

# On the Way to Effective Team Teaching

## A model of ICC development within the context of team teaching in Japan

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### Abstract

Team teaching has become a common practice in English classrooms across Japan, but since its inception, a number of problems have been observed. It is believed that the majority of these issues are due to miscommunication caused by cultural differences between the Japanese (JTs) and native-English teachers (NETs). Unfortunately, few studies have offered solutions on how teachers could improve their intercultural communication competence (ICC) so that the other problems can be rectified. Thus, the purpose of this paper is two-fold: 1) to illustrate the need for ICC among JTs and NETs through a review of literature and 2) to develop a model of ICC development specifically designed for the team teaching setting. By applying Iris Young's (1997) theory of asymmetrical reciprocity to ICC among team teachers, this study develops a model of ICC development within the context of team teaching in Japan so that future research may then apply this model to improving intercultural communication between the NETs and JTs and thereby enhancing the overall instruction in the team teaching classroom.

**Keywords:** *ESL, EFL, English language teaching, Japanese culture, team teaching, ICC development, cross-cultural communication, asymmetrical reciprocity*

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### Introduction

In 2008, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Culture (MEXT) (2008) in Japan put into effect a newly revised *Courses of Study (CS)*[1]. The revised CS guidelines include a number of changes for kindergarten through high school curriculum, including a required foreign language course, *Gaigokugokatsudo* (Foreign Language Activities), for fifth- and sixth-grade elementary school students. According to MEXT, the overall objectives of *Gaigokugokatsudo* are:

*To form the foundation of pupils' communication abilities through foreign languages while developing the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences, fostering a positive attitude toward communication, and familiarizing pupils with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages (p. 1).*

To assist in accomplishing these objectives, MEXT advises Japanese teachers (JTEs) to teach in collaboration with a native speaker of the foreign language. Since English is generally the foreign language being taught in this language course, the most typical arrangement is for a JTE and a native-English teacher (NET) (Romanko & Nakatsugawa 2009) to work together as a team to achieve the above objectives.

### Literature Review

#### Benefits of team teaching

In Japan, team teaching is usually defined as “a concerted endeavor made jointly by the [JTE] and [NET] in an English-language classroom in which the students, the [JTE] and the [NET] are engaged in communicative activities (Brumby & Wada 1990:38), and educators generally regard this approach as an effective means of fostering and improving Japanese students’ English language skills (Tajino & Tajino 2000). One of the more significant benefits of team teaching is that it provides a lower teacher-student ratio. When properly arranged[2] the presence of two teachers is advantageous in modeling dialogues, demonstrating question and answer routines, as well as providing students with more one-on-one time with their teachers. This, in effect, assists in improving management and control of the classes (Carless 2006:346).

Additionally, MEXT (2002) claims team teaching benefits both students and teachers in a number of ways by (a) providing students with the opportunity to use English in the classroom in meaningful ways, (b) presenting opportunities for life-enriching cultural exchanges between the students, JTE, and native-English teacher (NET), and (c) assisting both the JTE and NET in becoming better teachers by enabling them to develop more effective teaching/learning materials and providing them with opportunities to present those materials in a variety of situations and contexts in the classroom.

These assertions made by MEXT have been investigated in various studies whether directly concerned with team teaching in Japan (see Benoit 2001; Browne & Evans 1994; Gorsuch 2002; Kobayashi 1994; Shimaoka & Yashiro 1990; Smith 1994), team teaching in ESL (see Bahamode 1999), or team teaching in general (see Goetz 2000; Murawski & Spencer 2011). One study in particular, however, provides strong support for MEXT’s claims.

In his 2002 study, Gorsuch observed professional and personal growth among JTEs involved in team teaching. This growth was attributed to the new teaching methods and approaches the JTEs were exposed to by the NETs (Gorsuch 2002). In addition, JTEs’ communication abilities in English greatly improved, assumedly from their interaction with their native-English speaking teaching partners, i.e., the NETs (Gorsuch 2002). Likewise, foreign participants of such programs as the JET Programme[3], the forerunner team-teaching program in Japan, generally regard the program as an enjoyable experience as most feel the program benefited them both personally and professionally (JET Programme 2010). Clearly then part of the rationale behind team teaching is that the JTE and NET complement one another both inside the classroom and out (Carless 2006). Unfortunately, this does not always appear to be the case.

## **Problems of team teaching**

In Japan, team teachers differ from each other in a number of ways — in professional status (lead teacher versus assistant), linguistic proficiency[4] (non-native versus native speaker), and cultural background (native Japanese versus non-native Japanese, i.e, foreigner) (Miyazato 2009). These differences can pose challenges for the teaching team, since team teaching, particularly intercultural, demands several enabling features in order to be successful (Carless 2006). Those features, as identified by Carless (2006), are: *pedagogic*, *logistical* and *interpersonal* (345).

### ***Pedagogic***

According to Shimaoka and Yashiro (1990), a lack of established methods and guidelines that the NET and JTE may follow has resulted in many of the problems seen in team teaching. One of the major concerns of team teaching addressed in numerous studies (see Carless 2006; Fujimoto-Adamson 2010; Gorsuch 2002; Mahoney 2004; Tajino 2002; Voci-Reed 1994) is the teachers’ roles. Though both NETs and JTEs have addressed the issue of roles, generally it tends to be more of a concern among NETs as they are usually defined as “assistants.”[5]

The most commonly accepted roles of the NET are as language and cultural informants (Tajino 2002); however, the majority of NETs feel they are being used more as “tape-recorders” and “game machines” (cited in Kachi & Choon-hwa 2001:4). Consequently, the ineffective utilization of NETs has resulted in many of the problems seen in team teaching in Japan (Tajino 2002). For example, the uncertainty of their roles and conflicting role expectations has resulted in frustration and seemingly uncooperative attitudes among NETs, a concern about NETs often raised by JTEs (Voci-Reed 1994; Kachi & Choon-hwa 2001).

Wada (1994), one of the primary designers of the JET Programme, has provided suggestions for teacher roles — the NET communicates (in English) and interacts with students as much as possible while the JTE explains facts about the English language and assists in answering students' questions. Additionally, familiarity with their students' needs and abilities, as well as knowing what it is like to learn English as a second language, sets JTEs in an opportune position to act as a mediator between the NET and students (Carless 2006). Unfortunately, however, such ideal team-teaching situations do not always come to be (Tajino 2002).

### **Logistical**

While confusion over roles seems to be the primary concern of NETs, JTEs are more concerned with the lack of time for preparing team-teaching lessons, which is a very real issue considering preparation is crucial for successful collaborative teaching lessons (Nunan 1992). Nevertheless, even those who have the time to prepare often express their desire for more methods and ideas that can be utilized in the classroom. Additional training and team teaching workshops have been suggested and implemented; however, evidence shows such training rarely results in profound improvements (Duff & Uchida 1997).

### **Interpersonal**

There is certainly no doubt that both role designation and careful lesson preparation are essential to effective implementation of team teaching (Carless 2006); however, when considering Carless' definition of interpersonal factors, — “the ability to cooperate with partners, allied to sensitivity towards their viewpoints and practices, particularly when differences emerge” (345) — it can be presumed that of the three features Carless identifies — pedagogic, logistical and interpersonal — “interpersonal” is the most significant as it could have the greatest impact on the other two. In fact, Carless' study of good practices in team teaching found the most successful classes were where the teachers, i.e., non-native and native speaker, were sensitive and displayed goodwill towards one another, were willing to let “points of tension subside,” and were willing to compromise (350). Roles, preparation and methods, i.e., pedagogic and logistical features, did not emerge as issues because, assumedly, these rectify themselves if teachers are able to cooperate; however, because of NETs' and JTEs' different cultural backgrounds, this is not always easy to accomplish.

Cultural clashes between native and non-native speakers involved in team teaching are quite common (Kwon 2000). The teachers' cross-cultural team-teaching relationships and the NETs learning how to manage the social and cultural expectations of themselves in Japan cause serious problems and are the root of most, if not all, other issues found in the team-teaching classroom in Japan. Thus, for the purpose of this paper, concern is directed toward the “false expectations, unrealistic goals, and uncommunicated ideas” (Voci-Reed 1994:66) that often lead to discordance between NETs and JTEs.

Consider, for example, the following statement (Tajino & Tajino 2000:5) made by a JTE concerning a NET's qualifications[6]:

*[T]he [NET] is not properly trained to lead the class, has no experience as an educator, has little in-depth knowledge of the English language, and is not responsible for the class.*

NETs also have complaints about their Japanese counterparts (Tajino 2002:31):

*Many [JTEs] don't know what to expect of [NETs] and this is a major problem. Japanese people tend not to express what they feel openly. This has to change.*

With statements from NETs and JTEs like those made above, it is no wonder many educators and researchers have concluded that the success of team teaching in Japan may very well be dependent on the abilities of the NET and JTE to effectively communicate across cultures (Romanko & Nakatsugawa 2009; Tajino 2002; Tajino & Tajino 2000). This, however, seems like a fairly obvious answer to a rather complicated situation. NETs and JTEs differ from one another in a number of ways — the most significant being cultural. Thus, when the two come together, simply telling the teachers to

“communicate” is unproductive. In an intercultural relationship, such as the one between the NET and JTE, basic communication will not suffice, even if they are linguistically proficient in the other’s native tongue. What is needed is the skill to communicate across cultures, i.e., intercultural communication competence (ICC).

Consequently, it is this aspect of team teaching, that is, intercultural communication between NETs and JTEs, that needs to be addressed before pedagogic or logistical features are investigated. However, it is not a question of whether or not ICC is beneficial for NETs and JTEs — this is fairly obvious. There is no doubt ICC development among team teachers must occur for team teaching to be truly effective. This is largely accepted and much attention has been given to developing methods by which to foster ICC among team teachers (see Benoit 2001; Horwich 1999; Kobayashi 1994; Shimaoka & Yashiro 1990; Tajino 2002; Tajino & Tajino 2000); however, before methods for fostering ICC can be created there needs to be a way to accurately observe and measure the development of ICC. And though there are numerous well-established models of ICC development (see Beamer 2004; Gudykunst & Kim 2003; Hammer 1989; Imahori & Lanigan 1989; Spitzberg 2000), there are very few designed for the team-teaching classroom, let alone specifically for NETs and JTEs. Thus, in an attempt to fill this need, this study amalgamates Iris Young’s (1997) theory of asymmetrical reciprocity with ICC within the context of team teaching in Japan, thereby creating a model of ICC development to be used in future research for developing methods for fostering ICC among NETs and JTEs.

## Asymmetrical Reciprocity

To begin, however, it is first necessary to understand how Young’s (1997) theory of asymmetrical reciprocity applies to this study. Young (1997) presents her theory as an alternative to Benhabib’s (1992) theory of symmetrical reciprocity. Young (1997) claims that, though Benhabib’s symmetrical reciprocity is accurate in its concept of the reciprocal action involved in communication, Benhabib’s symmetrical view fails to acknowledge the differences between the self and the other in communication. Benhabib’s theory assumes that “the perspectives of self and other are reversible” (Young 1997:38), and it is this reversibility and symmetry of perspectives that constitutes communicative action.

According to symmetrical reciprocity theory, all are capable of understanding the other’s perspective, implying that everyone is essentially the same (Benhabib 1992). But historical and contextual factors, such as social position, play a huge role in predetermining positions in communication and strongly influence the process and outcome of the interaction between one another (Sunaoshi 2005). And, as Duff and Uchida (1997) assert, social identity is, in fact, a kind of positioning — a “personal location and belonging” as they describe it. This definition, therefore, suggests that each person, young and old, rich and poor, native and foreigner, communicate to one another from varying positions, implying that each person is, in fact, very different.

Young (1997) agrees, stating, “each participant in a communication situation is distinguished by a particular history and social position,” (p. 39) and thus it is not possible to be symmetrical to one another. The idea of a symmetrical relation to the other “obscures the difference and particularity of the other position,” Young (1997:44) explains. This concept is further supported by Peters (1996), who argues that communication occurs between people exactly for the reason that it is not possible to be the other. Consequently, “communication will always be an asymmetrical enterprise of co-constitution” (Peters 1996:376).

## A Model of ICC Development in Team Teaching

### Level 1: Perceiving differences asymmetrically

Taking this into consideration, what then could be the implications of asymmetrical relation between the NET and JTE in the context of ICC and team teaching? Essentially, it means that neither the NET nor the JTE can assume he or she understands the other or that the other understands him or her. By

acknowledging these fundamental differences, the NET and JTE may avoid assumptions that often lead to miscommunication (Horwich 1999). Therefore, the initial issue in ICC development is of perception (Beamer 2004): the NET and JTE must recognize that they each perceive the world differently. Perception plays an important role in communication because it is by perception that people connect and create meaning. Checkland (1981:215) elaborates on the role of perception in creating meaning:

*We attribute meaning to an observed activity by relating it to a larger image we supply from our minds. The observed activity is only meaningful to us, in fact, in terms of a particular image of the world...*

Miscommunication occurs because of these varying perceptions the NET and JTE bring with them when communicating to one another. Therefore it can be assumed that, because it is through perception that meaning is attributed, meaning is not universal; it is not fixed (Hall 2003a; 2003b). The floating characteristic of meaning thus explains why communication signals the NET or JTE sends to the other are structured “in terms of a particular image” of his or her world, i.e., dictated by his or her culture, and why the other teacher, who is outside of that culture, may not be able to attribute meaning to those signals or interpret them correctly. This is what identifies those who belong to a culture, as well as distinguishes those who do not, thus creating identity through both affiliation and division.

Hall (2003a) suggests that being part of a culture essentially means knowing “. how concepts and ideas translate . and how language can be interpreted to refer to or reference the world” (p. 22). Therefore, rather than complementing themselves on the other in an effort to “belong” in one another’s culture, the NET and JTE must accept that it is not possible for them to be part of or “belong” to the other’s culture. Consequently, this acceptance leads to recognition between the two teachers that the signals being sent to one another may not be interpretable through their “particular image of the world” (Beamer 2004). When this occurs, the NET and JTE come to understand that there is meaning that exists outside their own understanding, that meaning is not “fixed” within their culture but may change from one culture to another. This enlightened state enables both teachers to proceed cautiously when interpreting signals from one another, greatly reducing potential misunderstandings and instigating the initial level of our model of ICC development: *Level 1: Perceiving differences asymmetrically.*

## **Level 2: Considering the value and limitations of stereotypes**

Once diversity is acknowledged and accepted, the next step is to familiarize oneself with the unfamiliar (Beamer 2004; Young 1997). Whenever one interacts with someone from another country, he or she brings knowledge, either substantial or minimal, of the other’s world (Byram 1997). This knowledge, or stereotypes, is one way to comprehend that which is incomprehensible and may prove to be helpful in identifying the differences between cultures. They help to form connections, which is important when entering new intercultural spaces (Duff & Uchida 1997). In fact, Gudykunst (1994) suggests that “the need for a sense of a common shared world” is important motivation for interaction and cooperation. However, it is also must be remembered that explaining differences may appease the anxiety of communicating cross-culturally to some degree (Thrush 1997) but will not entirely remove all fear, since stereotypes’ view into culture is limited (Beamer 2004). Thus, the NET and JTE may use stereotypes initially in an effort to understand one another, but they must remember to always question the accuracy of those stereotypes.

The NET and JTE may utilize stereotypes as a tool for better understanding one another, but must always keep in mind that the rigidity that stereotypes impose on culture can have dire consequences in intercultural relationships and communication (Anzaldúa 1993:101):

*The borders and walls that are supposed to keep the undesirable ideas out are extended habits and patterns of behavior; these habits and patterns are the enemy within. Rigidity means death. Only by remaining flexible, [are we] able to stretch the psyche horizontally and vertically.*

This flexibility Anzaldúa (1993) discusses can be manifested in a willingness to challenge stereotypes through questions as a number of ICC theories have proposed (see Beamer 2004; Gudykunst & Kim 2003; Spitzberg 2000; Young 1997). Thus, the NET and JTE cannot allow stereotypes to dictate their views of one another because rather than a neutrally, inherently, and historically determined fixed category, culture is in fact a historically contingent discursive formation (Foucault 1972), and, as Kubota (2003) explains, “[is] diverse, dynamic, and fluid, and constructed and transformed by political and ideological forces” (p. 70). Considering this view, it is clear why stereotypes cannot nor should they ever act as absolutes nor definitive truths of a culture; they must always be considered within their historical and social contexts, thus identifying the second level in the model: *Level 2: Considering the value and limitations of stereotypes*.

### **Level 3: Communicating in intervals**

To gain a greater insight into ICC it is necessary to acquire an understanding of a key component of asymmetrical reciprocity before moving on to the final two levels in this study’s model. According to Young (1997), communication is asymmetrical in the sense it requires participants to freely open up to each other; it is this “free” action of opening up that implies a gift:

*When I give a gift this begins a process, makes an opening, whereby you may give me a gift in return, but if I consider that you “owe” me, the gift relation is effaced and has become a commercial exchange. (p. 54)*

The relation of giving and taking is asymmetrical in that a gift is not to be returned, only accepted; however, later the taker may become the giver, but not in response to the first offering, but only as an offering all of itself (Young 1997). This interval between the original gift and succeeding offering is central to the reciprocal bond because each offering opens onto a new relationship.

As the NET and JTE progress through the various levels of ICC development, they begin to analyze the communicative actions that succeed and those that fail. These episodes result in the NET and JTE learning to identify culturally specific differences in communication behavior, e.g., masculine style (confrontational and assertive) versus feminine style (consensus-seeking and emotional), high- versus low-context cultural continuums, concepts of time, space and sociology (Thrush 1997), and values that may differ from culture to culture, such as views on “self, family, society, human nature, nature and the supernatural” (Beamer 2004:407). In each communicative action at this level, the NET and JTE apply these various cultural elements when communicating to one another to discover what is successful and what is not. The interval is seen when one teacher offers a “gift” of communication and waits for a response from the other[7]. The response will then provide the teacher with contextual cues as he or she contemplates the cultural specificities of the other, and that teacher will, in turn, await a response. By this point, the teacher has reached the third level in ICC development: *Level 3: Communicating in intervals*.

### **Level 4: Circulating forward toward wonder**

Thus far the evolution of ICC development in the team teaching setting has been observed with the aid of Young’s (1997) theory of asymmetrical reciprocity and, as a result, three levels of a model of ICC development within the context of team teaching in Japan have been established:

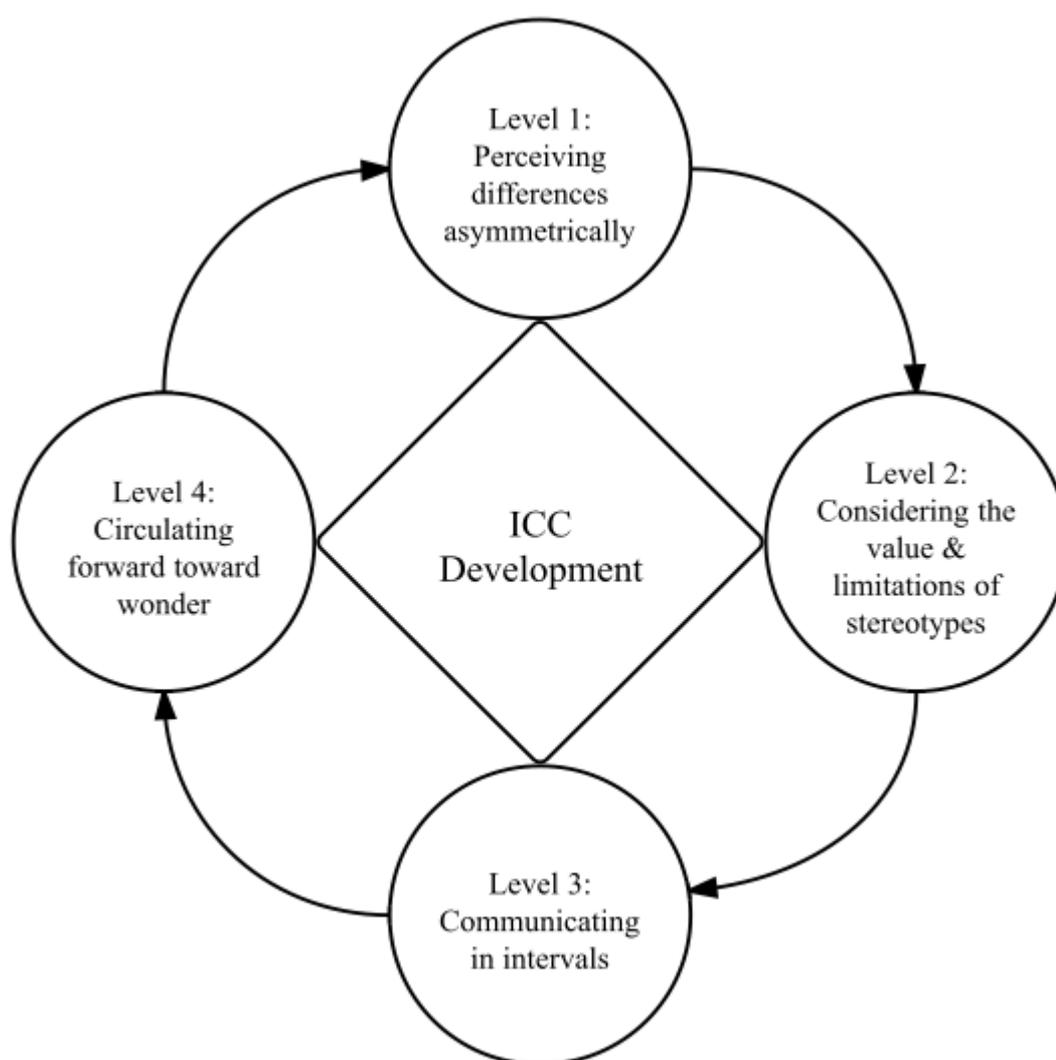
- The irreversibility of perception in Level 1: *Perceiving differences asymmetrically*
- The familiarization of the unfamiliar in Level 2: *Considering the value and limitations of stereotypes*
- The giving-and-taking of responses and the temporal exchange of those responses in Level 3: *Communicating in intervals*

In the end, however, achievement of these levels does little for successful intercultural communication without the willingness of both the NET and JTE, which can only be achieved by a mutual respect for one another. According to Young (1997), this respect is represented through questions. The importance of questions in learning ICC has been observed, but where does the desire to pose questions arise? The

answer is quite circular in its reasoning. For mutual respect to be attained each participant must share with one another questions, yet for questions to be presented each participant must respect the other enough to ask those questions.

Asymmetrical reciprocity also suggests the presence of a cyclical pattern in effective communication. Young (1997) explains that though communication demands mutual understanding, the desire to understand one another will “dissolve into indifference without a moment of wonder, of openness to the newness and mystery of the other .” (p. 56), and it is inquiring about the other through questions that fuels this wonder. This rotating characteristic of ICC development and the “wonder” Young refers to establishes the fourth and final level of this study’s model: *Level 4: Circulating forward toward wonder*.

As the NET and JTE move toward this final level they constantly circulate from one level to another back to another as they seek to gather the appropriate signals to generate a message within the other teacher’s culture. The questions they continually ask one another subsequently stimulates a wonder for the other, which, in essence, turns to mutual respect. Young (1997), however, also explains that though wonder is demonstrated through a “respectful stance,” it is also the ability to “see one’s own position, assumptions, perspective as strange, because it has been put in relation to [the other’s]” (p. 56). This ability indicates an acknowledgement of diversity (observed in the first level), once again illustrating how ICC development both constructs, produces and maintains a cyclical pattern, and how it is necessary to revisit each level over and over again in order to generate messages through the other culture [See Figure 1].



**Figure 1:** Model of ICC development within the context of team teaching in Japan

# The Effects of ICC on Team Teaching

## Proposing possible outcomes

Though the intent of this paper has been to create a theoretical model by which ICC development may be observed and measured among NETs and JTEs, it is the belief of this author that without devoting some time to contemplating the effects ICC would have on the NET and JTE relationship, this study would be incomplete. For this reason, the following is dedicated to illustrating how NETs' and JTEs' development process of ICC would appear. This is done in order to demonstrate that the concepts presented in this paper are relative and can be utilized in future research for fostering ICC development among team teachers in Japan.

The NET and JTE first accept each other's differences and the fact that neither can understand the other's position, thereby positioning themselves asymmetrically. They then attempt to better understand one another through the application of stereotypes (e.g., NETs are not experienced or trained in teaching English; Japanese cannot communicate openly), but all the while acknowledging the limits of these stereotypes (i.e., stereotypes are not definitive truths), and exhibiting their flexibility by posing questions to one another in an effort to organize those stereotypes. Through the organization of stereotypes, the NET and JTE begin to analyze the communication behaviors of one another through exchanging responses. With each response, the teachers analyze the responses of the other as they attempt to communicate beyond their own culture through the culture of their counterpart's, creating a genuine interest in one another that is presented in the form of more questions. These questions, in turn, create a wonder and desire to know more about the other, essentially bringing about a deeper respect for the other. This newfound respect results in the NET and JTE perceiving their self in relation to the other, thereby creating equal positions that remain asymmetrical. In these positions the NET and JTE then begin to make observations about the other teacher rather than complaints [See Figure 2].

	Before ICC Development	<i>SHIFT</i>	After ICC Development
<b>JTE</b>	"[T]he [NET] is not properly trained to lead the class, has no experience as an educator, has little in-depth knowledge of the English language, and is not responsible for the class." (Tajino & Tajino 2000:5)	→	"The NET has not been trained to lead the class, but offers a unique and positive atmosphere for the students when learning English. Despite the teacher's inexperience as an educator, she has a lot of interesting ideas to offer that I never would have considered."
<b>NET</b>	Many [JTEs] don't know what to expect of [NETs] and this is a major problem. Japanese people tend not to express what they feel openly. This has to change. (Tajino 2002:31)	→	"The JTE doesn't know what to expect of me, but we are discussing the best ways I can contribute to the class. I'm not always sure what to do, but I try to consider the teacher's style and help in whatever capacity I can."

*Figure 2: A shift from complaints to observations is illustrated through these revised statements of a Japanese teacher and native-English teacher.*

## Conclusion

### Taking a step in the right direction

The need for ICC among teachers in Japan cannot be refuted — this has been well established. However, how to foster ICC is something that clearly needs to be explored further. This is what this study has attempted to do by proposing a theoretical model of ICC development. The model, developed through the application of Young's (1997) theory to the team-teaching setting in Japan, has helped to bring about a better understanding of ICC development among NETs and JTEs.

In this investigation differences in position and perspective have been revealed through an asymmetrical relation, suggesting that communication between the NET and JTE is very likely to fail unless there is an acknowledgement of these differences. Furthermore, the vital role questions play in challenging and organizing stereotypes and maintaining mutual respect and a sense of wonder has demonstrated how the levels of intercultural learning recur and sustain one another. Therefore, a level can never be forgotten or left behind; it continuously circles back, bringing with it new insight into intercultural communication in order to generate messages in the other culture. Finally, the potential positive effects ICC could have on the relationship and communication between the NET and JTE have been presented.

Though, as reiterated throughout, this study's intention has not been to directly establish a method by which ICC may be developed, it is this authors' hope that the model generated can assist future research in making a way for the development of methods by which to effectively foster ICC among NETs and JTEs. Though only a small step, it is a step in the right direction, which has the potential of one day leading to a significant improvement in the effectiveness of team teaching in the English-language classroom in Japan.

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## About the Author

Jonathan Brown has taught English in Japan for nearly 10 years and currently lectures at the University of Yamanashi. Prior to that, he was an elementary school English teacher in Kofu and helped in developing and implementing Kofu City's ESL/EFL curriculum. His areas of interest in research are L2 writing, rhetoric, intercultural communication, and team teaching.

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[1] The Japanese Ministry of Education “determines the Courses of Study as broad standards for all schools, from kindergarten through upper-secondary schools, to organize their programs in order to ensure a fixed standard of education throughout [Japan]” (MEXT 2011).

[2] Friend and Cook (2009) identify five arrangements which are typically implemented in collaborative teaching: a) Lead & Support, b) Station Teaching, c) Parallel Teaching, d) Alternative Teaching, and e) Team Teaching. Each arrangement has its own strengths and weaknesses, but in Japan schools usually implement the Team Teaching arrangement. However, there is still much debate and confusion on the role of the NET and JTE in this arrangement.

[3] The JET Programme, established in 1987, is a government teacher exchange program that sponsors teachers from all over the world to come live and teach, in collaboration with a licensed Japanese teacher, languages, generally English, in the Japanese public school system.

[4] Though Japanese English teachers in lower- and upper-secondary schools do speak English and have been educated in teaching the language, the recent implementation of English into elementary 5:th- and 6:th-grade curriculum (MEXT 2009) has created problems because JTEs at this level generally do not speak English and certainly have not been trained in how to teach it.

[5] Most foreign teachers in Japan are hired as “assistant language teachers” (ALTs) or “assistant English teachers” (AETs); however, their title does not always define the role they actually play in the classroom, e.g., in some circumstances they lead the class while in others their role is essentially non-existent.

[6] Many native-English speaker teachers in Japan, particularly those working in primary and secondary schools, are not formally educated or trained in teaching the English language.

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