

Mid-Year Conference

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Effective Team Teaching

Calvin and Hobbes by Bill Watterson



Hiroko Konno/Thomas Oliver

What is Team Teaching?

Team teaching can be defined as an educational strategy where a group of two or more teachers work together to plan, conduct and evaluate the learning activities for a group of learners. It is also referred to as co-teaching or collaborative teaching.

Team teaching (TT) started gaining prominence in the 1960s and the term now encompasses a wide variety of arrangements. However, the five most commonly recognized forms of TT are as follows:

- **Traditional TT** – Both teachers teach the target material and are actively involved in the whole class.
- **Complimentary/Supportive TT** – One teacher teaches the target material to the class and the other offers extension activities reinforcing the material.
- **Parallel Instruction** – The teachers divide the class into two (or more) groups and each teaches to one group.
- **Differential Split Class** – The teachers divide the class into groups based on ability and each teaches to one group focusing on their specific needs.
- **Monitoring Teacher Approach** – One teacher teaches the entire class while the other circulates and monitors student understanding and behavior.

Cultural Sensitivity

Communicating with co-workers within our own culture can be a challenging task. This same task can be even more challenging with a member of a completely different culture. Through JET, members of two different countries, and often cultures, are put together in the same classroom. In order for this approach to be successful, respect and communication is necessary. But if we're not careful, we can often make mistakes.

Beware of ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is the belief one's culture or ethnic group is superior. Also, to have a better understanding of our co-workers words or actions, try to keep in mind their perceptual frame of reference. All of us are a product of the culture and environment we were raised in. Below I have placed a few bullet points that were compiled directly from two different sources: Studies in Team Teaching and "Understanding Japanese Office Culture/Understanding JET". The following address is for the latter article.

<http://www.geocities.com/sendaialts/japaneseworkplace.html>

Western Office Culture

Individuality is valued

Assertiveness is encouraged

Frankness is a virtue

Japanese Office Culture

Group harmony is valued

Assertiveness is discouraged

Frankness is insensitive

Tacit Rule

It's natural to have clear cut rules in the workplace.

Most employees are from same background. Feel it is unnecessary to bind everything by rules.

Employment Length

It is common to develop our careers by changing positions a few times.

Too frequent job change is considered suspicious in Japan. "Life-time employment" is common.

Time Punctuality

Punctuality is valued, but it's not unusual for a person to be less mindful.

Very mindful of punctuality.

Learning

Exposed to creative and experimental teaching methods. Do not rely entirely on text teaching.

Japanese government has a very restricting hold over the Japanese education system. Education in Japanese schools is very regulated.

Parent/School Role

Parents provide love and discipline.

It is taken for granted that parents provide love to their children. Discipline is considered the responsibility of the school.

Suspensions are common.

Suspension is uncommon or non-existent.

Out of workplace get-togethers

Drinking with a colleague occurs but is not commonplace.

Drinking with colleagues is common. If you do not participate you may be considered unsociable or lack commitment to work well with others.

Hints & Tips

When it comes to team teaching there are no rules set in stone to make it successful. We all bring different styles and strengths to a team teaching classroom. We have to make it our duty to make the relationship work so ultimately the students do not suffer. Below are a few general hints/tips that may help us stay on the right path. By no means is this a 'complete' list. As we learn and grow it is continually expanding.

Never take anything for granted; explicitly discuss everything.

Compromise: Discuss your teaching philosophies and targets for teaching and agree on how much time you will spend on different teaching styles.

Plan ahead: Make sure you are both aware of the upcoming syllabus, from the overall yearly schedule to term/monthly/weekly/daily plans and prepare accordingly.

Compliment each other: Work out your individual strengths and abilities and determine how these can be used to the best effect.

You have the power to invigorate, stimulate and inspire, so use it!

Of course we don't know everything so always have a dictionary on hand so you can try and answer students' questions. Get back to them with the correct answer if you do not know it at the time.

Use eye contact and signaling: Try to keep an eye on each other so that you can communicate when it is time to end/change/modify activities.

If only one of you needs to be at the front of the classroom, the other should walk around the classroom to help/keep students engaged.

It's important for the students to be exposed to English as a real communicative tool. At the very least give simple instructions or make short conversation together in English.

It can be very effective to let the students see the ALT as a language learner too. Speak some Japanese in lessons, let them laugh at your mistakes; it'll show the students that mistakes are acceptable.

Avoid immediate translation: This is extremely important. You will encourage the students to be passive if the English they hear is immediately translated into Japanese.

Have back-up: Always try to over-plan and if an activity is proving unsuccessful, move on to your back-up plan. If it's not needed, you can always use it another time.

Evaluate: Even if it's just on the way back to the staffroom, always try to discuss in which ways your lesson was successful and how you could improve it next time.

Share the workload: Decide which of you will do what when planning, teaching and evaluating. For example, JTE sets tests, ALT corrects free composition etc.

As we have been told before, "every case is different" so there is no 'correct' way of team teaching. It is up to both of you to find a balance which suits your TT partnership.

Last but not least, least but not last: Ideally, you and your TT partner will have a trusting and open relationship but of course in reality there are some unfortunate cases where personal or cultural conflicts are unavoidable. However, these conflicts have no place within the classroom. Remain polite and respectful at all times as students will be quick to pick up on any tensions and may try to exploit them. Always remember, in the classroom, the most important people are the students. Set aside any personal difficulties and make teaching your number one priority.