
Team Teaching: Kahny et al.

Six Aspects of a Successful Team Teaching Program

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Over the past several years, there has been an effort on the part of Japanese institutions to "internationalize" by introducing foreign instructors into the classroom in various team teaching programs, including the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. As part of this trend, the Language Institute of Japan (LIOJ) in Odawara was asked by the local Board of Education to implement a junior high team teaching project in 1988.

The Board of Education requested that students develop cultural awareness of other countries through the medium of English, and that classes be unique in execution and conducted differently from existing programs which focus on text-based language training, such as the JET Program. LIOJ felt that these goals met with its own philosophy of developing individuals, both students and teachers, using English as a means to promote greater cultural awareness and sensitivity. The Odawara City Junior High School International Understanding Program started in 1988 with one school and has expanded over the years to presently include seven schools.¹

The procedure followed by LIOJ is but one of many ways of administering a team teaching project. This article describes six important points which most contribute to the success of the program, factors which may be applicable to the JET Program and other team-teaching projects. They are:

- I. a comprehensive manual describing the program
- II. established lesson plans based on an interactive philosophy
- III. the principle of equal participation by teachers
- IV. scheduled time for lesson preparation ("open period")
- V. a system of class observation and teacher development
- VI. concentration on junior high first grade

I. Program Manual

During the third year of the program, teachers and administrators felt the time had come to clarify policy and existing procedures. A team of LIOJ staff, including both teachers and administrators, worked together to compile what eventually became the comprehensive team teaching manual for the program.

The first draft was submitted to participating schools and the City Board of Education for their suggestions and, after revision, meetings were scheduled at each school to go over the manual in detail. In addition to a description of the program's history and goals, the

manual includes general policy for the following areas:

- conditions for participation
- team teaching philosophy
- expectations for schools
- orientation for students
- teaching schedules
- lesson plans
- scheduled time for lesson preparation
- classroom management
- disciplinary procedures

The manual is updated as circumstances change in the program from year to year. It has been a valuable tool for unifying the expectations of LIOJ, the Board of Education, and participating schools, and for codifying the important issues involved in the program.

II. Lesson Plans

The team teaching manual describes LIOJ's lesson plan philosophy. The goals of the program—inter-cultural, linguistic, communicative, and behavioral—are to be accomplished through interactive lesson plans. Basic lesson plan principles are explained, including the specific goals for a lesson, the stages of the lesson (input, reinforcement, application), and other aspects of lesson planning (e.g. progression from group to individual, from listening to speaking).

When the program was conceived by the Board of Education and LIOJ, it was decided that, while the course should use the medium of English to develop cultural awareness of other countries, it should not focus on text-based language training. The use of textbooks in International Understanding classes has never been a requirement and, hence, teachers have the freedom to create lessons which meet the goals of the program rather than cover specific material or prepare students for an exam. Cultural awareness in students can be developed through such activities as board games, international music, and cultural information quizzes. International Understanding lesson plans, however, frequently incorporate linguistic material (grammar, vocabulary) from the *Mombusho* text and build on the English that the students are learning in their regular English classes. The lesson plans are cross-referenced with the school textbook should the Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) wish to connect the material to what they are doing in their regular English classes.

LIOJ teachers have assumed the responsibility of planning lessons and creating necessary classroom materials. However, JTEs' input in this process is actively solicited. A set of field-tested lesson plans is

distributed to each school at the beginning of the academic year. After four introductory lessons, JTEs select which lessons they would like to team teach from among those on file. Once taught, LIOJ teachers and JTEs discuss and revise the plans. JTEs seem to appreciate the fact that the bulk of the responsibility for planning International Understanding classes is not on their shoulders.

III. Equal Participation of Teachers

Although LIOJ teachers are primarily responsible for preparing lessons and materials, once in the classroom, instructional style is based on the philosophy of equal participation of both teachers. Roles are not prescribed in the plans. Prior to the lesson, the two teachers decide on which responsibilities they will assume for each activity in the plan. There is no task—be it pronunciation, explanation, class management, and so on—which is strictly the domain of one teacher or the other.

Team-taught classes should be enjoyable for teachers and students alike and enjoyment is enhanced if everyone is involved. The team teaching manual describes the optimal approach to team teaching as the "interactive approach," in which both teachers share meaningful roles. Furthermore, there is active participation not only between the JTE and LIOJ teacher, but also with and between students. The concept of equal participation is key to one of the program's behavioral goals, that is, that any Japanese learner can interact comfortably in English with a person from another culture. The JTE, by interacting comfortably with the LIOJ teacher, serves as a positive role model for the students. The message received is: "If *sensei* can do it, I can too!"

IV. Open Periods

In order to have interactive classes in which both teachers are equal partners, thorough preparation is needed. To facilitate this, a full school period (usually second period) is scheduled for JTEs and LIOJ teachers to meet before classes (usually third, fourth, and sometimes fifth periods). Prior to the scheduling of this "open period", both teachers were required to find a mutually convenient time to meet. This was often difficult.

By scheduling the open period for the JTE and the LIOJ teacher, the City Board of Education has officially acknowledged the fact that lesson preparation for two teachers takes time and should be scheduled during the school period immediately prior to the team taught classes. During the open period, the teachers have the chance to thoroughly discuss the day's plan and the responsibilities each will assume. They also have the chance to develop their professional and personal relationships.

The team teaching manual outlines, in order of priority, how open periods should be used. The first three uses are:

- to review the day's plan to both teachers' satisfaction
- to preview the following week's plan to both teachers' satisfaction
- to prepare additional materials for International Understanding classes

When the above steps have been completed, the open period can be used for LIOJ teachers to interact with students and non-JTE staff, or for LIOJ teachers to attend school assemblies. Alternate proposals for use of the open period are welcome if arranged in advance.

JTEs and LIOJ teachers have clear guidelines to follow for the use of their scheduled time together. This is appreciated by both parties. In addition, the LIOJ teacher is free from the stress of not having a defined role.²

V. Observation and Training

One of the strong points of the International Understanding Program has been its continuity. During orientation, new LIOJ teachers are able to observe experienced teachers and, thus, feel more confident when they begin teaching with their JTE partners. Japanese and Western education systems are quite different and this "easing in" period allows LIOJ teachers to observe, discuss, and assimilate the differences. The trainee also has a chance to observe the interaction between team teachers, students, and between teachers and students.

There are also frequent opportunities during the school year for LIOJ teachers to observe other International Understanding classes and provide feedback to their colleagues. A teacher can get new ideas, inspiration, and reassurance from seeing another's approach.

Likewise, JTEs who have been associated with the program over a period of time can orient new JTEs to the program, thereby maintaining continuity on both sides. Perhaps due in part to the frequency with which LIOJ teachers observe each other's classes, there has been increasing acceptance among JTEs to observe their colleagues' classes as well. In addition, videotaping as a means of reflecting on the dynamics of team teaching has received widespread support.

There are advantages to being based at a language institute that has its own in-house program. Each term, LIOJ team teachers teach a class in the LIOJ Community Program for local residents, and are exposed to different curricula and techniques from which to gather ideas for team teaching classes. A variety of resources are available at the institute and LIOJ teachers can also share ideas with their in-house co-workers.

VI. First Grade

The final aspect which has influenced the success of the International Understanding Program is the fact that it is conducted mainly in first-year classes.³ In the early stages of the program, each school had its own schedule of different grades to teach. Once having taught all levels, both JTEs and LIOJ teachers came to the conclusion that it is easier to coordinate preparation, revision and train-

ing if the program focused on a single level. In addition, first-year students are the most receptive to a new, interactive classroom approach. English can be introduced as a means to communicate with people. Students become accustomed to English-only classes and participate wholeheartedly in activities using expressions such as *Pardon?* and *What does that mean?* when they do not understand. Concentrating on first grade has proven successful as instructors have been able to focus their efforts on creating lessons for that age and level. In addition, all public school students in the city will eventually have the chance to participate in the International Understanding Program.

Conclusion

The LIOJ Team-Teaching Program is by no means perfect. In a program of this nature involving so many people there is always potential for misunderstandings and differences of opinion. Still, a recent survey points to general student satisfaction⁴ and JTEs and LIOJ teachers have found the program mutually rewarding.

This success has been achieved by clarifying our policy in the manual, creating plans that teachers and students can participate in and enjoy, giving both teachers meaningful classroom roles, scheduling time for

teachers to meet, allowing for ongoing observation and training, and concentrating on younger students. While not all of these organizational principles may be suited to the various team teaching projects around the country, including JET, certain of them may prove beneficial in providing direction for a more positive, productive teaching experience for both JTEs and AETs in other team teaching programs.

Notes

- ¹Three LIOJ teachers and the program supervisor, working with Japanese teachers, cover a total of thirty five classes per week at the seven schools.
- ²This stress is described in Voci-Reed, E. (1991). Adjusting to life as an AET in a Japanese junior high school. *The Language Teacher*, 15 (12), 11-13.
- ³LIOJ teachers continue to do one-shot lessons in second and third grades.
- ⁴In a survey conducted at the end of the 1991-92 school year, 82% of all first-year students responded *yes* to the question, *Did you enjoy having a Japanese and non-Japanese teacher together in class?* 79% of all first-year students responded *yes* to the question, *Do you think next year's first-grade students should have team-teaching classes?*

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