

# Children's Eikaiwa Teacher Perspectives on Team Teaching

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*Team teaching is a significant topic of academic inquiry throughout Japanese mainstream English language educational contexts. This study reported on the experiences and perspectives of a small sample of teachers employed within a children's conversational English school who practised team teaching regularly. Data was obtained via a survey and follow-up interview. In addition to brief statistical analyses, a thematic qualitative framework derived from the literature and the authors' personal reflections was used to analyse and interpret the survey results and interview transcripts. The literature indicated that teachers in mainstream contexts are primarily concerned over a lack of clarity regarding teacher roles, despite a relatively consistent convention regarding the assignment of roles existing elsewhere in the literature. However, the research presented here indicated the existence of and a preference towards an alternative team-teaching dynamic wherein roles are more dynamically negotiated. This presents researchers with a unique and yet hitherto unexplored perspective on team teaching within this context.*

**Keywords:** team teaching, teacher roles, English as a foreign language, eikaiwa, young learners, assistant language teachers

Team teaching is a common feature of English language classrooms throughout East Asia and likely originated in Japan where it has been in use for over 50 years (Brown,

2016; Carless, 2006; Fujimoto-Adamson, 2010; Kano et al., 2016; Tajino & Smith, 2016). The practice of inviting assistant language teachers (ALTs) to Japan to work alongside Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) began as early as 1952 as part of a program that would eventually morph into the Japanese Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET) in 1987 (Juppe, 1998; Kano et al., 2016). At the time of its inception, the JET Programme began with 848 participants which in 1997 grew to a population of 5,030 (Juppe, 1998, p. 114). Since then, the program has grown to include approximately 4,500 ALTs annually (Tajino & Smith, 2016, p. 13), with 5,234 ALTs participating in the 2019–2020 period (JET Programme, 2019), bringing the overall total of past and present participants to around 70,000 (Carless, 2006, p. 342). In 2014, the Japanese government set out on an initiative to place “[ALTs] in all elementary schools by 2019” (MEXT, 2014, as cited in Kano et al., 2016, p. 74). With this proliferation in mind, it is perhaps little wonder that team teaching has become one of the key topics concerning English language teaching research in Japan (Tajino & Tajino, 2000).

Team-teaching research commonly focuses on Japanese elementary, junior, and senior high schools, what we will refer to collectively as mainstream contexts. To our knowledge, the present study represents the first time that team teaching as a topic of research has been examined within the context of English conversational schools in Japan, which are referred to as *eikaiwa* in Japanese. With regard to *eikaiwa* research, there is a scarcity of scholarly articles in

general (Cater, 2017; Hooper et al., 2020; Nagatomo, 2013; Nuske, 2014). This is despite the fact that, taken as a collective, *eikaiwa* are equal to the JET Programme in terms of being a major entry point for most foreign teachers into Japan (Cater, 2017, p. 1), not to mention their nationwide presence comprising a multibillion-yen industry (Hooper, 2018, p. 32; Taylor, 2017, p. 62), and employing approximately 15,000 foreign teachers (Nagatomo, 2013, p. 3), a figure which is similar in scale to the number of ALTs teaching in mainstream contexts (15,432) (MEXT, 2016, as cited in Kano et al., 2016, p. 74). Of the studies that do directly address *eikaiwa* (e.g., Bailey, 2007; Cater, 2017; Kubota, 2011; Tajima, 2019), most tend to focus on ideological critiques (Hooper, 2018, p. 33; Nuske, 2014, p. 108). A significant portion of this extracurricular context involves services called *kodomo no eikaiwa* that specifically target young learners, with some even catering to infants less than a year old, as can be seen by visiting the websites of the Aeon Corporation (<https://www.aeonet.co.jp/kids/>) or the Seiha Network (<https://www.seiha.com>).

Having first-hand knowledge of *eikaiwa* classes for children where team teaching is routinely practised, we can attest to the need for research that caters to teachers and policy makers working throughout this context. While principally following a reflective approach, we realised that our experiences and insights would be better supported by the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative data obtained from a sample of teachers with similar backgrounds. This, alongside the literature review, would allow us to triangulate our perspectives within a broader framework. While modest in scope, we hope that this study will break new ground by examining the team-teaching dynamic within *eikaiwa* lessons for young learners. To that end, the present study approached the following research question: What are *eikaiwa* teachers' perspectives on and experiences of

team-teaching roles in *eikaiwa* classes for children?

### Literature Review

*Team teaching* can be defined as any team of two or more teachers cooperating in some manner to deliver a lesson (Sponseller, 2016, p. 123; Tajino & Smith, 2016, p. 11). Indeed, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) defines *team teaching* as "any time two or more teachers work together to guide an individual learner or a group of learners toward a set of aims or objectives" (MEXT, 1994, p. 14, as cited in Carless, 2006, p. 343). In Japan, *team teaching* typically refers to the arrangement commonly found throughout mainstream English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms: a "native" English speaker, working in cooperation with a licenced JTE (Hawkinson, 2016, p. 183; Johannes, 2012, p. 165; Martin, 2010, p. 146; Tajino & Tajino, 2000, p. 4). Later, we suggest that the term native may no longer be broadly applicable throughout this context. Being that the common denominator amongst these teachers is typically their foreign nationality rather than their L1, we will adopt the all-encompassing term foreign teacher of English (FTE) to refer to all such teachers within this particular teaching context. These descriptors, however, do little in the way of illuminating the various intricacies of team teaching in practice. This is one of the central issues reported throughout the literature related to team teaching in mainstream contexts; teachers lack a unified set of established team-teaching methods and principles to follow (Shimaoka & Yashiro, 1990, as cited in Tajino, 2002, p. 30).

According to Brown (2016), the topic of teacher roles is a shared concern across multiple studies related to team teaching in Japan. Indeed, his own study found that teachers' uncertainty regarding their specific roles during team teaching was a commonly reported concern (Brown, 2016). Another

study found that “unclear role distribution” was one of the five major concerns arising from instances of team teaching (Rao & Chen, 2020, p. 339). A study by Mahoney (2004) demonstrated that teachers envisioned specific roles for themselves and their team-teaching counterparts, and that these perspectives and expectations were often in conflict with one another. The terminology used within official JET documents may be partly responsible for these reported uncertainties as terms such as “partner” and “assistant,” used in reference to the ALT, appear to confuse expectations over equality and subordinacy (Sponseller, 2016, p. 124). Carless (2006, p. 345) identifies three enabling features for successful team teaching in which the definition of “appropriate classroom roles” appears as a sub-category. Considering this, the lack of a clear consensus regarding team-teaching roles in practice warrants concern.

The idea that team teachers complement each other for the benefit of students strongly informs the designation of roles within EFL learning contexts (Carless, 2006; Rao & Chen, 2020). Medgyes (1992, as cited in Tajino & Tajino, 2000, p. 3) suggested that the presence of the two teachers balances their inherent strengths and deficiencies, and that this was an ideal arrangement for EFL contexts. This lends credence to the idea that each teacher has a specific role to play in the classroom, composed of activities and responsibilities that best match their abilities and traits (Tajino & Tajino, 2000). What follows is a breakdown of the components that contribute to each teacher’s ideal role according to this logic. The FTE, due to their perceived English first language (L1) status, possesses greater communicative competency in the tutored language and is therefore suited to active communication and interaction with students, while the JTE possesses better intuitions about the students’ L1 and is furthermore uniquely

positioned to appreciate the language acquisition process from a second language (L2) learner’s perspective (Carless, 2006; Carless & Walker, 2006; Nuske, 2014; Rao & Chen, 2020; Tajino & Tajino, 2000). Each embodies a cultural element that further influences their roles. The FTE’s possession of target cultural knowledge enables them to act as an ambassador, or “inter-cultural informant” (Tajino, 2002, p. 30), while the JTE’s knowledge of local culture and language enables them to act as a classroom manager and language/intercultural mediator (Brown, 2016; Juppe, 1998; Miyazato, 2009; Rao & Chen, 2020). In practice, it would appear that each teacher leverages their inherent strengths in a delicate power struggle so as to maintain active participation and autonomy within the classroom; however, as Miyazato (2009) demonstrated, this is not always the outcome.

Despite the FTE’s functional proficiency, grammar and linguistic instruction typically form part of the JTE’s role as it is thought that they are likely to have a firmer grounding in “the grammar and syntax of the language they are teaching” (Juppe, 1998, pp. 120–121). The fact that the JTE is both fluent in their students’ L1 and a trained and licenced teaching professional likely contributes to this expectation, as it is not expected nor required for FTEs to be trained or licenced teaching professionals in most situations. Furthermore, we should consider that, apart from their foreign national status and perceived fluent English language ability, FTEs are often only required to have a bachelor’s degree, with said degree not needing to be related to the field of language education (Cater, 2017, p. 1; Hooper et al., 2020, p. 41; Nuske, 2014, p. 108; Sponseller, 2016, p. 123). While seemingly counterproductive, making FTEs “less threatening” may have been an intentional design choice “in order to equalise the power balance between” team teachers and to lower resistance on the part

of JTEs who feared a loss of autonomy within the classroom (Miyazato, 2009, pp. 41–42). It is interesting to note that while *eikaiwa*, and *eikaiwa* FTEs in turn, are often stigmatised (Hooper et al., 2020), FTEs in mainstream contexts are in no way inherently more qualified than their *eikaiwa* counterparts based on common hiring practices, which also rely on English proficiency and a bachelor's degree as being the standard requirement for employment eligibility. In contrast, JTEs in *eikaiwa* contexts are not typically required to be trained and licensed teachers. However, in both mainstream and extracurricular contexts, the JTE's perceived superior Japanese language ability as well as their perceived L2 language learning experiences appear to predispose them towards translating grammatical functions into their students' L1 where such teaching practices persist.

By fulfilling their roles, the teachers in effect come to represent complementary models; the FTE acts as a model for fluent English language discourse and as an embodied representation of foreign culture, while the JTE presents the students with a model of a successful second language learner (Juppe, 1998; Mahoney, 2004; Medgyes, 1992, as cited in Rao & Chen, 2020, p. 335; Tajino, 2002). It is assumed that such models will motivate students on two counts; the FTE model provides motivation to speak English and engage with foreign cultures, while the JTE model provides a proof of concept that learning an L2 is possible (Juppe, 1998). The JTE may be of particular benefit to the students as an inspirational role model given that the FTE is typically someone who is more socially and culturally distant to the learners, existing beyond that which is reasonably expectable as an achievement goal (Murphey, 1998).

Thus, to summarise, team teaching in mainstream contexts typically refers to a teaching partnership between a JTE and an FTE. By virtue of their unique attributes, it is expected that each teacher is predisposed to

a specific role, and by performing these roles each teacher in turn represents a type of complementary model: the FTE acts as a model of fluency and as an embodiment of foreign culture, while the JTE acts as a model of a successful language learner. While other approaches to team teaching can and do exist (e.g., Kano et al., 2016; Tajino & Tajino, 2000), what we have outlined here might be fairly described as being the conventional approach to team teaching in mainstream contexts. Despite its emphasis on a principled delineation between teacher roles, the literature indicates that confusion over teacher roles remains a key issue. Finally, the roles that FTEs and JTEs are called upon to play in extracurricular contexts may not differ significantly from their mainstream counterparts. This study aims to help illuminate the unexplored intricacies of team teaching in *eikaiwa* for young learners.

## Methods

### Context and Participants

The persons involved as well as the data collected within this study originate from within the same institution. This study is thus not examining *eikaiwa* classes for young learners in general, but is instead looking at this context through the lens of a single institution in the hopes of furthering the discussion about team teaching within such a context. The current study involved teachers working within a professional *eikaiwa* for young learners, hereafter referred to as the institution. The institution caters to ages 0–16 with a maximum of ten students in each class. Lessons are taught by both an FTE and a JTE. Institutional policy dictates that, in principle, the FTE is to lead the lesson and has the final say on lesson content. The institution provides a curriculum that defines a list of monthly themes, each of which contains a specific language learning goal. These goals involve vocabulary lists (6–8 words) and corresponding grammatical examples that generate closed dialogues. This approach remains consistent across all

age groups with the key difference being relative increase in sentence length, instances of verb conjugation, and tense complexity over time. Teachers are free to plan activities in support of these goals and are trained to construct lesson plans using the presentation, practice and production (PPP) methodology (Harmer, 2015).

The study sample involved eight FTEs. The participants held positions as foreign teacher trainers, meaning that along with normal teaching duties, additional responsibilities included teacher training, lesson observations and evaluations, and self-initiated research and development. Individual demographic descriptors are unavailable due to the small sample size making it possible to identify individual participants, and they agreed to participate only when provided with anonymity. The minimum length of residency in Japan was 3–6 years and the maximum was more than 10 years. The minimum tenure at the institution was 3–6 years and the maximum was 6–10 years. Three teachers reported their Japanese language ability as below beginner, another three as intermediate, and two declined to answer.

## Design

Participants gave informed consent to complete an anonymous online survey and to attend a follow-up online individual interview conducted using video conferencing software. All participants completed a survey; however, only six attended the follow-up interview. The survey contained multiple choice and checkbox questions related to the topic of team teaching in three distinct categories: teacher roles, lesson planning, and working alongside team teachers. The interview format was informal and unstructured, being designed to give participants an opportunity to expand on and better represent their perspectives and experiences.

The quantitative data obtained from the survey responses exist primarily for

exploratory and supplementary purposes orientated towards a better understanding of this particular teaching context. This analysis is designed to illustrate the sample's general perspectives towards team teaching and is not intended to be generalised to a target population beyond this specific context. A theory-driven analysis of the interview transcripts provides qualitative data and is interpretative; participant accounts are analysed using an interpretive lens that is based on both the literature presented here as well as our own experiences as long-serving *eikaiwa* FTEs at the same institution as the participants.

## Findings and Discussion

### Quantitative Data

To illustrate their implicit perspectives on team-teaching roles, participants were asked to select which abilities they would use to describe both FTEs and JTEs from a list. The results are presented in Table 1. Participants commonly attributed both FTEs and JTEs with abilities that, according to the conventional approach to team teaching, would enable them to fulfil their counterpart's role. There was a particular lack of consensus between participants on FTE-exclusive abilities, with only half of the participants agreeing that FTEs' abilities include understanding foreign cultures and possessing "native"<sup>1</sup> English accents. Instead, FTEs scored highly in abilities that would predispose them to their counterpart's role such as having an understanding of English grammar and the ability to connect with students. Participants demonstrated a much stronger consensus on JTE abilities, with all participants agreeing with the notion that JTEs are able to understand and connect with the students, as well as manage the

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<sup>1</sup> The term "native" in this context is problematic and warrants unpacking, though this is beyond the scope of this article. For our purposes, the term may reasonably be construed as common parlance across the broader context of EFL education in Japan, which is why we included it within the survey.

classroom. Furthermore, seven of the participants agreed with the remainder of the JTE-exclusive abilities, except for “understand English language (grammar),” for which only six of them agreed. Unlike their mainstream counterparts, JTEs in this context do not require a teaching licence which might account for this being the lowest consensus for a JTE-typical type trait. JTEs did however score highly in the FTE-typical abilities “understand foreign culture” and “act as a model for English conversation.” Overall, JTEs were more consistently attributed with a broader range of skills, as can be seen in Table 1.

Participants tended to see individual attributes in both FTEs and JTEs, suggesting that they felt that both teachers are not sufficiently predisposed towards exclusive roles. This sentiment was echoed to a mild degree in the participants’ response to the question of who ought to act as the leader during lessons. Participants were evenly split

on assigning the FTE as leader or whether consideration of the actual teachers involved ought to be the deciding factor. Similarly, when asked about who should bear the main responsibility for lesson planning and content, half of the participants agreed that both teachers should share the responsibility, while the other half was split between FTEs and consideration of the actual teachers involved being the deciding factor. This is an interesting finding when we consider that FTEs in this context are explicitly charged with both leading lessons and having the final say on lesson content, which suggests that despite their empowered status, the FTE participants within this study demonstrate a mild preference towards shared responsibility with the JTE. The emergent theme here is that individual personal factors appear more important when deciding who should perform what role in a given team-teaching arrangement rather than assumptions about teachers’ innate abilities.

Table 1

*Comparison Between FTE and JTE-Typical Ability Scores as Reported by FTEs (N=8)*

FTE-Typical Abilities	Foreign Teachers	Japanese Teachers
1. Model for English conversation	(7) 87.5%	(6) 75%
2. Understand English language (grammar)	(7) 87.5%	(6) 75%
3. English fluency	(7) 87.5%	(4) 50%
4. Understand foreign cultures	(4) 50%	(6) 75%
5. Native English accent	(4) 50%	(0) 0%
JTE-Typical Abilities	Foreign Teachers	Japanese Teachers
6. Able to manage the classroom	(6) 75%	(8) 100%
7. Able to understand and connect with students	(7) 87.5%	(8) 100%
8. Understand what it is like to learn an L2	(5) 62.5%	(7) 87.5%
9. Understand Japanese culture	(4) 50%	(7) 87.5%
10. Japanese fluency	(0) 0%	(7) 87.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>59</b>

Note. Participants could ascribe an attribute to both FTEs and JTEs.

Table 2 shows the results of a survey for FTEs about issues with JTEs. When we consider that, among other issues reported,

the most common (n=7) was the tendency for JTEs to not confront FTEs directly when they have an issue with their counterpart, we

might infer that the participants emphasise cooperation and interaction over strict adherence to predetermined roles. However, another finding was that despite strong agreement between teachers on the JTEs' theorised ability to manage the classroom, six of the eight participants reported that they had issues involving some of their counterparts' inability or unwillingness to enact classroom management and discipline.

Three other commonly reported issues (n=6, respectively) were JTEs spending large amounts of time on non-teaching duties, JTEs failing to enact classroom discipline, and difficulty with JTEs offering effective translations to students. These findings indicate that despite impartiality towards role-sharing, the participants consider translation and classroom management to be a necessary role exclusive to JTEs with the latter being of particular concern to FTEs.

Table 2

*Problems Reported by Participants When Working with Japanese Teachers (N=8)*

Reported Problem	Percentage
1. JTEs don't confront you directly when they have a problem with you or your lessons.	(7) 87.5%
2. JTEs won't translate what you want them to say effectively	(6) 75%
3. JTEs don't manage the classroom and enact discipline	(6) 75%
4. There isn't enough time to discuss teaching and professional matters	(6) 75%
5. JTEs spend most of their time on non-teaching duties	(6) 75%
6. JTEs expect me to plan the entire lesson	(4) 50%
7. JTEs don't understand English	(4) 50%
8. JTEs rarely talk to you	(3) 37.5%
9. JTEs rarely speak English	(3) 37.5%
10. JTEs don't respect your ideas	(2) 25%
11. JTEs don't let you participate in lesson planning	(1) 12.5%
12. JTEs won't let you lead the lesson	(1) 12.5%
13. N/A	(0) 0%

*Note.* FTEs were requested to select all that apply. Questions based on Kano et al. (2016).



## Qualitative Data

During the interviews, some participants questioned whether having a JTE present in the classroom disincentivises student engagement with both the FTE and the English language. Participant 5 (hereafter P5) described how JTEs provide an avenue for students to avoid engaging with the English language and that without them students would be forced to directly confront both English and the FTE. P2 and P6 made similar comments about JTEs actively disincentivising engagement by “spoon-feeding” the students, which they described as either unnecessary L1 explanation or translation. As P2 remarked, “Sometimes we take away, or most of the time the JTEs take away the ‘ability to think’ from the kids.” P3 instead described how the JTE acts as a kind of interface between the FTE and the students, like a “security net” that protects the students when they do not understand the FTE.

On the topic of defining roles, P6 provided a description of roles that more closely aligned with the conventional approach, provided that the FTE was qualified to lead the lesson effectively, also mentioning that the JTEs’ role included translation and classroom control. Some participants, however, echoed the neutral sentiment found in the survey results regarding clearly defined roles. P4, for example, wanted to avoid using the term “assistant” to describe the JTE’s general role in practice while P2 remarked that rather than having a strictly defined role, the JTE ought to provide “support, not just appear to be a translator.” In these examples, there is an expressed desire for the JTE to act as a complement to the FTE, not as an assistant, suggesting that the specific responsibilities each teacher must fulfil are more fluid. P4 best described this fluid dynamic:

It's kind of like tag team wrestling. You know, like you put in your two cents and the Japanese teacher says something. You have this kind of vibe going on. You feel the

synergy, you know? You demonstrate the language, you demo a game together, those things are really important, really fun, and it really helps the kids learn.

The “synergy” this participant refers to perhaps best describes what the teachers in this study find valuable about team teaching. Several participants described a practical element to this dynamic, noting that it was useful to have another teacher in the room to help remember things or handle classroom materials. In the above excerpt, P4 suggested, as did others, that such teacher interaction was beneficial for the students. In this vein, P1 remarked:

... sometimes when I ask the JT[E] about certain things that are not like, “Oh, you didn’t forget...? Where’s this...?” and they respond to me in English, they [the students] think we are just talking to each other. They can see we are communicating in the language we try and teach.

In summary, it was not a clear breakdown and allotment of responsibilities that some participants found most valuable, but rather it was whether the teaching partnership provided mutual support and the opportunity to interact with their counterparts in front of their students: the synergy dynamic. Despite the tendency for participants to assign JTEs the role of translator and disciplinarian, this may simply reflect that the one constant among teachers is the JTEs’ fluency in the students’ L1; ergo, it might simply be an unavoidable responsibility on their behalf.

The dynamic presented here provides a unique perspective that differs from the conventional approach to teacher roles. Rather than the teachers representing two exclusive models, with the JTE acting as an example of a successful L2 learner and the FTE acting as a model for fluent English communication, it is the act of the two successfully and positively communicating and negotiating meaning that provides the most beneficial model for the students.



Relating this to Murphey (1998), observing a “near-peer role model” (the JTE) successfully communicating and negotiating with a foreign English speaker may be exceptionally motivating for students in this context.

This sentiment was reflected in the participants’ complaints; rather than describing specific role failures, participants were likely to report actions or behaviours that risk jeopardising this dynamic. Both P5 and P6 noted a lack of consistency between counterparts, potentially undermining the dynamic in these instances. Unlike the FTEs featured in the literature, participants did not report experiencing confusion or obscurity when it came to the matter of individual responsibility and who should act as lead. Again, participants tended to emphasise the personal-individual contribution to the team dynamic. As P2 put it:

I think [our institution’s] way of giving roles, it’s very clear. To be honest, for me it’s just a matter of how you deal with your workmates, so it boils down to each [other’s] attitudes, you know, if you would fit, if they would fit with me or not, then both of us must make an adjustment so just we can do our job.

Quantitative data suggest that the barriers to achieving this synergy dynamic are a) a lack of non-teaching time available for collaboration, b) a lack of transparency on the part of the JTEs, c) the preoccupation of JTEs with non-teaching duties, and finally, d) personal differences. This is because these examples appear to directly impact both trust and rapport, elements that are integral to the development and maintenance of this dynamic.

Despite the promise of this dynamic, some participants noted that it was trust built on rapport and reputation for being a reliable FTE that led to some JTEs becoming disengaged from the partnership; trust and rapport ironically broke the dynamic rather than fortify it. As P4 reported:

... the Japanese teachers, just in my case, they trust my judgement. And I think that’s

one of the reasons why some of those teachers just go off and do whatever they do because they trust me. But that’s not what their job is, their job is not to just let the foreign teacher do the lesson and they can do whatever they want. That’s not what team teaching is.

P5 made mention of the same phenomenon. When JTEs become disengaged from the lesson they risk missing opportunities for dynamic support such as L1 intervention or operating classroom equipment, and this was a common source of complaint for the participants. In mainstream contexts, FTE hiring practices appear to be designed in such a way as to guarantee an intake of young, untrained, and inexperienced teachers who also possibly lack broader Japanese cultural and linguistic knowledge (Miyazato, 2009, pp. 41–42). This suggests that FTEs are more at risk of being pushed to the periphery of classroom involvement. However, Miyazato (2009) suggests that the FTE’s language ability might trump the JTE’s understanding of student language and culture, allowing the FTE to exert greater control over the team-teaching dynamic. In addition, it follows that FTEs with longer residency and institutional tenure, or some Japanese language ability may further upset this balance, as these traits effectively grant them access to JTE-typical roles. This might offer an alternative explanation for the participants’ tendency to remark on JTE periphery involvement, although this contradicts the results recorded in Table 1, as the participants generally regarded JTEs as possessing a broader skill set. Another explanation may be the lack of time available for collaboration as reported in Table 2. In time-sensitive situations where teachers are under pressure to perform, without prior rehearsal or discussion, it seems that some teachers find it difficult to maintain active involvement, and the deciding factor may be their experience or confidence.

## Conclusion

Team teachers in mainstream contexts appear chiefly concerned with a lack of clarity over teacher roles as well as issues encountered when attempting to negotiate their roles in practice. However, this study has shown that team teachers in an *eikaiwa* context tended to emphasise interpersonal qualities and behaviours that reinforce or damage a synergistic teamwork dynamic. In doing so, participants presented an alternate perspective on team teaching that challenges the conventional wisdom regarding the assignment of teacher roles. Despite the emergent preference for more dynamic roles, participants generally considered translation and classroom control to be a JTE default responsibility, something that reflects research findings conducted in mainstream contexts. However, we suggest that this does not necessarily contradict the alternative dynamic presented here, given that the one constant in typical team-teaching arrangements is the JTE's Japanese fluency and familiarity with cultural standards. Such traits might reasonably predispose JTEs towards assuming primary responsibility over these roles. Participants noted a phenomenon where too much positive rapport appeared to disincentivise JTE involvement. This phenomenon might be in part due to power imbalances favouring the FTE and/or to the reported lack of time available for collaboration. While generally holding positive perspectives towards team teaching, participants did question whether the JTE provided a net benefit by acting as an interface between students and FTEs. On reflection, we do acknowledge past instances of classroom communication between FTEs and JTEs, including ourselves, that demonstrated positive models of successful L2 learning on the part of the JTEs, which might in turn provide a significant source of motivation for the students. We conclude

that more opportunities for team building as well as more time for collaborative lesson planning are key enabling features for fostering this alternative dynamic.

The insights gained from this small convenience sample, while not aspiring to generalisation, nonetheless present researchers with a unique perspective for approaching the topic of team teaching. Importantly, this study also provides critical insights into seldom represented *eikaiwa* contexts. Further research involving a larger sample size spanning multiple institutions, as well as input from a sample of JTEs, is required to provide a more complete picture of the benefits and challenges of team teaching within the context of *eikaiwa* classes for young learners. Finally, it is worth acknowledging that the participants' unique perspectives may reflect their relatively high average length of tenure; they have had the time to adapt their practice and assume dynamic roles that respond to the unique particularities of their context. While it is understandable that less practised teachers may desire or even benefit from more clearly defined roles, we have considered challenges to the current conventional reasoning behind teacher roles for FTEs and JTEs. The synergistic dynamic and the participants' responses promise a more give-and-take type relationship that we suggest is favourable for lowering conflict over roles and authority. Therefore, considering the suggested correlation between length of tenure and the development of a synergistic approach, one final conclusion is that encouraging a greater length of tenure amongst team teachers ought to be a concern for institutions interested in the stability that such a dynamic might promise, and as such, institutions should consider what incentives they can provide to inspire teachers to commit to longer terms.

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## Appendix

### Selected Questions from the Online Survey

1. What abilities would you use to describe foreign teachers in general? Select all that you think apply.

- (a) English fluency
- (b) Native English accent
- (c) Understand foreign culture
- (d) Understand the English language
- (e) Able to act as a model for English conversation
- (f) Japanese fluency
- (g) Understand Japanese culture
- (h) Understand what it is like to learn a second language
- (i) Able to understand and connect with students

(j) Able to manage the classroom

2. What abilities would you use to describe Japanese teachers in general? Select all that you think apply.

- (a) English fluency
- (b) Native English accent
- (c) Understand foreign culture
- (d) Understand English language
- (e) Able to act as a model for English conversation
- (f) Japanese fluency
- (g) Understand Japanese culture
- (h) Understand what it is like to learn a second language
- (i) Able to understand and connect with students
- (j) Able to manage the classroom

3. How much do you agree with the following statement: The Japanese teacher's main role is to translate/explain grammar and manage the classroom while the foreign teachers' main role is to act as a model for English dialogue and native fluency, as well as act as an 'ambassador' for foreign culture.

- (a) Strongly disagree
- (b) Disagree
- (c) Neutral
- (d) Agree
- (e) Strongly agree

4. Who should be the 'leader' during team taught lessons?

- (a) The foreign teacher
- (b) The Japanese teacher
- (c) It depends on the teachers involved
- (d) No one should be the leader, because both teachers are equals

5. Who should have the main responsibility for lesson planning and the final say on lesson content?

- (a) The Japanese teacher
- (b) The foreign teacher
- (c) Both should share the responsibility
- (d) It depends on the teachers involved

6. What problems have you faced with Japanese teachers? Select all that apply.

- (a) JTEs rarely talk to you
- (b) JTEs don't understand English
- (c) JTEs rarely speak English
- (d) JTEs don't respect your ideas
- (e) JTEs don't let you participate in lesson planning
- (f) JTEs expect me to plan the entire lesson
- (g) JTEs spend most of their time on non-teaching duties
- (h) JTEs won't let you lead the lesson
- (i) JTEs don't confront you directly when they have a problem with you or your lessons

- (j) JTEs won't translate what you want them to say effectively
- (k) JTEs don't manage the classroom and enact discipline
- (l) There isn't enough time to discuss teaching and professional matters
- (m) N/A

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