book. The teacher is responsible for teaching the material and administering and grading the test. At the Nagoya location there is a desk for the English teachers to use in the administration room. There is one full time teacher of English and several part-time teachers. As employees of the subcontracted company, they do not have any official contact with the staff at the Nagoya Communication Arts Junior College. If all of the students of a class are taking a trip to America, and they tell the English teacher this fact, the English teacher can not just skip going to work that day. Unless he hears the official word from the office in Osaka, he must go to the classroom and sit in an empty class. Even if the teacher calls the office in Osaka and tells them what he was told, he must go to the empty room and sit. The reason this happens is because the official contact person at the Nagoya office was on a trip and was not able to “officially” confirm that the class was not going to be held.

3.7 Chukyo University

There is a program at Chukyo University where part time teachers are paid to sit in a common area as resource to be used by the students. The belief is that full time teachers are in their offices with the door shut and have meetings to attend and reports to write, so therefore the part time teacher sitting on a couch will allow the students access to a native speaker for questions and answers or conversation practice. It may be coincidence, but the level of the English and confidence
students have in their abilities is so great now that one problem
this system has created is that many of the upper level students
are taking the option of studying overseas for a semester or two.

3.8 Yokohama City University.
Mark Furr of Yokohama City University recently gave a
presentation on graded readers in Nagoya. He has set us a
system where groups of students work together while using
graded readers. Each student in every group has a part to play
in the discussion that takes place every class. It is vital that
every student contribute to every lesson. Since the introduction
of the program, attendance has increased, the amount of
speaking and listening in every group in every class has gone
up, and if a student can not make it to a lesson, he is
responsible to the group and makes sure the information the
group needs is there for them.

4. Summary.
It is hoped that the information in this paper gave the reader
an idea of how team teaching is being used in certain schools in
Japan. It could be argued that there are more ways of team
teaching than there are teachers as each team teaching situation
is unique and each person brings something different to the
team teaching arena. There is definitely a need for more
research and writing to be done on the topic of team teaching.