

Some Problems in Team Teaching in Korean EFL Contexts and Their Solutions*

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Park, Honky & Lee, Heechul. (2015). Some Problems in Team Teaching in Korean EFL Contexts and Their Solutions. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 23(1), 91-105. This study first considers the definition and styles of team teaching and then its advantages and disadvantages. Next, it narrows the scope of its research to team teaching in English education in East Asia. Later, this study focuses on team teaching in Korea, describes two problems found in team teaching, and suggests solutions to them. First, there is confusion about the roles of team teachers, especially, of the NNEST (Non-Native English Speaking Teacher). Second, the classes taught by the NEST (Native English Speaking Teacher) is in incomplete integration with system-wide curriculum and so they lack in assessment as a part of teaching and learning procedures. This paper deals with suggestions on how to solve both of the problems.

Key Words: team teaching, English education, NNEST, NEST

1. Introduction

Team teaching between native English speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) has become a common feature in English education of the East Asia region (Carless, 2006b; Richards & Farrell, 2005). Brumby and Wada (1990) described team teaching as a concerted

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endeavor made jointly by NESTs and NNESTs by engaging in communicative activities in an English classroom. Examples of team teaching in the East Asia region include the Japanese Exchange and Teaching program (JET), which started in Japan in 1987, the English Program in Korea (EPIK), which started in Korea in 1996, and most recently the Primary Native-speaking English Teachers, which started in Hong Kong in 2000. This arrangement was introduced to East Asian countries because of "the input-poor environment where learners have little opportunity to hear or read the language outside or even inside the classroom" (Kourago, 1993, p.167).

Among these government funded programs, EPIK was launched in Korea with aims to "improve the English speaking abilities of students and teachers in Korea, to develop cultural exchanges, and to reform English teaching methodologies in Korea" (English Program in Korea, 2006). In recent years, research on issues of team teaching in Korea has tried to examine if team teaching is effective in teaching English, focusing on the reduction of anxiety, the increase of interest and motivation, and the improvement in students' skills of English (Cho, 2001; Kim, 2005; Kim, 2006; Kim *et al.*, 2008; Koh, 2000). Additionally, many studies have been devoted to the teachers, focusing on the importance of interpersonal skills and the confusion of roles in team-teachers in Korea (Kim, 2005; Kim *et al.*, 2008). However, as research suggests that team teaching is not as effective as it could be (Choi, 1998; Kim *et al.*, 2008), it is necessary to review teachers' participation as well as the practical problems of team teaching in Korea which prevent team teaching from being more effective for students' needs and wants (Tajino & Walker, 1998). This study will review team teaching in general, and then discuss team teaching with a specific focus on the Korean EFL context in order to answer the following questions:

- (1) What are the problems, if any, of team teaching carried out in Korean classrooms?
- (2) What would be solutions to the problems?

2. Literature Review

This section will deal with the definition and styles of team teaching on the one hand, and its advantages and disadvantages, on the other.

2.1. Definition and Styles

Davis (1995) offers a basic definition of team teaching: "All arrangements that include two or more faculty members in some level of collaboration in the planning and delivery of a course" (p.6). However, team teaching has been defined variously based on the number of people in a team, their functions in the team, or other circumstances of the team teaching organization (Anderson & Speck, 1998). For example, Buckley (2000) provided two definitions according to the number of teachers involved and their team work: "Team teaching involves a group of instructors working purposefully, regularly, and cooperatively to help a group of students learn" (p.4) and "all members of the team attend several or all of the class sessions to observe, interact, question, and learn" (p.5).

For the purpose of this paper, team teaching is confined to English education and the special arrangement of the NEST and the NNEST in the same class at the same time throughout the process of English teaching (Richards & Farrell, 2005). One specific form of team teaching in language teaching, which has become quite prevalent in East Asian countries, is having two teachers teaching simultaneously in a language classroom (Tajino & Walker, 1998). Specifically, team teaching in EPIK is defined as a process in which NESTs and NNESTs share almost equal responsibility in the teaching and learning process (Kim *et al.*, 2008).

Gotez (2000) divides team teaching styles into two different categories, A and B. Category A team teaching is where two or more instructors are teaching the same students at the same time within the same classroom. Category B team teaching is the case where the instructors work together but do not necessarily teach the same groups of students, nor necessarily teach at the same time (Gotez, 2000). Although team members share ideas and resources for team teaching, teachers function differently, lead classes independently, instruct different sub-groups within the whole group, or teach his/her own specialized

skills to the whole class (Gotez, 2000). Gotez (2000) also identifies the type of team teaching where one individual plans the instructional activities for the entire team due to time and financial constraints.

In the late 1950's, team teaching in English as a Second Language environments was adopted in immersion classrooms or bilingual classrooms where two teachers with different first languages were present in the classrooms (Sagliano & Greenfield, 1998). Afterward, this became more and more common in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environments in East Asian countries and East European countries (Benoit & Haugh, 2001; Carless, 2006a; Medgyes, 2001). Specifically, Richards and Farrell (2005) described this team teaching arrangement as "native/advanced speaker and less-proficient speaker" and "fluent, untrained native speaker and experienced non-native speaker" (p.163) in which the native/advanced speaker (NEST) teaches linguistically more demanding parts, and the untrained NEST is invited to team-teach with the experienced NNEST.

In Japan, NESTs were hired to help Japanese students develop better oral/aural communication skills in three programs: the Monbuso English Fellow and the British English Teaching Scheme in the late 1970's, and JET in 1987 (Tajino & Walker, 1998). NESTs were hired to teach alongside Japanese teachers of English. As NESTs were not allowed to acquire a Japanese teaching license, they were given the title of Assistant English Teachers (Tajino & Tajino, 2000). Consequently, the traditional team teaching situation was established with the Japanese teachers of English mainly responsible for the lesson planning, assessment, management, and evaluation (Tajino & Walker, 1998).

Like traditional team teaching in Japan, team teaching in Korea was also designed for both NESTs and NNESTs to teach together in the classroom. It had problems similar to those of JET, such as the insufficient qualifications of NESTs, the excessive teaching hours, and the insufficient training program (Choi, 1998).

The first large-scale project to import native English speaking teachers into Hong Kong secondary schools was launched in 1987 with 91 NESTs. Unlike the other two programs, the one in Hong Kong hired only trained and experienced NESTs (Carless, 2006b). Consequently, NESTs in Hong Kong were generally deployed as solo teachers in secondary schools. However, team teaching by the NEST and the NNEST was introduced to address specific problems such as low

student motivation and discipline problems in a solo teaching class by the NEST (Carless, 2006b).

Regardless of how team teaching is incorporated into NESTs' teaching, there may be advantages and disadvantages. Let us consider them in the next section.

2.2. Advantages and Disadvantages

After examining successful cases in JET, the Primary Native-speaking English Teachers and EPIK, Carless (2006b) summarized common positive outcomes. First of all, students give positive responses to team teaching as the programs aim to achieve their goals in the classroom practices. Students have lively and enjoyable classes by having more opportunities to listen and speak in the classroom (Carless, 2006b, p.350). Secondly, two teachers are so complementary to each other that group activities become more practical. Carless (2006b) notes that the teachers provide more support to the student in the team teaching classes as a model of learning by illustrating dialogue or question and answer routines in front of students. Thirdly, two teachers play their roles to each other's strengths as the NEST and the NNEST. The NEST has strengths in pronunciation, fluency, or cultural knowledge, while the NNEST has strengths in familiarity with syllabi and the examination system as well as with students' common difficulties (Carless, 2006b, p. 350).

Benoit and Haugh (2001) pointed out three disadvantages of team teaching between the NEST and the NNEST. Firstly, two teachers are so poorly trained to deliver a team teaching class that they cannot lead the class effectively. Carless (2006b) observed in his analysis of unsuccessful cases that they were often in conflict with each other in implementing a team teaching class due to the lack of training. Secondly, even if they are assigned as the partners of a team, many teachers are reluctant to share the class with others, or to be observed by colleagues (Benoit & Haugh, 2001). What is worse, some teachers do not show mutual respect to their assigned partner (Carless, 2006b). Consequently, it is the teachers who first need to develop a positive attitude toward team teaching (Tajino & Tajino, 2000).

3. Research Procedure

3.1. Instrument

A class was videotaped in which a NEST and a NNEST were teaching the same first-year middle school students simultaneously. The class is composed of both girl students and boy students. Their school is private and located in Jeonju, Jeollabukdo. The videotaped class was taught in the second semester of the school year.

3.2. Participants

Twenty university students majoring in English education participated in the survey. The students were familiar with how to teach English as a foreign language since they had already taken some courses related to teaching methodology. They consider teaching English at secondary school their life-time career. They study with a plan to become a teacher after graduation. Their university is also located in Jeonju, Jeollabukdo.

3.3. Survey

The videotape of the class was played in front of the subjects, the English education majors. They were instructed to write on how they evaluated the videotaped class which was taught by the NEST and the NNEST. They were also advised to base their assessment on all of their knowledge that they acquired from taking courses related to language learning and teaching. They were free to write whatever they wanted to on blank paper in regard to how the class was taught.

4. Results and Discussion

The students' evaluations of the team teaching class were analyzed and categorized in such a way that some of their comments belong to the teachers' strengths and others to their weaknesses. Then their evaluations belonging to

strengths and the ones belonging to weaknesses were grouped into different subcategories by the time that some generalizations could be achieved. One of the most conspicuous assessments is related to the NNEST, as follows:

(1) The NNEST keeps interrupting, speaking Korean. This might prevent the students from being immersed in English. It even seems that the NNEST is no more than an assistant in the classroom.

(2) Because of the NNEST, there are no substantial communications between the NEST and the students.

(3) The NNEST seems kind of helpful, but she is distracting the class. I think we need to find another way in which the NNEST plays a contributing role in the class because I think having the NEST and the NNEST together in the same class at the same time is bad.

(4) The NEST is trying to teach in CLT methods, but I think the NNEST blocks the NEST and the students from interacting with each other. The NNEST keeps intervening in their interaction even though the students can understand what the NEST says and answer questions. The NNEST's presence in class also makes the NEST and the students rely on the NNEST, not on themselves. I feel sorry that even the NEST depends on the NNEST and leads the class passively.

(5) Without the assisting NNEST, the NEST and the students could have had more opportunities to communicate. I think the NNEST got rid of the opportunities for communication and interaction between the NEST and the students by translating the NEST's instruction into Korean.

(6) It could be confusing to have two teachers in a classroom at the same time even though one is an assistant.

(7) It would have been better if there had been no NNEST in class and the students had asked questions or communicated with each other in English. I think the students were not given the opportunities to speak English because the NNEST was present.

(8) The NNEST should have given the students enough time to try to understand what they have heard instead of giving Korean translations right away.

(9) I think it would have been better if the NEST had elaborated in English on what the students did not understand. Instead, the NNEST interpreted it into

Korean.

(10) The NNEST participates so often and randomly in the class, which can lead to the students' confusion about the class. It is better for the NNEST to help the NEST at stated time.

(11) I think the NNEST and the NEST should have discussed how to divide their roles in team teaching.

The above evaluations made about the videotaped team teaching class show that the NNEST is seen as nothing but an assistant, not as a team teaching partner. What is worse is that the NNEST is considered an obstacle to the class which could have been taught in English without the NNEST. As we all know, NNESTs are well trained and qualified, and for most of them, experienced. On the other hand, most of NESTs are untrained as a teacher to teach English in EFL contexts. This may be one of the reasons that the NEST teaching in Japan was given the title of Assistant English Teacher. What may have caused the NNEST to be viewed as an assistant, not a primary teacher?

Despite NNESTs' potential advantages, they do not participate in team teaching to their full potential because they perceive themselves as teachers who have a low proficiency in communicative English (Woo, 2000). Due to low confidence in their English abilities, NNESTs sometimes serve only as interpreters or take responsibility only for discipline (Lee, 2008). Carless (2006b) noted that NNESTs could not find time for planning team teaching classes because of their heavy workload at school. This insufficient preparation leads to unsuccessful team teaching classes in which one partner dominates the lesson with the other as spectator or disciplinarian (Tajino & Tajino, 2000; Carless, 2006b). An NNEST felt that he/she was wasting time by standing and watching the class (Na, 1997). This means that NNESTs think of themselves as nothing but an interpreter during the class. What is worse, some NNESTs tended to give NESTs full responsibility to teach classes (Kim, 2005). In fact, NNESTs are likely to abandon their roles as teachers and become translators in this situation (Tajino & Walker, 1998). What can be done to improve the ways the team teaching classes are taught in the Korean EFL context?

First of all, NESTs and NNESTs should be given more opportunities to meet through the team teaching process. As the active participation of both teachers is

the crucial ingredient of effective team teaching (Carless, 2006b), they have to define their roles to their strengths through having meetings and clear on-going communication between NESTs and NNESTs (Benoit & Haugh, 2001). In the analysis of good practices in team teaching in the East Asia region, Carless (2006b) presented a case of an untrained Canadian and an experienced Korean counterpart as good practice in Korea. Both teachers in the case met once per week and developed their own effective team teaching through the meetings.

Secondly, NESTs and NNESTs should find and develop the areas of contribution of NNESTs to the team teaching class in order to expand NNESTs' participation. After analyzing their individual strengths and abilities through clear communication, both teachers can work together to determine how these can be used in classroom practices (Benoit & Haugh, 2001). Despite the discrepancy in language proficiency between the NEST and the NNEST, NNESTs can teach their students the learning strategies (Medgyes, 2001). In particular, as a learning model, NNESTs can anticipate language difficulties and teach learning strategies more effectively. In the good practice in Korea (Carless, 2006b), an experienced Korean English teacher stated that she could "support the EPIK teacher in preparing suitable materials because she knew her students' standard" (p.348).

An alternative solution might be that a modified version of category B team teaching (Gotez, 2000) is implemented, in which the NEST and the NNEST work together but do not teach the same groups of students at the same time. In other words, they can teach the same students, but at different time. This may prevent the confusion about their roles as team teachers because they lead classes independently and teach their specialized skills to the class.

The second most frequent assessments from the subjects are as follows:

(12) The class lacked in the NEST's feedback. Considering the class followed 3P's model and comprised the three stages of presentation-practice-production, the NEST should have given the students feedback on how well they did in the production stage.

(13) The NEST did not check the students' performance while they were doing some activities.

(14) The objectives of the class written on the lesson plan should have

mentioned expected results after the lesson. The NEST did not seem to consider the assessment of the students' performance.

(15) Comprehension check-up was carried out just once. It will be better to have it a couple of times more.

(16) There was no evaluation of the students at all in the class. There is no way of knowing if the students understood the class well. We need a more concrete way to assess the students.

As seen in the evaluation made by university English majors about the team teaching class from (12) to (16), the team teachers do not seem to consider assessing the students during or at the end of class. The reason why the testing of the students is not properly done is that the team teaching class is not integrated with the curriculum. For the potential of team teaching in Korea to be maximized, there needs to be integration with the system-wide curriculum and assessment priorities (Carless, 2006b). Carless (2006b) insisted that "a team teaching English class is likely to have greater impact on students when integrated with regular teaching rather than being a one-off performance" (p.345). However, team teaching in Korea high schools cannot achieve its full objectives because team teaching English classes are not integrated with the regular English curriculum of a high school (Lee, 2008). Team teaching English classes in Korean high schools were delivered as a part of curricular or extracurricular activities which lacked integration into the wider curriculum and assessment process (Choi, 1998; Lee, 2008). According to Choi (1998), one of the NESTs in EPIK stated that "because there is no exam related to the conversation lessons, there is no reason for students to concentrate, so it is a struggle to catch their attention" (p.33). Due to the pressure to achieve higher scores in the grammar and reading-based high school and university entrance examinations, high school students showed more learning motivation in the NNESTs' classes focusing on grammar and reading than team teaching classes between NESTs and NNESTs (Kim, 2006). Subsequently, high school students in the survey on team teaching in one province of Korea responded that they did not pay attention to the team teaching English classes because they did not have exams at school or the class did not give any impact on their score in the university entrance examination (Lee, 2008).

For team teaching in a Korean high school to be fully integrated with the regular English curriculum, NESTs and NNESTs have to find their own strengths and develop teaching skills which can contribute to the examination-oriented English classes (Kim *et al.*, 2008). In the EPIK context, NESTs are generally found to teach speaking, listening, pronunciation, and the culture of English speaking countries better, while NNESTs are found to teach grammar better (Park, 2007). Specifically, in high schools, NNESTs are found to teach listening effectively, and to be better at teaching reading and vocabulary (Kim *et al.*, 2008). Subsequently, in a reading class, NESTs can help students to understand the text by teaching the cultural background and idiomatic expressions in reading while NNESTs can teach some reading strategies which are suitable to the entrance examination (Kwon, 2004). In addition, as some universities are asking students to write an essay in English, students need to become familiar with writing an essay in a western style while NNESTs help their students to build correct sentence structures (Kim *et al.*, 2008).

5. Conclusion

Team teaching in English education in the East Asia region was implemented to address the typical problems in the input-poor environment of EFL (Carless, 2006a; Kouraogo, 1993). Particularly in Korea, team teaching was introduced to improve the quality of the EPIK program which started in 1996 (Choi, 1998). Research on team teaching in Korea in the past was conducted mainly to confirm the effectiveness of team teaching in two areas of learning, affective and cognitive (Kim *et al.*, 2008). However, it is getting important to properly address practical problems which prevent team teaching from being more effective.

In this paper, after reviewing team teaching for English education in Korea, two practical problems which need to be properly addressed were outlined. The first problem was how to define the roles of NNESTs throughout the team teaching process so that not only the students but also NNESTs may not be confused about their roles. While maximizing their strengths, NNESTs have to improve their abilities in English and interpersonal skills with NESTs (Kim *et al.*,

2008). To be fully engaged in team teaching, NESTs have to find their ways through clear on-going communication with NNESTs. This study argues for the team teaching of category B (Gotez, 2000) as an alternative style.

The second problem was that team teaching in a high school was not integrated with regular curriculum, so that it does not include testing as a part of teaching and learning procedures. Because students learn English to enter university, team teaching should find a way to meet their needs while capitalizing on the strengths of NESTs and NNESTs. Both NESTs and NNESTs need to specialize in teaching areas such as reading, speaking, writing, and listening (Kwon, 2004). This study focused on how to deal with practical problems which act as a deterrent to a successful team teaching.

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