Jet, Net and Epik : Collaboration and Communication in East Asian ELT

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Judy YONEOKA

Kumamoto Gakuen University

概要

　日本英語教育に欠かせない JET programme は 1989 年に始まり、すでに 30 年となる。東アジアで JET programme に類した制度も次々とでき、韓国の EPIK（1995）と香港の NET（1998）プログラムが代表的である。本論はこの 3 プログラムを比較し、その共通点と相違点を指摘する。結果として、次の 2 点が分かった。1）それぞれの「英語母語話者」（NS）の定義に対する曖昧さがあり、実際に採用されている人材と異なる場合がある、2）ティームティーチングにそれぞれコミュニケーションの問題があるが、特に共通問題として授業前後に打ち合わせる時間が少ないことが分かった。最後に後者の問題解決のために、かつ 2020 年のコロナ禍で授業と会議がオンライン化される現代にも対応できる打ち合わせチェックリストの可能性を提案する。

1.　Introduction

As an international language, English has played an important part in cooperation and collaboration in Asia for several decades, and continues to do so today. Especially in the field of education, local English teachers across East Asia have had opportunities to collaborate and team teach with international teachers under the auspices of programs such as JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) programme in Japan, EPIK (English Program in Korea) and NET (Native English Speaker) scheme in Hong Kong.

　The first of these was the JET programme, begun in 1989, which celebrated its 30th year in 2019. In the 30-some years of its existence, it has taught a generation of young people to consider themselves a part of the wider world. Gone are the days when Japanese believed themselves to be unique and believed that foreigners could never really understand them, and vice versa. Gone are the television programs that touted non-Japanese who could use local dialects, eat natto or play shogi as *henna gaijin* (strange foreigners), replaced by programs featuring international *tarento* such as academic Robert Campbell, enka singer Gero, comedian Atsugiri Jason, Mongolian sumo wrestlers and a host of *halfs* (or doubles). Gone are the school children who say *harro* en masse and giggle in surprise when the answer comes back *ohayo gozaimasu*.

　However, critics point to falling TOEIC and TOEFL scores (not realizing that these standardized tests do not necessarily reflect conversational ability) and wonder about

how much success the program has actually had. As stated in one Japan Times article, "Interested observers typically divide into either JET-lovers or haters. Supporters, underlining the word "exchange" in the program's title, defend it for helping internationalize Japan. Critics, pointing to the word "teaching," attack it for failing to improve students' English proficiency and wasting money" (McCrostie, Japan Times, May 3, 2017).

In spite of what the critics say, the JET Programme has had great influence not only in Japan but across Asia. Similar schemes popped up in other Asian countries, including EPIK (English Program in Korea) in South Korea in 1995 and NET (Native English-speaking Teacher) in Hong Kong in 1998. Although such programs may have been started with JET in mind, they differ from their role model. Each is tailored to its own country's educational needs and priorities. On the other hand, they share a common need to bridge a communication gap between NESTs (Native English Speaking Teachers) and LETs (Local English teachers) for success both inside and outside the classroom. They also share similar problems, including time constraints, differences in English fluency, misunderstandings about classroom roles (Sponseller, 2017) and educational philosophies (Copland, Garton & Mann, 2016).

The present study will compare the three programs (NET, JET, and EPIK) and explore their similarities and differences. It will especially focus on issues of "native speakerism" or preferential treatment bordering on discrimination towards native English speakers in hiring, organization of team teaching, and facilitating communication between teachers.

2. Jet, Net and EPIK: an Overview

It has been 30 years since the well-known Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (for some reason, spelled in British English) brought 848 Assistant English Teachers (AETs) and Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs) from 4 countries to work together with Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs) in 1987. Since then, over 66,000 young people have come to Japan from over 67 countries as ALTs (Assistant Language Teachers, revised in 1989 with the inclusion of French and German, native speaker teachers), CIRs and SEAs (Sports Exchange Advisors, which were added to the programme in 1994). The highest year of JET intake was in 2002, with 6273 participants. Since then, it fell steadily until 2011 (4330 participants) but the rise again in recent years (5163 in 2017) is certainly due at least in part to the increased English education at elementary schools.

The EPIK program (English Program in Korea) began in 1995 with 59 NESTs from six English-speaking countries: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK and the US, and hired 2051 new teachers in 2011 (EPIK und., "Timeline"). However, EPIK went into some decline after that peak year (which also happened to be the peak year for Jet), and in 2015 had only 937 new teachers. Like Jet, it has risen again, with 1324 new recruits in 2018. Contracts are initially for one year, but may be renewed indefinitely with financial incentives offered for those who stay longer. Moreover, a partner program called TaLK

(Teaching and Learning in Korea) offers positions for "less" qualified native English teachers in rural elementary schools for contract periods starting from 6 months. Unlike Jet, both EPIK and TaLK hire native English speakers as teachers only, specifically from seven countries: the six listed above and recently-added South Africa. Provisions are made, however, for hiring Korean citizens with near-native English proficiency if they were educated in those countries.

Similarly, the NET (Native English Teacher) program in Hong Kong began in 1998 after the 1997 handover from Britain to China. It followed a predecessor program called the Expatriate English Language Teachers Pilot Scheme (EELTPS) begun in August 1987 with 30 Expatriate English Language Teachers (EELTs). In 1998, under the new NET scheme, 388 teachers were hired to teach in secondary schools (Education Bureau, Hong Kong, 2001). The program was expanded to primary schools in 2002, when a separate entity was set up to handle hiring, training and placement for this new program. A clear difference is made between primary and secondary school NETs, as evidenced here:

> Native English Speaker Teachers (NESTs) teaching in primary schools are expected to resource Local English Teachers (LETs) and disseminate good practices not only in school-based events but also in region-wide ones (which seems to suggest that NESTs are linguistically and pedagogically superior) those teaching in secondary schools are to collaborate with the LETs (perhaps suggesting a more equal partnership) (Tang, 2016, p. 39).

Now, there are estimated to be approximately 800-900 NET teachers throughout Hong Kong, with one for each public school being the norm. NET applicants "should be a native-speaker of English or possess native-speaker English competence" and are hired in several classifications depending on their qualifications. Moreover, teachers are hired initially for two years, have older age limits, and are provided financial "retention incentives" (RI) to stay longer, leading to an older, more experienced and possibly more professional cohort of teachers than the JET program, with some participants staying more than 10 years.

3. Native Speakerism in Asian Team-teaching Programs

	JET (Japan)	NET (Hong Kong SAR)	EPIK (South Korea)
Participants at inception	848 (1989)	388 (1998)	59 (1995)
Participants in 2014-5*	4876 (2015)	858 (2014)	1165 (2014)
Length of employment	1 year, renewable for up to 5 years	2 years, renewable indefinitely	1 year, renewable indefinitely
Employment restrictions	Fluent English speakers from ESL/ ENL countries	Native speaker English competence	Native speakers from 6 ENL countries only

Table 1. Comparison of JET, NET and EPIK Programs (*data from Wong, Storey, Ho, Lee & Gao 2018, p. 10)

The native speaker/non-native speaker dichotomy is pervasive throughout ELT around the world and a number of acronyms have developed to differentiate teachers who are on one or other side of this divide. In this study, the terms used in the title of the 2016 British Council study *NESTs and LETs: Voices, Views and Vignettes* (Copland, Garton & Mann, 2016) are adopted specifically to refer to participants in team teaching situations in which one of the teachers was hired as a native or near-native language speaker (NEST = Native English Speaker Teacher) to provide support to a local language teacher (LET=Local English Teacher). NESTs also called NETs in China and Hong Kong and ALTs (Assistant Language Teachers) in Japan. The latter may refer to teachers hired both under JET programs or from other sources (e.g. non-JET ALTs). LETs are also called JTE (Japanese teachers of English) in Japan.

The very idea of a team made up of a representative of each side of the NS-NNS divide has developed stereotypically as an idealized marriage of two very different partners, each bringing their own unique set of requisite skills to the classroom. Linguistically powerful NESTs are compared with culturally powerful LETs in Miyazato (2009). Under this model, LETs are expected to have:

1. (better) understanding of classroom culture
2. (more) inclusion in major decision-making
3. power as a role model

and NESTs are expected to have

1. (more) English conversation ability
2. (more) student/society admiration
3. (more) "native English"

and the imbalances created by this "planned status difference" are meant to provide more power to both parties.

However, there are several inherent problems with this binary, stereotypical division of multicultural and ever-globalizing human beings. First, NESTS (in the meaning used here) are not necessarily "native speakers" of the language they are teaching. In recent years Japan has welcomed teachers from Outer Circle countries like Jamaica and Singapore who may not fit the traditional definition of "native," and both Korea and Hong Kong have contingencies for hiring multicultural or ethnically Korean/Chinese teachers with "native-like" proficiency. Similarly, LETs are not necessarily "non-native". LETs are generally hired on the basis of nationality and educational credentials, not linguistic status. Second, there is a whole group of professionals who "fall through the cracks" in the NS-NNS dichotomy. Consider a Korean national raised in Japan with a Ph.D from the US, with native-like proficiency in both Japanese and English. Such individuals may have difficulties being hired in Japan simply because they have the wrong nationality to be a LET and the wrong native language to be a NEST. Third, current hiring practices for NESTs still tend to favor candidates who "look the part" and Visible Ethnic Minority (VEM-)NESTs are often "considered 'almost' a native speaker of English" simply because they do not

resemble a "typical" native speaker (Javier, 2016, p. 229). Fourth, as Liu (2008, p. 104) succinctly puts it, "nativeness does not guarantee good teaching". Hiring based on this dichotomy rewards native English speakers without taking into account the possibility that they may have never had the experience of trying to master another language and therefore cannot empathise with their students, leading Pennycook (2016, p. 255) to lament "should a basic qualification to teach English as a second language not at the very least be bilingualism?"

These problems arising from a NS-NNS paradigm which is "based on a deficit and difference model of 'nativeness' essentialises teachers for their 'native and non-nativeness' and fails to recognise and embrace the fluidity of teachers' identities and the complexity of language, learners and the language learning process" (Wong, Lee & Gao 2016, p. 223) should be rethought in the process of recruiting and hiring English teachers across Asia. However, a detailed look into the actual requirements for each program reveals varying degrees of fluidity and tolerance in actual recruitment policies, as will be discussed in the next section.

3.1. NET, JET and EPIK recruitment policies

An inherent desire to hire so-called English native speakers is evident in all three of the programs under study. However, although "the recruitment policies of Taiwan, Japan, Korea and Hong Kong are broadly similar" (Lin & Wang, 2016, p. 150), each show varying degrees of flexibility in hiring conditions for prospective teachers who don't fit the traditional NS mold. In Japan, according to the JET Programme website, (JET Programme, und. "Eligibility") ALTs are not required to be native speakers but must "be adept in contemporary standard pronunciation, rhythm and intonation in the designated language (e.g. English for those applying from English-speaking countries) and possess excellent language ability that can be applied accurately and appropriately; have ability to compose sentences logically."

Similarly, prospective EPIK teachers must be citizens of and have graduated from a university in one of the following 7 countries: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States, or South Africa. However, exceptions are made for individuals of Korean ethnicity as follows: "Korean citizens with legal residency in one of the 7 designated countries listed above are eligible to apply, but must provide proof of English education beginning from 7th year/grade and through university" (EPIK und. "Eligibility"). The same is true for the TaLK program explained above.

Even the "Native English Teacher" program in Hong Kong, which clarifies its requirements in the title of the program itself and should presumably have the most stringent attitude towards hiring native speakers, shows a certain degree of ambivalence and tolerance. Although the term "native speaker" is clearly defined on the website as follows:

Native speakers of English are people who acquire the language in infancy and

develop the language through adolescence and adulthood within a community where English is spoken as the first language.

the website goes on to say that

…Native-speaker English competence refers to the ability to use English fluently and spontaneously, to give grammatically accurate responses in communication and to write or speak creatively.

and that

Non-native speakers of English, i.e. people who have not acquired the language in early childhood, are also suitable for employment as NETs if their English competence is not different from that of native-speakers in terms of fluency, accuracy and creativity in language use. (Education Bureau, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. January 29, 2018)

As seen from the above, then, each of the three programs embody a de facto ambivalence towards the question of native speakerism that reflects the underlying world reality while preserving the outward "official" conditions placed on recruitment.

4. Team Teaching in East Asia

The concept of team teaching, or having two teachers working with the same class of students, has been around since the 1950s. In the US it has been widely implemented under the name of co-teaching in special education contexts. However, variations on the theme are myriad, and can differ widely from the original concept of having two teachers work together with each other to impart information in front of a group of students. Fig. 1 shows six recognized variations of coteaching, of which the quintessential image of "true" team teaching held by much of the Asian ELT profession is that of "teaming" (number 5 in the figure). However, such collaborative teaching by partners of equal status requires the highest level of professional cooperation—they should both take equal responsibility for the class, and the students should consider them equally their teachers (Liu, 2009, p. 111). Ideally, the team should work together like clockwork, knowing, feeling and trusting in each other's skills. This level of coordination develops with time; time that team teachers can ill afford.

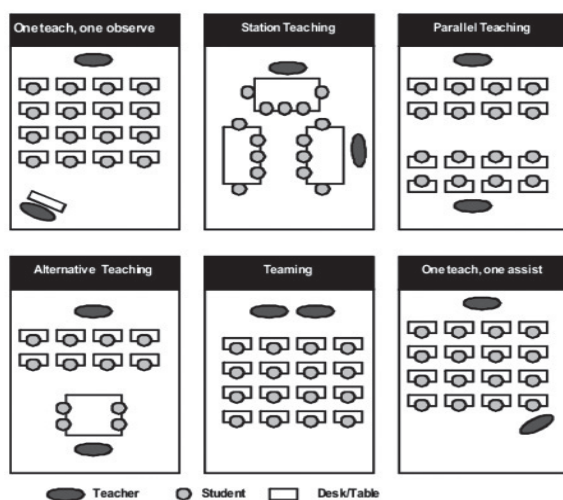Indeed, team teaching under the JET programme is characterized by Shimaoka and

Fig. 1. Six Variations on Cooperative Team teaching (Friend & Bursuck, 2009, p. 92)

Yashiro (1990, cited in Browne, 2008, p. 66) as a seventh variation which they term *reverse team teaching* (RTT). In this style, each teacher has clearly delineated (and stereotypical) roles and functions, but the ALT assistant teacher is actually the main teacher in the classroom. (Shimaoka & Yashiro, 1990). Ideally, in a reverse team teaching situation, "the ALT should actively engage in communication with Japanese students, and the JTE should explain the English language, specific concerns and facts, and answer learners' questions." (Browne, 2008, p. 67). Therefore, RTT is equivalent to the "one teach, one assist" variation in Fig. 2 (or in extreme cases, "one teach, one observe") but the one doing the teaching is generally the ALT. Macedo (2002) found that RTT is especially common in Japanese junior high schools.

4.1. Communication between team teachers

Lin & Wang (2016, p. 150) note that "there are two responsibilities most schemes have in common: firstly, NESTs have to conduct team teaching with Local English Teachers and, secondly, they have to provide professional development for NNESTs". Both of these responsibilities require a high level of communication and collaboration between NESTs and LETs. However, the native speakerism inherent in each of the three team teaching programs often leads to a stereotyped and often artificial division of expectations of each member of the team, who end up engaging in reverse team teaching (at best, the "one teach, one assist" variation in Fig. 2, but often also "one teach, one observe") rather than acting together as a true unit. Moreover, members of a new team approach each other colored by these expectations and stereotypes, creating a vacuum for true communication. Little room is provided for learning about individual personality and teaching styles, and teachers have little choice but to fall back on the socialized teaching patterns that their respective positions dictate. The end result is an arranged marriage which only with great luck can lead to a successful classroom. In many cases however, it will instead

lead to miscommunication, frustration and disappointment with the system as teachers forcibly mold themselves to fit the stereotypes which then carry over into the classroom. LETs especially will carry over expectations from previous partnerships into new ones, perhaps without realizing that their new partners may be operating under completely different understandings and premises than their predecessors. At the very least, even the successful cases will end up perpetuating the stereotypical roles of each partner and make it increasingly different to break out of established modes and norms.

Khánh and Spencer-Oatey (2016, p. 181) note that "empirical studies in Japan, Korea and Hong Kong have revealed a number of problems and challenges, many of which are associated with the team teachers' process of collaboration." Roadblocks to communication between teacher teams include the fact that they are different people, work at different schools with different class cultures, and are contextualized in different personal life situations, but there is one clear but simple underlying factor that preempts all of these: time.

4.2. No time to talk

As Tonks (2006) observed, "Teaming teachers who are not satisfied with their programs have only one option. They must work with their colleagues to improve their team teaching experience." Team members should work together to make important decisions about:

(1) what will be presented (e.g., the units, lesson objectives) and in what order,

(2) how the material is to be presented (e.g., to a large or small group presentation),

(3) who is to present the information,

(4) how the students will be assessed, and

(5) how small groups will be organized and which team teacher will be assigned to each small group. (Goetz, 2000, online)

In spite of such a clear need for close collaboration and understanding, all of these programs are dogged by a similar problem of lack of time for communication between team teachers.

In Japan, "LETs were found to have very busy schedules, with insufficient time for joint lesson preparation with the ALTs. As a result, ALTs felt that they were treated more as visitors than as insiders in the Japanese educational system. This suggests that when two teachers do not spend sufficient time working closely with each other or engaging in ongoing communication, their team teaching relationship tends to be problematic." (Khanh & Spencer-Oatey, 2016, p. 181). Moreover, "JTEs are very busy and ALTs are often visiting multiple schools. Making time for planning and reflection sessions is challenging given such constraints." (Sponseller 2017, p. 129).

In Korea, "collaboration seems to be very limited and is rarely carried out." (Kim, 2016, p. 112). NESTs may be unqualified or inexperienced with nothing more than a college degree (Carless, 2006). They are often "in dire need of guidance or training" and "express a

preference for co-teaching rather than independent teaching" (Kim, 2010, p. 215). However, they cannot achieve true collaboration for several reasons: limited English proficiency of LETs, cultural differences, poor resources, and a lack of understanding of what is needed in the classroom. On the other hand, it can be inferred that here, too, the real criminal is lack of time, as Chung, Min & Park (1999) reported that only 14 per cent of team teachers in Korea actually planned their lessons together. Kim (2016, p. 117) concluded that "there seemed to be a lack of collaborative effort in making curricular decisions for the classes taught by the NESTs. Due to this absence of concrete guidelines, the NESTs were largely left alone in planning their courses."

In Hong Kong, too, NESTs and LETs do not seem to work in close conjunction with each other. Observations found 'a lack of genuine collaboration' which resulted in "little mutual understanding and sharing between the team teachers. In particular, there were some tensions in their educational philosophies and practices, such that they could not find a common voice in the practice of their team teaching" (Carless and Walker 2006, p. 465).

As seen above, the lack of communication leading to mutual understanding, respect and collaboration is often chalked up to a lack of time. Liu (2008) recommends at least a week of getting to know one another before attempting to teach together, which seems to be a reasonable estimate of the time it would take to become aware of relative strengths of the teaching partner and to overcome generalized stereotypes. But such luxury is unaffordable in Asian ELT, where teachers are expected to be in the classroom all day and with students and/or parents in after-school activities after classes finish. This leaves them little time to prepare their own classes, much less communicate deeply with their teaching partners.

5. Conclusion

As the longest team teaching programme in East Asian ELT, the JET programme continues to bring young people from around the world to Asia, along with its newer counterparts, EPIK in Korea and NET in Hong Kong. All three programs have similar functions, and all wrestle with the stereotyped image of native vs. non-native speaker teachers in a multicultural, multilingual world. Moreover, all three programs suffer from a systemic lack of time for engaging in the conversational interactions necessary to create a true team teaching partnership.

One possible solution to this problem could be the introduction of pre-formatted checklists designed to aid team teaching partners to make effective use of limited time in order to establish and maintain successful communication and collaboration. Such checklists would include an initial meeting list that would enable prospective team teachers to exchange the maximum amount of information in a minimal time, including details on class management, student and teacher personalities, expectations and roles of each teacher, and contact information. Similar checklists could be created to aid in pre- and post-class planning. Moreover, online versions of the checklists could also be created in order to cut

down on actual facetime communication requirements while leaving a written record of personal responses that can provide a basis for information sharing in new partnerships.

　With the onset of COVID 19 in early 2020, things have changed. At publication, the NET, JET and EPIK websites all show a moratorium or reduction in hiring of new recruits. Moreover, with the necessity to move more classrooms as well as meetings online, there is an even more increased demand for communication streamlining to create the most efficient and satisfactory conditions for collaboration in team teaching partnerships, as well as provide novel methods to ensure accuracy and accountability. Continuing forward in the corona era, both partners have an increased responsibility to communicate effectively to create the best learning environments for their students, both initially and before and after each team teaching experience. In short, what is demanded for true collaboration is none other than online or offline "quality time" between the partners.

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