Interaction in the Team-taught Classroom: An Investigation of HRTs, ALTs, and Learners

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Abstract

The number of team-taught classes with assistant language teachers (ALTs) has been increasing year by year. While team teaching has been practiced at elementary schools for over 15 years, there have been few empirical investigations of classroom practice to inform theory and policy. The present research sought to address this gap by applying conversation analysis to examine interaction in the classroom. Analysis revealed three classroom contexts (classroom management, form-and-accuracy, and content-centered) and several trends in interaction, including a hierarchal structure. Furthermore, a link between active involvement in interaction by HRTs and student engagement in lessons was suggested. Results were contrasted against four proposed benefits to team teaching, and, if top-down policy is intended to achieve concrete pedagogical aims, the necessity for a clearer outline of the ALTs' roles was highlighted.

1. Introduction

As of April 2020, foreign language will become a compulsory subject for fifth- and sixth-grade students, and foreign languages activities will be brought forward to the third and fourth grades. As the introduction of foreign languages (English[1]) was a hastily decided policy, many teachers feel unprepared to teach them (Machida, 2016). Recent Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (hereafter, MEXT) reports show that less than 1% of elementary teachers hold English qualifications at a level considered to be desirable for the teaching of English at the secondary level (MEXT, 2016). In order to make up for this perceived deficit, MEXT encourages the use of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs).

ALTs were introduced into elementary schools alongside foreign language activities in 2002, and numbers of team-taught classes with ALTs have been increasing ever since (Ogushi, 2008). The system has not been without its problems. Recent research suggests that many ALTs feel underutilized, or not "considered to be a part of the school community" (Kano & Ozeki, 2018, p.

123). Similarly, Japanese homeroom teachers (HRTs) often struggle with team teaching, partly due to the fact that materials for Japanese teachers and those such as the JET Programme's ALT handbook contain contradictory information regarding teachers' expected roles (Ohtani, 2010).

Nevertheless, MEXT continues to advocate for the increased use of ALTs. In the *Guidebook for foreign languages activities and foreign language at elementary schools*, team-taught classes are claimed to have the following benefits:

a) having two teachers in the classroom to support and guide students

b) displaying smooth model dialogues

c) creating opportunities for students to try out what they have learned

d) increasing student motivation and interest through an ALT's introduction of foreign culture and lifestyles (MEXT, 2017a, pp.108-109, translation by the author)

The validity of such claims, however, remains unsubstantiated. While interview and survey research has elaborated upon both positive and negative aspects of the introduction of ALTs (see, for example, Kano & Ozeki, 2018), there remains little empirical research into classroom practice. The purpose of this research, therefore, is to examine team-teaching practice in the classroom, and to contrast the findings with the proclaimed benefits of team teaching.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Team teaching with ALTs

ALTs were first introduced *en masse* in secondary schools with the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme in 1987. It has been suggested that as the program was not pedagogically motivated, but rather a gift to Americans to ease a trade deficit (McConnell, 2000), there was little opportunity to prepare for the ALTs' arrival. Early detractors noted that teachers had ALTs thrust upon them, with no preparation period or support (Wakabayashi, 1989/2016).

Perhaps coincidentally, English education in Japan was at the time undergoing a communicative reform. The Course of Study in effect included for the first time in its objective the phrase "develop a positive attitude towards expressing oneself in English" (MEXT, 1981). Minoru Wada, a principal designer of the JET Programme, suggested that Japanese teachers were incapable of conducting communicative lessons alone. He stated that because teachers "concentrate on 'drills', while largely neglecting 'natural language use'… [ALTs are] expected to act as a catalyst for the development of students' communicative strategies." (Wada, 1994, p. 11).

This approach has been criticized in the literature. Sometimes referred to as the 'deficit model' of team teaching (Bolstad & Zenuk-Nishide, 2016), it presupposes a deficiency in each of the teaching partners (i.e., Japanese teachers have insufficient English, and ALTs, insufficient Japanese). Under this model, two teachers fulfill the role of a 'completely bilingual teacher.' This has led to ALTs being used as simple pronunciation models, or "human tape-recorders" (Kumabe,

1996; Kano et al., 2016). Unfortunately, these issues persist. A recent doctoral dissertation included an alarming comment by an ALT; "I love earning lots of money, doing nothing!" (Hiratsuka, 2014, p.2). Conversely, ALTs sometimes conduct classes on their own (Hiratsuka, 2013). Lessons with ALTs are also often seen as a "break" from study, with teachers making such comments as "you can get rid of the JET program, and it won't make too much of a difference, based on what kids are learning English [sic]" (Hiratsuka, 2013, p.12). Two major reasons for the persistence of these issues, after more than three decades, are: a) there are still no clear outlines and objectives to team teaching, and b) ALTs typically have no experience or qualifications in language teaching, and are unfamiliar with the Japanese education system (Ohtani, 2010).

2.2 Team teaching objectives at elementary schools

Elementary teachers are now facing the same situation that their secondary school colleagues encountered in the 1980s. Little time or resources have been allocated for preparation to receive ALTs, who are increasing in number yearly. In fact, the elementary school situation may be even more difficult, as HRTs are typically untrained in foreign language teaching (Machida, 2016). As HRTs also do not usually have free periods in which they can discuss and plan lessons with ALTs, it is likely that they would require even more support than secondary school teachers.

Despite these factors, however, MEXT policy and documents for teachers seem to have ignored the issues that have troubled team teaching over the last three decades. For instance, the only allusion to team teaching in the most recent course of study is that HRTs should "devise lessons… with the help of native speakers and local human resources proficient in English[2]" (MEXT, 2017b, p. 162/177). Other documents, such as the aforementioned *Guidebook*, give more detailed explanations of what is expected from each teacher (Table 1, over page).

Despite the apparent delineation of roles in the guidebook, which appear to be consistent with the four proposed benefits of team teaching above, it is notable that there is no description in the materials of what activities with ALTs are intended to entail, or how they are supposed to differ from regular classes. The ALT is also seemingly supposed to fulfill a dual role; that of English linguistic expert, and of cultural informant, providing information on the life and culture of their home country, information which does not necessarily need to be conveyed in English.

The linguistic expectations of each teacher seem consistent with the deficit model, in that English use seems to be mostly a role of ALTs, while HRTs have a more managerial position. There is less information about what should entail ALTs' cultural informant role. Another issue with these materials is that they are not available in English for ALTs, meaning that HRTs and ALTs lack a shared understanding of their roles. It has been pointed out that "many ALTs… do not get information regarding their school mission, lesson planning, and curriculum" (Ohtani, 2010, p. 43), a trend that persists. Furthermore, teacher materials seem to be based on idealized models of what team teaching should be, and not on empirical investigation of the classroom.

Table 1. Expected roles of each team teacher

Roles expected of the HRT	• Observe students' understanding while progressing the lessons • Alongside the ALT, demonstrate how to conduct activities • Pick up on students' comments and noticing, and have the ALT reply with easy English • Make the ALT repeat, or adjust speed of, remarks in English for the students to listen to • Conduct shared evaluation, and in reflective tasks, praise the students' noticing
Roles expected of the ALT	• Alongside the HRT, demonstrate how to conduct activities • Introducing life and culture of their home country relevant to the current unit, and learn about the students' country through interaction • Pick up on students' comments and noticing directly, or with the assistance of the HRT, and reply with easy English and gestures • Repeat and have students listen to the correct native-speaker pronunciation • Engage in conversation with the students using English they have learned • Conduct shared evaluation, and in reflective tasks, praise the students' skills

Note: Translated by the author from the *Guidebook for foreign languages activities and foreign language at elementary schools* (MEXT, 2017, pp.109–110).

What empirical research exists appears to contradict some of the proclaimed benefits of team teaching (for instance, the benefit of having two teachers in the classroom to support and guide students). Aline & Hosoda (2006) examined HRT participation in team-taught classes and found that HRTs often act either as 'bystanders' or participate as 'translators' or 'co-learners', roles which do little to promote communicative language use. They also pointed out that when HRTs act as 'co-teacher', they "most often manifested this pattern on occasions of classroom management" (p. 15). As far as the author is aware, no studies have investigated the interaction of all participants (HRT, ALT, and learners) in the team-taught elementary school classroom.

As MEXT policy continues to recommend the use of ALTs, it is necessary to investigate how interaction occurs in the classroom, in order to better inform team-teaching practice. The broad purpose of this research, therefore, is to examine and describe interaction between HRTs, ALTs, and learners, and to contrast the findings with the proclaimed benefits of team teaching.

3. Method

3.1 Conversation Analysis

As the aim of this paper is to first describe interaction in the classroom, rather than to test the validity of prior theory, Conversation Analysis (CA) was chosen as a methodology. CA initially appeared as a branch of ethnomethodology for the analysis of ordinary conversation, and has since

been applied to a wide variety of institutional contexts, including the foreign language classroom. CA is generally based upon on the following assumptions:

1) Social interaction is orderly at all points;

2) Participants orient to that order themselves – that is, order is not a result of the analyst's conceptions or any preformulated theoretical categories; and

3) Such order can be discovered and described by examining the details of interaction (Waring, 2016, p. 45).

Occasionally referred to as unmotivated looking, CA does not code interaction using pre-determined criteria, nor does it seek to validate external theories. It is an emic approach that endeavors to explain interactional phenomena within their contexts, and therefore "it is not relevant to invoke power, gender, race, or any other contextual factor unless and until there is evidence… that the participants themselves are orienting to them" (Seedhouse, 2005, p. 166). This paper seeks first to apply unmotivated looking to describe interaction, before using findings from the analysis to consider the four proposed benefits of team teaching outlined above.

3.2 Data

The data were collected over three months at an urban elementary school in the Kansai area, and a semi-rural school in the Tohoku region. The schools were chosen a) because both had begun to implement English-as-subject for the upper grades; and b) to avoid any interactional peculiarities of a single region, school, or pair of teachers. A total of eight classes were video recorded, transcribed and analyzed. Information on each class is shown in Table 2, below[3].

Table 2. Elementary school English (activities) data

Data	School	Grade	Class type[1]	Total class hours (yearly)[2]	TT classes (yearly)	Data collected
(1)		5	Subject	70	20	Nov. 2017
(2)	Kansai	2	Activities	35	10	Dec. 2017
(3)		5	Subject	70	20	Jan. 2018
(4)		1	Activities	35	10	Dec. 2017
(5)		6	Subject	70	20	Dec. 2017
(6)	Tohoku	2	Activities	25	5	Dec. 2017
(7)		2	Activities	25	5	Dec. 2017
(8)		3	Activities	35	10	Dec. 2017

[1] Note: Subject = English as a full subject, Activities = Foreign language activities.

[2] Due to ALT visiting schedules being somewhat irregular, the number of team-taught classes represents an estimate.

Despite the different locales and HRT/ALT combinations, the data demonstrated a surprising degree of homogeneity. Classes were typically centered around the introduction of a

target phrase (with the exception of data (2) and (5), see Table 3, below). Alongside the target phrase, related or incidental vocabulary was also introduced, typically with flashcards (again, excepting (5) in the data). Data (2) had very little HRT interaction, as the class was mostly a lecture-style explanation by the ALT conducted primarily in Japanese. Data (5) was spent entirely on preparation for a presentation in the following class, and there was no HRT-ALT interaction besides an opening greeting. Analyses of typical instances of interaction will be presented in section 4. Any names that appear in the transcripts are pseudonyms.

Table 3. Class content

Data	Class objective	Main activities[1]
(1)	1. Learn countries' names 2. Ask and say where you want to go	Introducing/practicing English country names/flags, "Jeopardy"-style quiz about countries, practice of key phrases "Where do you want to go" and "I want to go to…"
(2)	1. Learning about Christmas	Practicing Christmas vocabulary, ALT-led PowerPoint explanation of Christmas, Q&A with ALT about Christmas
(3)	1. Pronounce school subject names 2. Asking subjects that people like	Introducing/practicing English subject names, rhythm game to practice pronunciation, quiz about school subjects, practice of key phrases "What subject do you like?" and "I like…"
(4)	1. Learning Christmas vocabulary 2. Asking for/receiving	Practicing Christmas vocabulary with picture cards, Making Christmas tree pictures (using "I want…") with HRT/ALT
(5)	1. Making an original story	Group work, HRT/ALT giving advice/hints
(6)	1. Learning Christmas vocabulary 2. Asking for/receiving 3. Learning about Christmas	Practicing Christmas vocabulary with picture cards, Making Christmas cards (using "I want…") with HRT/ALT, Listening to ALTs explanation of American Christmas, Q&A with ALT
(7)	see (6)[2]	
(8)	1. Learning Christmas vocabulary 2. Asking for/receiving	Practicing colors in English, practicing Christmas vocabulary, making Christmas cards (using "I want…") with HRT/ALT

[1] Note: Excludes opening greetings, classroom management etc.

[2] The lesson plan for this class was prepared beforehand by the head teacher of the second grade and was shared by the teachers in data (6) and (7), resulting in the main activities being the same.

4. Analysis

Analysis of the data revealed three main contexts in the team-taught classes. The classroom management context (section 4.1) involved opening and closing the lesson, giving information about the class, and shifting between pedagogical foci. This context was generally managed by the HRTs, and while ALTs occasionally offered input, they rarely issued instructions directly to

students. This context occurred in all of the data. The form-and-accuracy context (section 4.2) included drawing students' attention to linguistic form, generally to introduce new words and expressions. Here, ALT input was consistent, almost always providing a linguistic model, although feedback patterns to student responses varied between the HRTs and ALTs. This context was present in data (1), (3), (4), (6), (7), and (8). Finally, the content-centered context (section 4.3) was typically led by the ALT, who would introduce cultural information about foreign countries. HRT interaction patterns varied considerably in this context. This context was somewhat uncommon, appearing in data (2), in which it took up the majority of the lesson, and in (6) and (7), in which the context appeared as a roughly 15-minute activity in the class (the remainder of the lessons (6) and (7) consisted of vocabulary practice and sentence drills).

4.1 The classroom management context

Most interaction in this context was conducted between the HRT and the learners, or between the ALT and the HRT. While ALTs occasionally made suggestions, or interjected to confirm class procedures, HRTs would typically give instructions, regardless of their complexity or the language in which they were given. The data was consistent with the findings in Aline & Hosoda (2006), in which HRTs most commonly acted in a co-teacher role when conducting management. Observation of gaze revealed that students recognized the HRTs' authority to give instructions, but an unexpected finding was that the ALTs also seemed to orient towards this authority.

Extract (1) [Kansai: 20.11.2017, Data (1)]

((The class has just begun, and both teachers have finished conducting simple greetings))

```
01 HRT:  ((to ALT)) kore kara dou suru suwaru ((gestures
02       sitting down)) owatta? ((tr: What are we doing now,
03       should they sit? Are we finished?))
04 ALT:  ((shakes head)) ((to class)) oka::y okay what's the
05       date today °sorry wha-°
06 LL:   ((in sync)) november
         ((7 lines omitted))
14 ALT:  its m[onda::y okay ]very good well
15 LL:        [monday monday]
16 ALT:  ((gestures to HRT)) °sit down°
17 HRT:  sit down plea::se
```

In Extract (1), the HRT attempts to confirm what the students will do next and manages this interaction with the ALT through to line 02. What is striking is that although the ALT seems comfortable making the decision to continue the warm-up activity (line 04), he orients to the

HRT's authority to give direct instructions in line 17. Here, he prompts the HRT, rather than giving the instruction himself. This phenomenon resonates with previous questionnaire research on ALTs, who indicated that the HRT is more efficient at delivering instructions to students (Kano & Ozeki, 2018; Ohtani, 2010). Another display of this orientation can be seen below.

Extract (2) [Tohoku: 07.12.2017, Data (6)]

((The chime for the start of class has just rung, and the ALT enters the room))

```
01  ALT:  ((enters from rear of the room))
02  L1:   sensei kyo zenin sorotta ((tr: Ms, everyone is here))
03  HRT:  (saki nani shiteta no:) ((tr: (unclear) what was
04        [someone] doing?))
05  ALT:  () ((looking at papers))
06  HRT:  ((to ALT)) it's okay
07  ALT:  °okay°
08  HRT:  ((to LL)) hai ((tr: okay)) stand up please
```

Even in this small segment the orientation of both the students and the ALT to the HRT's authority is quite evident. Upon noticing the ALT enter the room, L1, instead of greeting the ALT, turns to the HRT to announce that everyone has arrived. Some time passes between lines 02 and 03, in which the ALT waits at the front of the classroom, averting gaze (in fact, first eye contact with students occurs in line 06, after the HRT's utterance). In the classroom management context, the HRTs' authority to give instructions is recognized and oriented to by both students and ALTs.

4.2 The form-and-accuracy context

This context generally involved introducing or reviewing phrases, vocabulary, or model dialogues. In introducing a new grammar point or phrase, the HRT and ALT would typically show a model interaction, before the HRT gave instructions to the students. For vocabulary, the HRT sometimes took a passive role, and on other occasions the HRT took the role of a co-learner, repeating target vocabulary with the students. Extract (3) is a typical example of a model dialogue.

Extract (3) [Tohoku: 14.12.2017, Data (7)]

((The HRT has just finished explaining the task, a role-play of shopping for decorations to put on Christmas card. The HRT and ALT give a model demonstration))

```
01  HRT:  hai. ((tr: okay)) (0.2) yatte mimasu ((tr: here goes))
02        ((to ALT)) ah, demonstration please
03  ALT:  okay
04  HRT:  ((waves to ALT)) $hello::$
```

05 ALT: hello:: ((waves back to HRT)) (0.3) what do you want
06 HRT: hm:: (0.2) <i: want (0.1) a star>
07 ALT: m: oka::y ((searches through box))
08 HRT: ((to ALT)) ˚*sono mama de ii yo*˚ ((tr: just like that
09 is fine))
10 ALT: oh (.) $here you are:$ ((hands paper star to HRT))
11 HRT: $thank you::$
12 ALT: $bye bye$
13 HRT: $bye bye$ ((waves to ALT)) ((to LL)) *dekiso desu ka*:?
14 ((tr: do you think you can do it?))
15 L: *dekiru* ((tr: yeah))

Here, the HRT introduces the context, and initiates a model dialogue with the ALT. Of interest is the code switching employed by the HRT, who uses English to make a request of the ALT in line 02 but relies on Japanese mid-task in line 08. Code switching was relatively common amongst various classroom contexts, occurring in all of the data, although not every context in every lesson included code-switching. Here, it seems to have a two-fold purpose; the HRT taking on a managerial role to move the role play along quickly, as well as demonstrating to the students that this utterance is not part of the role play[4]. The HRT concludes with a question directed to the learners. This extract was followed by an activity in which the students would interact with either the HRT or the ALT, who each played the role of shopkeeper. Interestingly, it was the only instance in the data of prolonged interaction between the ALT and the students.

Extract (4) [Kansai: 11.12.2017, Data (2)]

((The ALT is conducting vocabulary review, while the HRT stands to the side))

01 ALT: ((holding up vocabulary card)) ginger cookies
02 LL/HRT: ginger cookies
03 ALT: ((changes card, gestures at card)) sleigh
04 L: sled
05 L: (sleigh)
06 HRT: ((to L)) () ((gaze returns to ALT))
07 ALT: sleigh (0.3) sleigh
08 LL/HRT: SLEIGH

Here, the HRT acts as co-learner, repeating the vocabulary in tandem with the students. The ALT relies on simple IRF (initiation, response, feedback) patterns, initiating by holding up a card, awaiting a response, and then giving brief feedback. Of note is the learners' shift in attention after

line 03. When the HRT makes a brief (inaudible) remark to a student (Figure 1, below), the flow of the activity is broken, and only two students respond to the ALT's prompt (lines 04 and 05). Only once the HRT's gaze returns to the ALT does the activity continue. Even when the ALT is taking the central role, it is apparent that the learners are orienting to remarks made by the HRT.

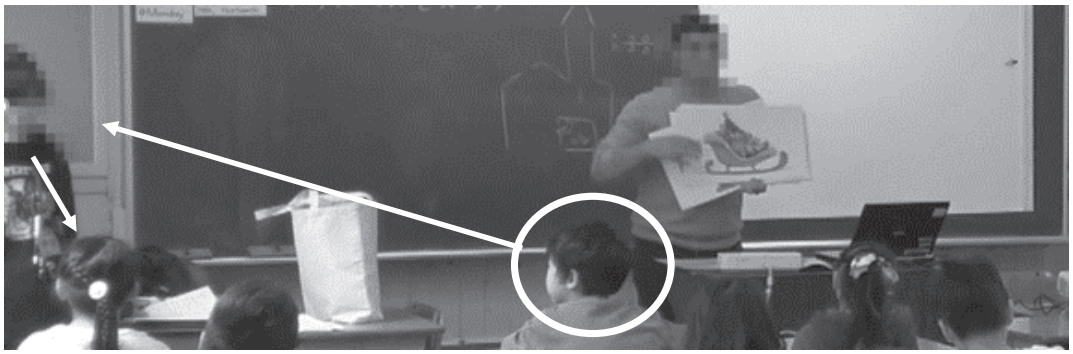

Figure 1. Students orienting to the HRT (Extract (4), lines 06 through 09).

4.3 The content-centered context

In this context, the content was typically provided by the ALT, although participation of the HRT seemed to strongly influence how the students interacted. When the HRT took on a passive bystander role, student attention seemed to waver, with several instances of students talking off-topic amongst each other for relatively extended periods, which occurred in data (2). When the HRT took on the more proactive facilitator role, confirming information with the ALT before paraphrasing, which occurred in data (6), or translating for the students (both in data (6) and (7), although the HRT in the latter relied more heavily on direct translations of the ALT's speech), or inviting questions, students seemed both more interested and more focused on the content. Active HRT participation also allowed for a greater degree of interaction, resulting in information from the ALT being delivered in shorter utterances, potentially aiding student understanding. Extract (5) demonstrates how an HRT can interact to facilitate interaction in this context, whereas Extract (6) illustrates what happens when the HRT acts as bystander.

Extract (5) [Tohoku: 14.12.2017, Data (7)]

((The ALT is introducing American Christmas with overhead pictures in the final fifteen minutes of class, while the HRT is actively participating as both a facilitator and conversation partner.))

```
01  ALT:  okay. so (.) in japan (.) what (.) do you eat (.) ((to
02        HRT)) for christmas?
03  HRT:  kurisumasu ni nihon dewa nani wo tabemasu ka? ((tr:
04        what do we eat for Christmas in Japan?))
05  LL:   [keki keki chikin        ] ((tr: cake, cake, chicken))
```

06 HRT: [*ayano no uchi de nani wo*] *taberu*? ((tr: what does
07 your family have, Ayano?))
08 L1: ()
09 HRT: *keki? chikin?* ((tr: cake? Chicken?)) ((to ALT)) ()
10 cake or chicken
11 ALT: o:h christmas chicken and i think ((to HRT)) christmas
12 cake?
13 HRT: ((to ALT)) christmas cake yes ((nodding))
14 ALT: ((to LL)) in america: (.)
15 L2: .hh
16 ALT: we ea:t ((changes image))
17 LL: O:::H
18 L3: *dou yatte tsukuru no*? ((tr: how do you make that?))
19 HRT: ((to L)) >*dou yatte tsukuru no ne*?< ((tr: I wonder
20 how?))

Between lines 03 to 09, the HRT acts as a go-between, translating the ALT's question to the students, before relaying the students' answers to the ALT. It is interesting that this translation request was initiated by the ALT in line 02, by directing the last two words to the HRT. The HRT carries this out effectively by naming a student to elicit a response (line 06), something the ALT would likely be unable to do as effectively, given her limited number of classes with the students.

Another point of interest is how the HRT effectively makes use of the ALT's pauses. In lines 16 to 19, the students react enthusiastically to a picture displayed by the ALT. Before the ALT continues speaking, a student asks a question, to which the HRT responds (lines 18-19). Here the HRT does not answer the question, but rather reiterates it. This demonstrates that the student's question has been heard, while simultaneously positioning the HRT as 'co-learner' (in that she does not have all the information), which may also potentially help to elevate the status of the ALT as a cultural informant with new knowledge to provide. Throughout this interaction, the ALT and the HRT successfully interact non-verbally to establish each other's roles or to display intent or request intervention, both showing an awareness of each other's position in the classroom.

Extract (6) [Kansai: 11.12.2017, Data (2)]

((The ALT is beginning to introduce American Christmas through PowerPoint materials. The HRT stands to the front left of the classroom and acts as a bystander throughout the activity))

01 ALT ((to LL)) christmas (0.2) *itsu* ((raises hand)) *itsu kuru*
02 ((tr: when, when does [christmas] come))
03 L: *HAI* ((raises hand)) ((tr: me!))

04 ALT: *a a chotto* – ((tr: ah, ah, wait))
05 L: *junigatsu nijuy*[*okka*] ((tr: December twenty-fourth))
06 ALT: [*nihon*]*go ha chotto muzukashi kara kedo*
07 *demo ganbatte setsumei suru kara* okay? ((tr: Japanese
08 is a little bit difficult because but, but I'll do my
09 best to explain okay?))

In this extract, the ALT is taking the lead role to introduce the next activity, an introduction of Christmas. In contrast to Extract (5), also on the topic of Christmas, in which the HRT actively participates through translation, the HRT here takes on a much more passive, bystander role. While this may be because the ALT is conducting the instruction mostly in Japanese, the effect on interaction is salient in lines 01 through 06, in which the ALT poses a question to the class, to which a student twice attempts to answer (lines 03 and 05). Here, the ALT fails to acknowledge or capitalize on the student's response, speaking over the student in lines 04 and 06.

This type of interaction, in which the ALT was unable to address student input, occurred several times over the course of the Christmas introduction. The content covered included the birth of Christ, historical information about Santa Claus, and modern American Christmas traditions, although the lack of response to questions seemed to have a deleterious effect on student concentration. When the HRT rejoined the activity to assist with question-and-answer time, a number of students were no longer engaged, demonstrated by wandering student gaze. Furthermore, of the three questions asked during the final stages of this context, only one was related to topics covered by the ALT, potentially suggesting that learner pick-up was limited.

5. Discussion

Throughout the data, HRT participation reflected patterns previously identified in the literature; instances of HRTs as bystander, translator(facilitator), co-learner, and co-teacher were salient. Aline & Hosoda stated that such roles were not discrete, but "form somewhat of a continuum from little to greater participation" (2006, p. 9). This was also true in this study, as the HRTs' level of participation varied with the context. The HRT most consistently acted as co-teacher during classroom management, again consistent with the previous findings.

Newly investigated was how ALTs and learners orient themselves in interaction. Both displayed a consistent orientation to HRT as the authority figure. This orientation in the ALT was particularly salient in Extract (1), where an overt request was made to the HRT to give instructions. Extract (4) was a clear example of this orientation in the learners, whose attention was diverted away from the ALT when the HRT made an unrelated remark to an individual learner. Such orientation by all participants seems to suggest a hierarchy in interaction, as ALTs displayed fewer

rights to classroom management or instructions than the HRT. This orientation is not necessarily a surprising finding. Questionnaire research has shown that ALTs rely on HRTs to conduct management, maintain discipline, and call students by name (Kano & Ozeki, 2018; Ohtani, 2010). This is, however, the first time it has been demonstrated with empirical data.

This finding casts doubt upon MEXT's first claim that "having two teachers in the classroom to support and guide students" (MEXT, 2017a, p. 108) is a major benefit of team teaching, if this is intended to mean two teachers of equal standing who are both able to conduct management and instruction smoothly. The data shows that the ALT orients to the HRTs' authority to give instructions, and relies on the HRT to elicit responses from individual students in interaction, regardless of whether the ALT was taking the role of linguistic expert or cultural informant. Active HRT participation is therefore vital in conducting smooth lessons, a fact that was made clear by the learners' wavering attention in data (2), mentioned above, when the HRT took on a passive, bystander role – despite the fact that the ALT conducted the lesson in Japanese.

Other proclaimed benefits of team teaching did seem to manifest to varying degrees. The model interaction performed in Extract (3), for instance, would have been difficult in a single-teacher class. In linguistically-oriented tasks, the second proclaimed benefit, displaying model dialogues, has been established by the data. Curiously, what followed in this lesson was the only instance of prolonged ALT-learner interaction in the data examined. The third claim, that an ALT can create "opportunities for students to try out what they have learned" (MEXT, 2017a, p. 108), was therefore somewhat substantiated, but only in one instance in the eight lesson hours, suggesting that ALT-learner interaction may be infrequent. Given the fact that ALTs are present for only a small number of lessons, the pedagogical effectiveness of such interaction is dubious.

The content-centered context, in which the ALT typically acted as cultural informant, seemed to encourage the greatest degree of student engagement. While student concentration wavered in data (2), in data (6) and (7), where the HRT acted as facilitator, responding to student utterances and questions, and translating or paraphrasing the ALT's content, the students were most engaged, as evidenced by verbal reactions such as those in Extract (5), and also with audible gasps of excitement at the materials the ALT had prepared. While student engagement was elevated in this context, it is important to note that interaction involving the students was almost entirely conducted in Japanese, and direct questions from and responses to students were usually facilitated by the HRT (even in data (2), in which the HRT rejoined the lesson during the students' question time). Thus, the final proposed benefit of team teaching appears to be supported by the data. However, when the ALT was acting as cultural informant, there was little opportunity for learners to exercise their linguistic ability, suggesting that a clearer delineation of objectives for team teaching may be necessary. Is the ALT a linguistic resource, a cultural resource, or both?

From a linguistic point of view, in the literature review, the deficit model, in which an HRT and ALT work together to fulfill the role of one bilingual teacher, was introduced as the theory

behind team teaching in Japan. It was pointed out that MEXT's encouragement of ALTs seems to be motivated by a linguistic deficit in Japanese HRTs. While issues with this model in the secondary context have been discussed elsewhere (Bolstad & Zenuk-Nishide, 2016), the notable lack of ALT-student interaction in the data suggests that it is not a feasible model for creating communicative classes in the elementary classroom. Given that substantial language use is necessary to develop communicative competence (Netten & Germain, 2014), and learners seem to have few opportunities to interact one-on-one with the ALT, if ALTs are intended to be a primarily linguistic resource, ALT numbers will need to be greatly increased to ensure a more consistent presence. Otherwise, the role of the ALT in elementary schools should be reevaluated.

The goals of foreign language are, "Through understanding of how communication in foreign languages works, to develop… the *fundamental qualities and abilities necessary to attempt communication*" (MEXT, 2017b, p.173, translation and emphasis by the author), not only the development of specific competence in the English language. Thus, as students generally demonstrated greater engagement in the content-centered context, it may be more pedagogically meaningful to consider the ALT as primarily a cultural informant, rather than an English language expert. However, even when viewing ALTs as primarily cultural informants, linguistic elements need not be ignored. Attention may be given to linguistic aspects through a focus on metalinguistic knowledge, whereby ALTs might share information about languages in their home countries (both national and foreign), or share their experiences in language learning (particularly non-native speakers of English, to whom English is a foreign language, just as it is for the majority of Japanese students). In this way, ALTs may be able to contribute to elementary students' understanding of English and foreign language as a whole, as students learn about various aspects of language, rather than focusing solely on developing linguistic competence in English.

Regardless of what role the ALT should take, however, clearer guidelines are needed, and should be available to both teachers, so they might approach lessons with a shared understanding.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, interaction between HRTs, ALTs and students in the elementary classroom was investigated and contrasted against MEXT documents on team teaching. It was suggested that the communicative nature of team-taught classes as described in policy documents is not necessarily being realized in the classroom, and therefore a reconsideration of the role of the ALT may be necessary. The potential for ALTs to act mainly as cultural informant, simultaneously providing metalinguistic information, was briefly explored, but further research into ALT-learner interaction will be necessary to establish any pedagogical benefit. Nevertheless, it was made clear that if top-down recommendations are to be adhered to, clearer directives regarding the pedagogical role of ALTs are required. Furthermore, analyses revealed a hierarchy in interaction that suggested

regardless of an ALT's role, HRTs' active participation is necessary to ensure quality instruction. It is important for HRTs to remember that their partners are *assistant* language teachers, and it should not be assumed that they can function as fully competent teachers of foreign language.

Notes

1. While the subject names are *foreign language* and *foreign language activities*, both include an addendum that the language to be taught is, "in principle, English" (MEXT, 2017, p. 164/178).
2. Portraying ALTs as native speakers is problematic, as at elementary schools, non-native English speakers account for a third of ALTs (Sophia University, 2017).
3. While foreign language activities are not compulsory for first and second grades, many schools have introduced them as part of integrated study hours. As the aim of this paper was to investigate interaction between participants, the legal status of activities was not relevant. The discrepancy in hours was because 10 hours of other activities were implemented in the second grade, while all integrated study hours for the first grade were foreign language activities.
4. There may be different reasons to employ code switching, including 'welcoming' the ALT in the local language, or an HRT's lack of English confidence. Further investigation is warranted.

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