# The Problem of Equality: Barriers to Creating Meaningful Talk in the Team-Taught Classroom

Daniel Roy Pearce

## 1. Introduction

Team teaching between local teachers and English-speaking assistants has long been a part of English education in Japan. The JET Programme, introduced in 1987, invites several thousand candidates per year to Japan, over 90% of whom become assistant language teachers (ALTs) in English classes at elementary, junior, and senior high schools (CLAIR, 2020a).

As a pedagogical practice, however, team teaching was not initially supported by theory (Armstrong, 1977). Its introduction in Japan was both political and motivated by the idea that Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) were incapable of conducting communicative classes on their own; the presence of native-speaking assistants was necessary to promote communication in the classroom (Wada, 1994). In the decades since team teaching became mainstream, however, a large body of survey research and post hoc theory has developed.

Despite the wealth of research in the literature, there remains little empirical data on practice in team-taught classrooms. What theory exists seems to be based rather on idealized models of team teaching, rather than what teachers are actually doing. This paper, therefore, seeks to investigate team-teaching practice as it happens in the classroom, before contrasting the findings with theory and the pedagogical aims of team teaching.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The History of Team Teaching in Japan

The introduction of team teaching on a large scale, with the JET Programme in 1987, occurred during a period of change in English education in Japan. While the overt goals of English education had previously been the acquisition of reading ability (Gorsuch, 2002), the Course of Study in effect had, for the first time, referenced productive skills in its aims by including the phrase "develop a positive attitude towards expressing oneself in English" (MEXT, 1981, translation by the author). One of the principal designers of the JET Programme, Minoru Wada, suggested that ALTs were necessary to achieve such communicative aims, stating that because JTEs "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).

However, it has also been suggested that the introduction of ALTs was politically motivated rather than pedagogically. The JET Programme has been described as a policy developed by the Nakasone administration and "first presented as a 'gift' to the American[s]" (McConnell, 2000, p.1), to ease trade tensions, with the bonus of giving foreign (primarily American) youth an easy, well-paid sojourn, and then having them return home with a positive image of Japan (Wakabayashi, 1989/2016). This seems plausible given the age limit of 30 initially imposed, and the lack of requirements for teaching experience or qualifications (CLAIR, 2020b), as well as early criticisms that team teaching had been introduced haphazardly, thrust upon teachers, who were told they had to team teach, without any preparation period or support (Wakabayashi, 1989/2016).

Regardless of any political motivations behind the practice, team teaching has more recently taken a decidedly pedagogical turn. Age limits to JET Programme participation, for instance, were extended until 35, and then

40, before quietly disappearing. The number of privately-hired ALTs, who were never subject to such restrictions, have been increasing (Ogushi, 2008), now representing almost three-quarters of ALTs, a total of around 19,000 (MEXT, 2017). Also, despite the shaky pedagogical grounds upon which team teaching was introduced, and initial resistance, the practice has been generally viewed positively by JTEs, who recognize that ALTs' presence increases English use in the classroom (Galloway, 2009) and has a positive influence on their own English ability (Koike & Tanaka, 1995). Learners also tend to hold positive views towards team teaching, and the unique, friendly atmosphere that ALTs create (Miyazato, 2012).

However, a review of the literature reveals an alarming trend. Commonly-raised issues surrounding team teaching have remained relatively unchanged in the last three decades. Team teaching was initially described as an "approach in which collaboration between students, [JTE]s and [ALT]s creates a communication-centered class" (Wada, 1988, p. 3, translation by the author) intended to promote communication built "upon the co-operation by JTE and [ALT] on equal terms" (Wada, 1994, p. 15). As early as 1989, it was pointed out that "successful team teaching was a fluke occurring only between exceptional JTEs and ALTs" (Wakabayashi, 1989/2016, p. 15, translation by the author). In his 2000 review of the JET Programme, McConnell included the disquieting assessment that only "36 percent [of JTEs] said that they shared teaching responsibilities" (p. 211). ALTs are often relegated to providing simple pronunciation models, sometimes referred to as 'human tape-recorders' (Kumabe, 1996; Kano et. al, 2016). On the other hand, there are reports of ALTs left to conduct entire classes on their own (Hiratsuka, 2013). That these situations persist after three decades of team teaching may be due to the political motivations behind the practice and the lack of pedagogical theory to support it.

## 2.2 Team Teaching Theory and Teacher Power Dynamics

Since the introduction of team teaching, post hoc theory has begun to appear in the literature. Perhaps the most commonly cited collaborative model for team teaching in Japan is *team learning* (Tajino & Tajino, 2000; Tajino & Smith, 2016), which suggests that teachers might shift roles during teaching in order to achieve greater equality in the classroom, and posits several models of participation suggested to be suitable for a range of pedagogical aims. For instance, team learning posits that ALTs might act as cultural informants, and JTEs as facilitators of communication between ALTs and students in group discussions and debates (Tajino & Tajino, 2000). Such theoretical models tend to assume an uncomplicated teaching relationship, and that both teachers (JTE and ALT) are able to assume equal roles in the classroom. Results from survey research, however, suggest that this might not be so readily achieved.

Some early critics of the JET Programme saw the presence of ALTs as a threat to the authority of JTEs in the classroom, due to their (perceived) superior linguistic ability (Yoneyama, 1988). It has also been suggested that the role of ALTs as assistants in the classroom was part of an intentionally-designed power imbalance intended to alleviate the threat that ALTs might pose. Miyazato (2009) referred to 'culturally powerful' JTEs, who have a greater knowledge of their school systems and students than the ALTs, and 'linguistically powerful' ALTs, seen as experts in the English language, but often unable to escape the status of 'guest' in the classroom. She concluded that the linguistic power of ALTs was not sufficient to elevate them to a position of authority in the classroom, in that "the power structure did not result in equal role-sharing" (2009, p. 56). This power structure is ingrained in law – unlicensed ALTs are not able to conduct classes without a JTE present, nor are they qualified to be involved in the development of curriculums or evaluation of their students. The power structure also seems to have had an effect on the perceived quality of team-taught lessons, with

students reporting that they enjoy classes with ALTs as a distraction or a break from 'real study' (Miyazato, 2009; 2012; Hiratsuka, 2013).

Despite the apparent barriers to teacher collaboration identified in survey research, few studies have been conducted on how teachers actually interact in practice. There is thus little data to support the feasibility of team-learning style approaches, or to inform teaching practice. The few empirical studies that do exist will be examined in the following section.

### 2.3 Empirical Investigations of Team Teaching

Empirical investigations of team-teaching practice have been more common in South Korea [1], and seem to corroborate the culturally powerful status of local teachers over foreign assistants. For instance, in an investigation of ten teachers, Lee found that local teachers "frequently relegated the [assistants] to an asymmetrical position of compliance" (Lee, 2015, p. 194). Park's study on team teachers at the elementary level similarly suggests that while teachers do not necessarily fall into native-/non-native roles, local teachers were typically in charge of classroom management and commencing or concluding pedagogical activities (2014).

Empirical research in Japan has been less common. Yoshida (2016) investigated a single activity in a team-taught classroom, although he focused on the nature of the activity as an example of team learning, rather than on the dynamics of interaction between the participants. In the activity he examined, an 'invisible wall' between the ALT and JTE was necessary to prompt meaningful interaction between the students and the ALT. Two studies exist with a focus on teacher interaction patterns (Bhatta & Butterfield, 2016; Butterfield & Bhatta, 2015). They found that JTEs "seemed to be in charge of the overall management of the classroom" and "allocated who spoke", while ALTs were "more focused on performing canonical IRF sequences by producing questions and evaluating answers" (Butterfield & Bhatta, 2015, p. 184).

The limited empirical data appears to suggest that there may be difficulties in team teachers achieving equal status in meaningful interaction. As far as the author is aware, however, there have been no empirical studies on how meaningful interaction [2)] is managed in the team-taught Japanese English classroom. This study seeks to address this gap by examining instances of such interaction. Results of analyses will then be contrasted against the pedagogical aims of team teaching, as well as post hoc theoretical models of the practice.

## 3. Method

### 3.1 Conversation Analysis

Conversation Analysis (CA) was chosen to analyze the data collected in this study. As an emic approach, in CA, data should not be approached with prior theoretical assumptions, and thus it is "not relevant to invoke power, gender, race or any other contextual factor unless and until there is evidence... the participants themselves are orienting to them" (Seedhouse, 2005, p. 167). Given the lack of empirical data on team teaching to support theory, this separation of prior theory from empirical data was considered appropriate for the present study.

According to Schegloff, "actions completed by talking get done in turns-at-talk" (2007, p. 3). In CA, the basic elements of talk are turn-constructional units (TCUs). A TCU completes a communicative act, and may either be lexical, phrasal, clausal or sentential (Schegloff, 2007). The span that begins just before a TCU might end (signaled, for example, by falling intonation), is called a transition-relevance place (TRP) and is where a next speaker becomes potentially relevant. In ordinary conversation, the rules for speaker transfer at TRPs were established in early CA research, with involved parties usually sharing a fairly even distribution of nomination rights and rights to sanction violations to conversational norms (see Sacks, Schegloff &

Jefferson, 1974). In the L2 classroom, however, rights to next-speaker nomination at the TRP are almost entirely dominated by the teacher (see Seedhouse, 1996). Seedhouse (1996) also identified the exclusive right of the teacher to topic nomination, that is, deciding upon the content of talk. How such rights are managed in the team-taught classroom remains an underdeveloped area of research.

### 3.2 Data

The data consisted of 15 video-recorded English classes at one junior high school and one senior high school in different regions of Japan. The schools were chosen in order to avoid interactional idiosyncrasies of specific schools or teaching pairs. Four ALTs and 13 JTEs participated in the lessons analyzed. Table 1 contains information about the classes. Any names that appear in the transcripts are pseudonyms, and gendered pronouns have been obfuscated.

Table 1

*Team teaching data*

| Data No. | School | Grade | Date | Class content |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Tohoku, Senior High School | 10 | Jun. 2015 | What I had for lunch: Practice of *these are/ this is*. |
| 2 | | 11 | Jun. 2015 | Student presentations: Mock advertisements (favorite sweets). |
| 3 | | 10 | Jun. 2015 | Drill activity (*do you know* questions), bingo activity. |
| 4 | | 11 | Jun. 2015 | Student presentations: Mock advertisements (favorite sweets). |
| 5 | | 11 | Jun. 2016 | Student poster presentations: Mock advertisements (local shops/restaurants). |
| 6 | | 11 | Jul. 2016 | Describing people activity. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | Tohoku, Senior High School | 11 | Jul. 2016 | Giving opinions using *think, feel,* and *believe*. Grammar instruction, drill activity. |
| 8 | | 10 | Jul. 2016 | Poem translation activity. |
| 9 | | 11 | Jul. 2016 | ALT lecture on racism in America, France, Ireland, and Japan. |
| 10 | | 10 | Jul. 2016 | Brainstorming and writing English poems. |
| 11 | | 10 | Jul. 2016 | Brainstorming and writing/presenting English poems. |
| 12 | Kyushu, Junior High School | 7 | Nov. 2017 | Third person 's' practice. Grammar instruction/drills. |
| 13 | | 7 | Nov. 2017 | Third person 's' practice. Grammar instruction/drills. |
| 14 | | 8 | Nov. 2017 | Giving directions: Grammar instruction/ information-gap activity. |
| 15 | | 7 | Jan. 2018 | English in the home at New Year's: Textbook-based lesson with grammar instruction/drills. |

## 4. Analyses

Analyses identified two classroom contexts in which meaningful interaction was managed by both teachers; a) the procedural context, and b) the meaning-oriented context. Representative and exceptional excerpts from the two contexts will be examined below. Drill activities were also common, but as their focus was on the production of linguistically sound utterances, rather than meaning, they were considered beyond the scope of the present study and excluded from analyses.

### 4.1 The Procedural Context

The procedural context fulfills the functions of conveying the lesson aims, delivering instructions, shifting pedagogical contexts, and general classroom management, and occurred in every lesson analyzed. While in solo-

taught L2 classrooms, procedural information is typically conveyed via monologue (Seedhouse, 2004), this was not the case in the team-taught classroom. Excerpt 1 is a typical example of the team-taught procedural context.

*Excerpt 1. Tohoku, June 4, 2015 (Data No. 1)*

*The bell has rung to signal the start of class.*

```
01  JTE:  okay please stand u:p whose bento is this? whose?
02         whose bento? dare no sutemasu kedo daijoubu desu
03         ka((tr: whose is it? I'll throw it away alright))
04         okay <good afternoon everyone>
05  LL:    good afternoon
06  ALT:   good afternoon everyo::ne
07  LL:    good afternoon
08  JTE:   okay you can sit down whose bento is this whose
09         bento(1.5) nagisawa-san ((tr: Mr. Nagisawa))
10         yours is this yours
11  L:     yes.
12  JTE:   okay today ben-sensei came to our class so:: let's
13         start with some warm up and after that we will have main
14         activity so:: at first ((gazes to ALT)) °stand up?°
15  ALT:   yeah we'll do a criss cross game.
16  JTE:   okay so everyone please stand up stand up ()
17         ((students stand))
18  ALT:   so we'll start with simple questions
19  JTE:   very easy ((gazes to ALT)) °hai° ((tr: okay))
```

Excerpt 1 contains several TRPs, managed in various ways, although the JTE appears to dominate next-speaker nomination rights throughout. The first TRP without a speaker-nomination act occurs in line 07, with potential for both teachers to self-nominate, and the JTE takes the initiative in line 08 to conduct classroom management. At the TCU in line 11, the JTE again self-

nominates to communicate procedural information. The JTE clearly orients to her own authority in next-speaker selection. A similar phenomenon was identified by Butterfield and Bhatta, in their examination of IRF sequences, who point out that the JTE "seemed to be in charge of the overall management of the classroom and... allocated who spoke, and managed the progressivity of the activities in the lesson" (2015, p. 184). Interestingly, when the ALT attempts to assume conversational rights in line 18, the JTE demonstrates her control with an interruption in line 19, before verbally nominating the ALT (line 19: *hai*). The ALT orients to the JTE's elevated status – in ordinary conversation, such an interruption may be sanctioned (see Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Seedhouse, 2004). Here, the ALT does not exercise this right.

In the junior high school data, the procedural context was co-managed twice (Data 12 and 14), and both instances revealed a similar rights distribution, demonstrated in Excerpt 2:

*Excerpt 2. Kyushu, November 30, 2017 (Data No. 14)*

*Greetings and warm-up drills have been completed. The teachers introduce the next context.*

```
01  ALT:  so ((to JTE)) >should we begin (.) ˚today's lesson?˚<
02  JTE:  (0.7) hh ((to LL)) firstly lets (.) <review> (.)
03        the last lesso:n. kino. nani wo yatta desho ((tr
04        : What did we do yesterday?))
05  LL:   michi annai:: ((tr: giving directions))
06  JTE:  no yatsu ha yonda hh ((tr: we read that, yeah))
07        ((JTE moves to turn on digital screen))(3.2)
08  ALT:  ((to L)) have you got the new words? ((holds up sheet of
09        paper))(2.6)
10  JTE:  ((to LL)) miemasu ka. ((tr: can you see [the screen]?))
```

Here both teachers orient to the JTE's elevated status. The excerpt

begins with the ALT asking a question to the JTE (lines 01-02), who does not respond, instead directing procedural information towards the students. In ordinary conversation, this lack of response may be sanctioned by the ALT who might repeat the question (see Seedhouse, 2004). The ALT, however, does not sanction the incomplete adjacency pair [3], displaying the same orientation as the JTE towards her elevated status, establishing her authority to nominate the next pedagogical task. A similar display of task-nomination rights is managed in a different manner in Excerpt 3.

*Excerpt 3. Tohoku, June 13, 2015 (Data No. 2)*

*The bell has just rung to signal the start of class.*

```
01  JTE:  good afternoon everyone
02  LL:   good afternoon mrs hada
03  ALT:  good afternoon everyo::ne
04  LL:   good afternoon ben
05  ALT:  cool sit do::wn.
06        ((gazes to JTE)) ((JTE nods))
07  ALT:  today w- we need to finish:: you::r (.)
08        presentations first (.) about (0.7) this sweets do you
09        remember? a::h ((smiles)) (2.3) last week only yuri i
10        think ((to JTE)) °only yuri?° ((JTE nods)) yuri's group
11        presented. we have (.) a few more groups to present so
12        please follow your paper
13  JTE:  take out your sheet (3.2)
14  ALT:  if you haven't got it (0.4) you're going to have to do
15        (0.3) you're going to have to do it again very (hh)
16        quickly (0.4) alright so:: >and do you remember <what
17        sweets you had? do remember <what you had>
18  JTE:  please come to the front. [and ta-    ]
19  ALT:                            [a::h please] come now
20  JTE:  take your sweets (0.6)
21  JTE:  ((gazes at L)) do you remember? (1.5)
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22  JTE:  ((gestures)) come to the front. (0.9)
23  ALT:  please come. everybody let's go >let's go let's go<
24        quickly::
```

Excerpt 3 differs slightly from the previous excerpts in two ways. Firstly, procedural information is delivered by the ALT (from line 07) rather than the JTE, demonstrating a greater involvement in the procedural context. Excerpt 3 also demonstrates a rare occurrence in the data in which the ALT self-nominates (line 05). The self-nomination occurs at the end of an adjacency pair (greeting-greeting), and at the end of the students' TCU. A TRP follows again at the end of line 5, in which the ALT seems to seek permission to self-nominate (demonstrated by the ALT's gaze and the ensuing nod from the JTE). Rare amongst the data of the procedural context is the ALT's two other instances of self-nomination; line 14 and line 19. In line 15, the self-nomination occurs after a considerable pause. As for the self-nomination overlap in line 19, the ALT seems to have interpreted a TRP (indicated by falling intonation in line 18) and self-nominates to reiterate the JTE's instruction. Once the overlap has been completed, however, the JTE self-nominates again to complete the conveying of procedural information. Similar instances occurred elsewhere in the data, but in no instance did ALTs self-nominate after overlap, displaying a consistent orientation to the JTEs' speaker nomination rights. A successful self-nomination is carried out by the ALT in line 23, after a pause following the JTE's TCU in line 22.

In solo-taught classes, Seedhouse claims "the turn-taking system in the procedural context is... probably the most simple and straightforward and by far the most homogenous of all the L2 classroom contexts" (2004, p. 133). In the team-taught classroom, however, the presence of two teachers introduces some heterogeneity. Nevertheless, interaction between teachers in this context seems to follow general trends regarding next-speaker and next-task nomination rights. Throughout the data, speaker nomination rights were

dominated by the JTE. ALT self-nominations typically occurred after extended periods of silence following the JTE's TCUs (e.g., Excerpt 2, line 07), often to confirm or supplement instructions delivered by the JTE.

The nomination of classroom tasks (e.g., shifting from procedural talk to task-based) also followed a similar trend, being JTE-dominated. This assumption of nomination rights was typically established at the beginning of each lesson, in which the JTE was the first speaker to initiate interaction (Excerpt 1) or introduce the lesson content (Excerpt 2). Instances in which the ALT appeared to be nominating the next task (e.g., Excerpt 1, line 16), only occurred when the pedagogical context had already been established by the JTE.

Given the JTEs' cultural power (Miyazato, 2009), this organization of speaking rights and teachers' orientation to them is not necessarily surprising, and corroborates previous research that has identified the local teachers' rights to classroom management (Park, 2014; Butterfield & Bhatta, 2015; Lee, 2015). This hierarchical structure (JTE → ALT → Students) may be conducive to smooth classroom operation, by reducing the potential for conflicting instructions delivered by different teachers. In the next section, we will examine interaction in meaningful talk.

### 4.2 The Meaning-Oriented Context

The focus in this context is meaningful communication, and little to no attention is given to linguistic form. In team-taught classrooms, this might refer to teacher-teacher or teacher-student interaction. In this context, topic-nomination rights become relevant, as interactants negotiate the content. The meaning-oriented context typically occurred at the beginning of classes, and was teacher-centered, with only one instance of active student participation in the data (see Excerpt 5). The context occurred in five of the 15 classes (Data 3, 6, 7, 9, and 11). Excerpt 3 provides an interesting example of the context managed by two JTEs and an ALT:

*Excerpt 4. Tohoku, July 21, 2016 (Data No. 11)*

*The bell has just rung to signal the start of class.*

01 ALT: alright. (.) everyo::ne good morning:: this is the last
02 class i have with you-
03 JTE1: °we have together°
04 ALT: ((gazes to JTE1)) together with *tanaka-sensei*
05 ((tr: Mr. Tanaka)) last class (.) we have with you
06 befo::re summer holiday. and i- i'm very excited (.) SO-
07 JTE2: what's your plan for the summer holidays?
08 ALT: well. (0.4) next week I will go to tokyo (.)
09 osaka and kyoto.
10 JTE2: ↑oh ((nods at LL))
11 ALT: a::nd after that (.) when i come back to shonai i plan
12 on attending (.) sakata and ((gazes at JTE2)) akikagawa?
13 a::h fireworks festival.
14 JTE2: (0.3) akagawa
15 ALT: [akagawa.] yes
16 JTE2: [akagawa::] (.) ((to LL)) have you ever been to
17 akagawa:: fireworks? ((raises hand))
18 ALT: hands up ((raises hand))
19 JTE2: *akagawa hanabi taikai* ((tr: Akagawa fireworks festival))
20 ((sporadic raising of hands by LL))
21 JTE2: o::h a few have been
22 ALT: is it fun? it is really fun! it is so exciting last
23 year i went to *hanabi matsuri* ((tr: fireworks festival))
24 and it was so good I cannot wait to go again this year
25 ((gazes to JTE2))
26 JTE2: i've never se::n hh (0.2) ((gazes to JTE1)) how about you?
27 JTE1: a::h I used to work at a high school in tsuruoka

In this excerpt, the context is abruptly introduced by JTE2 in line 07, who interrupts the ALT's attempt to shift pedagogical context (evidenced by the brief pause before an exaggerated "so"). The sudden interruption to

change context is a more serious violation of conversational norms than those demonstrated in Excerpts 1 and 2, but one that again goes unsanctioned. Instead, the ALT orients to JTE2's greater nomination rights by swiftly responding (line 08). This phenomenon was covered in detail by Lee (2015), who noted that when instruction was remedied (the flow of the lesson changed or adjusted), "the remedial proposals were issued solely by the [local teacher] when the [native English teacher] had done, or was doing, something that the [local teacher] considered as being problematic" (p. 160). In the data for this study, as in Lee's, there were no instances of the ALT remedying instruction.

Here again, speaker nomination rights lie with the JTEs. JTE1 self-nominates to conduct repair in line 03, while JTE2 is the sole nominator of the next speaker in the remainder of the excerpt (nominating students in lines 16-17, and JTE1 in lines 26-27). The ALT displayed limited rights to self-nomination, to add to her own utterance (line 11), or JTE2's TCU (line 19).

As for topic nomination, Excerpt 3 was typical talk in that the broad topic was nominated by a JTE. In the data, the sub-topic was occasionally nominated by ALTs, but there was only one instance of an ALT selecting the broad topic: Excerpt 5. This excerpt is unique in being the only instance in the data of active involvement by all parties (JTE, ALT, students) in meaning-oriented talk.

*Excerpt 5. Tohoku, June 25, 2015 (Data No. 4)*

*While the JTE is preparing information on the upcoming exam, the ALT engages in discussion.*

```
01  ALT:    i did uh: wanko soba. wanko soba[4)]
02  JTE:    ↑oh::
03  ALT:    last- >two years ago< i did (.) i did ahh >wanko soba<
04          yeah? i ate thirty six ((writes 36 on blackboard))
05          >about thirty six< bowls two years. ago >two years ago<
```

06 L1: ()
07 ALT: ((to L1)) yeah. ((to LL)) this year this year how
08 many (.) do you think?
09 L2: one hundred?
10 ALT: no: ˚it wasn't˚ ((shakes head))
11 JTE: seventy.
12 ALT: ((gazes to JTE, shakes head))
13 L3: fifty
14 ALT: fifty?
15 L4: <fifty three>
16 ALT: fifty three.
17 L5: [four]
18 L2: [seve]nty::
19 ALT: ((to L5)) four. just four? hh
((4 lines omitted))
20 ALT: ((gestures to L2))
21 L2: seventy eight
22 ALT: seventy eight. I a:te ((writes on blackboard))
23 <seventy three>.
24 LL/HRT: oh::
25 JTE: twi- twice
26 ALT: yea::h so double. so i was happy. very happy about
27 that. (.) so you have to you have to beat the record.
28 >has anyone here< done wanko soba?
29 L6: yeah
30 ALT: how many (0.3) did you eat?
31 L6: twenty: ()
32 ALT: twenty nine? (0.3) twenty five. very healthy. one uh::
33 (0.2) one normal portion is fifteen.

Excerpt 5 is unique in that it was the only instance of the ALT nominating the topic of the talk and displaying next-speaker nomination

rights (lines 08 and 28). The JTE seems to have taken on a facilitator role, only self-nominating to offer a response (line 11) and make a clarification (line 25). Interestingly, this shift in speaker rights seemed to encourage more meaningful interaction on behalf of both the students and the ALT. The type of response given by L6 in line 31 and the subsequent (albeit brief) exchange was the only example of meaningful (rather than formulaic or drill, see Excerpt 6, below) interaction in the data. A similar instance of meaning-oriented communication was identified by Yoshida (2016), in which the JTE forced two-way interaction by explaining that she and the ALT "were not able to talk directly with each other because an imaginary wall stood between them" (p. 37). Under these circumstances, the power structure was ameliorated, and students were able to participate in meaningful interaction. It is possible that artificial barriers (such as the JTE effectively removing herself from center stage in the above excerpt) are necessary to encourage a shift in speaking rights and to facilitate student participation.

IRF patterns were also common in this context, even when the focus was superficially on meaning, not on linguistic form. An example of a rather dry IRF sequence is shown in Excerpt 6:

*Excerpt 6. Tohoku, July 8, 2016 (Data No. 6)*

*The ALT is asking questions of students about the weekend while the JTE checks attendance.*

```
01  ALT   what will you do o::n this weekend?
02  L:    °club activity°
03  ALT:  and whe::re will you do it? (0.1) where?
04  L:    °(school) °
05  ALT:  m:: thank you very much
```

The feedback offered in line 05 of this excerpt would be exceedingly unnatural in ordinary, meaningful talk, and is a feature peculiar to interaction

in the language classroom, as "linguistic forms and patterns of interaction... are subject to evaluation by the teacher in some way" (Seedhouse, 1996, p. 109). This extract is representative of ALT-student interaction in the data, which was typically product-oriented, rather than genuinely meaningful communication. It has been included here to highlight the uniquely meaning-oriented interaction in Excerpt 5.

In the data analyzed, the meaning-oriented context was usually initiated by the JTE, and generally carried out between the JTEs and ALTs without proactive student involvement (Excerpt 5 being an exception). No instances of the meaning-oriented context occurred in the junior high school data. Topic nomination rights were dominated by JTEs, while ALTs had limited rights to sub-topic nomination. Next-speaker nomination rights also fell into a similar hierarchal structure, although a change in rights distribution in Excerpt 5 seemed to elicit greater student participation.

## 5. Discussion

The aim of team teaching was stated above as increasing opportunities for students to engage in communication-centered classes through collaboration between all participants (students, JTEs, and ALTs). Both the original aims of team teaching and recent theory such as team learning suggest that this requires both teachers to operate on equal terms.

The findings of this study cast doubt as to whether equality is so readily achieved. Analyses of both procedural and meaning-oriented contexts highlight a hierarchical trend in speaker and topic nomination rights, with JTEs at the top, and ALTs below. The findings seem to corroborate previous research in which ALTs were relegated to positions of compliance (Lee, 2015) and local teachers maintained control over the general management of the class and pedagogical tasks (Butterfield & Bhatta, 2015). The fact that both JTEs and ALTs demonstrate a shared orientation to this hierarchy, and that

it is not specific to the Japanese context, indicates that it might be an inherent property of team teaching. Miyazato's (2009) conclusion that linguistic power does not bring ALTs on equal terms with the culturally powerful JTEs appears justified.

It seems then, that team teaching is not happening as intended. ALTs displayed limited rights to next-speaker and topic nomination in four of the five instances of meaning-oriented talk in the data, which resulted in one-sided, interview-like dialogues, with the ALTs simply responding to questions, rarely posing their own. As these nomination rights are equally shared in ordinary talk (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974), the case could be made that such interaction is simply an extension of the ALT-as-human-tape-recorder phenomenon [5]. While it was noted that this dynamic may be conducive to smooth classroom operation in the procedural context, it is less welcome in the meaning-oriented context. Certainly, with the ALTs' overt orientation to the JTEs' rights, it is difficult to expect them to be able to participate equally in genuine, meaningful interaction.

Nevertheless, instances such as the ALT-student conversation in Excerpt 5 indicate that meaningful interaction is indeed possible. It was suggested (with reference to Yoshida's 2016 study), that in order to achieve such communication, teachers need to take active steps to shift the power balance. In this study, it was achieved by the JTE removing herself from a teaching role, whereas in Yoshida's study, this was done by positing an imaginary wall between the two teachers, requiring the students to act as go-betweens. Such pre-planned, artificial rearrangements of classroom interaction may be necessary to facilitate communicative interaction.

Given the orientation of both JTEs and ALTs to the rights distributions demonstrated in the data, it is likely that awareness of power dynamics by both parties is a necessary condition to allow for the creation of contexts in which allocation of these rights are shifted to achieve greater equality in participation and therefore more meaningful communication between

teachers and students. Practicing teachers might achieve this awareness by engaging in reflection of their own lessons through shared watching of video-recorded lessons, for instance, or through constructive collaboration outside of class (see Pearce, 2019). The rarity of meaningful interaction in the data (only occurring in five of 15 lessons) also suggests that teachers may need to develop strategies to create opportunities for student-inclusive talk, such as setting aside time at the end of each lesson.

In the literature review, it was mentioned that team teaching was introduced into schools haphazardly, an afterthought of political strategy. Team teaching was unsupported by theory, and teachers were unprepared to implement the practice. In a way, this remains the case. Licensing programs for JTEs often lack a team-teaching component (Asaoka, 2019), and there is no mention of ALTs in the current Course of Study (MEXT, 2018). Due to the lack of team-teaching training, and of shared guidelines, it is little wonder that the most common criticism of team teaching is that neither teacher knows exactly what they should be doing (Glasgow, 2013).

If team teaching is to be a legitimate approach to promoting communicative classes, initiative beyond the practitioner level is also needed. With more than three decades of research on team teaching practice, it is no longer reasonable that newly trained teachers should approach the classroom without any idea of how to team teach. Textbooks might be better designed with team-taught classes in mind (as Glasgow, 2013, suggests). Strategies for overcoming the hierarchical structure of interaction identified in this paper, in order to promote more meaningful interaction, should be incorporated into teacher training. It is time for the research to inform practice, in order to better realize the goals that team teaching seeks to achieve.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper examined the dynamics of team-teacher interaction at

secondary schools in Japan in light of policy and team-teaching theory. A hierarchical organization in interaction was identified that may form a barrier to the realization of genuine, meaningful interaction in the classroom, and casts doubt on the feasibility of theoretical collaborative models of team teaching that require teachers to maintain equal status. This interactional organization seems to corroborate previous research on power imbalances in the classroom, but for the first time, this imbalance was addressed with empirical data and with reference to the espoused goals of team-teaching practice, showing how such a dynamic impacts their accomplishment. It was suggested that team-teaching theory and teacher training should include the findings of team-teaching research, in order to better equip teachers to create opportunities for meaningful interaction in their classes.

## Notes

1) South Korea operates an assistant language teacher program similar to the JET Programme, called the English Program in Korea (EPIK).

2) In this paper, meaningful interaction is defined as instances of interaction in which the focus is the conveying of meaning beyond the successful production of linguistically sound forms.

3) In CA, an adjacency pair is any pair of utterances that complete a social action (i.e., question-response, greeting-greeting).

4) Wanko soba is a style of noodle eating in which small portions of soba noodles are eaten and the bowls refilled immediately and continuously until the customer is satisfied.

5) While tape-recorder criticism referred to ALTs providing model pronunciations, the interaction in this study was more interview-like, and thus displayed more linguistically-rich input. *Hi-fi audio input* might a more appropriate, albeit somewhat cynical, label.

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