

Preface (1/4)

The Aim of this book

1. The direction has changed course

Until now, the Course of Study has always been organized in a rather content-centered manner. The teacher's attention has shifted on how to teach, from the usual explanation-centered (or teacher-focused) classes.

In the new Course of Study, the evaluation system has been changed to three types:

- Knowledge and skills.
- The ability to think, judge, and express for themselves.
- Their attitude during independent learning or study.

It's up to the learners themselves to deepen their learning, while the teachers provide a learner-focused environment. If we were to use a ship as an analogy, it's as if the ship has changed its course completely, rather than just a "Hard starboard," or "Hard aport".

This revision will change the ways we teach. In the area of "knowledge and skills," we must thoroughly teach what we need to, and make sure the students can do it. This is the foundation upon which the other two perspectives can be built. This is because their ability to think, judge, and express themselves; and their attitudes towards studying independently aren't things that teachers can teach, but are what students get on their own.

2. Replicating the way young children learn language in TT

In the first place, words have meaning only in context (or situations). It's natural for infants to acquire language through use, and is not something that can just be learned from adults. If this is the case, then language can't be learned through communicative activities which have no context or meaning in the classroom. It's important for teachers to keep in mind about how to learn by doing.

In particular, in order for students to absorb language, it's important for teachers to create an environment where students can become aware of their own learning. This is where Team Teaching (TT) with the ALTs come in handy. This is because the ALTs are "live teaching materials" who can use real English, and broaden the learner's views on several cultures.

3. What kind of lessons can be taught using this book?

This book is designed to support English teachers who are worried about the changing trends in English education, and to help ease the worries of teachers who have been agonizing over how to use ALTs effectively in TT.

The authors of this book are members of the editorial board of the 2021 edition of the Ministry of Education's English textbook for junior high school students, and have developed an excellent system for showing how to TT with ALTs. Many of them have authored, or co-authored books and articles in educational magazines and newspapers, including those who were involved in the preparation of the Ministry of Education's Course of Study, and those who have taught at the JET Program's mid-year seminars. In short, they are the leading practitioners in the field of English education in Japan. Therefore, this book, contains a wealth of knowledge and experience on how to keep the students engaged in class, and more importantly, just seeing the names of these activities is exciting.

Preface (2/4)

For example:

“Doubt it!” “My Secret”, and “Who ate my apple pie!” for the first graders. “Be a Fortuneteller!”, “Why do Japanese People do ●●?”, and “So many countries, so many rules” for the second graders. “I can’t remember that name!”, “Let’s write Haiku in English!”, and “The greatest gift for the ALT” for the third graders.

There are 90 of these activities in this book! The book is not only a collection of TT case studies, but also a treasure trove of learning tips from professionals on class design and management.

In the field, some teachers rarely open the Teacher’s Manual (TM), because they don’t want to follow a textbook. However, this only means that they are teaching what they want to teach, or teaching in an uncontrolled manner, without being aware of the skills that must be acquired in the Course of Study. It is important to accept that the student’s development is the result of the teacher’s guidance.

The TM, is a book, which has been carefully edited and authored by professionals with detailed models and instructions should give many hints for creating an ideal environment for lessons. It is a compass that guides its users.

This book is no different. I would like to treat this book as a package, and not as a selection of possible activities, based only on my own experiences, and also not as a simplification of content because to make things easier for students. This is also not meant to be used as a shortcut to skip steps. An important thing for classes is the arrangement (or order), and if even one step is skipped, the language activity will be effectively ruined.

By actually trying some of these activities, the cause of discomfort with TT will be clear. If you can apply what you learned from your student’s expressions during activities (the principles that motivate them), you’ll be able to develop lessons that engage with students.

4. Teachers should become the activators in TT

COBUILD says, “If a device or process is activated, something that causes it to start working.” This “something” can be replaced with TT, because the target to make something “start working” is the student’s communication skills. This book is also designed to activate TT. If you cannot find the TT instructional plan you are looking for in the textbook you have adopted, please use the index at the end of the book (by grammar) to find examples from other companies or examples that interest you. Even if you can’t find an instructional plan, you can find examples from other companies in the index at the end of the book. Comments like, “I never thought of it this way”, “I’m sure the ALT will be enthusiastic about it”, “I’d like to be a student in this class”, and so on.

As I mentioned in the beginning, I asked six professional teachers to write TT plans for six textbooks for this book. It is more of a competition than a joint project. In other words, you will be able to enjoy the recipes and flavors of six wonderful cooks. If you read this book quickly, you’ll be able to notice the individuality of each variation. In the classroom, it is only when the teacher’s personality shines that the students are influenced, and grow into autonomous learners. Exciting classes are key to the student’s guidance.

It is my sincere hope that this book will help, not only in TT, but also help the readers feel more comfortable about making their classes more enjoyable.

Preface (3/4)

Points for using this book

When we read an instructional manual for something, we often focus on how to put it together, then use it. The things often left out are a set of precautions, or things to consider, and frequently asked questions. As a result, you may sometimes find yourself stuck in the middle of a situation. In this section, I will explain not only how to use this book, but also the “Dos and Don’ts” of TT, which should also be helpful in TT lessons.

1. Read the “Aims” carefully. (Which skills the activity is targeting to develop)

It’s not the content of the activity, or how to use your 50 minutes which is most important, but the “aim” of each activity. The most important thing is the “aim” of each activity, which should be communicated to the students from the start. By showing them the target and giving them some perspective, the students will be able to look back at their progress. It’s also important for the teacher to express their expectations on the challenges, and what they can do to face them. Of course, I’d like you to read this book beforehand with your colleagues, the ALTs, to make sure that you’re on the same page.

2. Respect ALTs as human beings, and value their feelings.

In TT, when you put yourself in the ALT’s shoes and think about your role, it’s important to make sure that the activities are fun, and have some sense of control. It’s important to adapt, and make changes as needed, even during class. We want TT to be a mutually beneficial learning experience. Not a joint effort (sharing of time and activities), but a collaborative effort (mutual influence). If we do this, we can prevent ALTs from just being “human tape recorders”, quietly orbiting around class, or in a daze with nothing to do.

3. Basically, don’t change the flow of the lesson plan.

It is possible to have some flexibility with your time and plans based on the situation in class, but it’s important to avoid skipping or simplifying parts of your lesson, simply because “it might be too hard” for the class. This is because you can’t finish your carefully crafted puzzle, with missing pieces.

In addition, the potential of the students are often underestimated. If they’re discouraged because they haven’t done something before, then they’ll stop growing. I hope you’ll be able to see them in a new light.

4. Always take notes of what you notice in class.

The things that come to your attention during class are the things that you haven’t noticed before which you may be able to improve. You should prepare a small card (with positive notes on the front, and negative notes on the back) for each class.

Both JTEs and ALTs should write down what they notice, and reflect on any points in the staff room. It’s not about whether the class went well or not, but about how to interact during the next TT lesson. The notes should be stored for future reference.

Preface (4/4)

Points for using this book

5. Spend more time on looking back, rather than just preliminary discussions.

In many TT lessons, more time is spent on the preliminary meetings. This is because they want the next 50 minutes to go smoothly.

Unfortunately, after the class ends, there's no time to discuss on how to improve the TT lessons. There's no real discussion on how to improve it. Even if a discussion does occur, there would only be partial adjustments in future classes. I don't think enough time was used to actually improve it.

From step 4, I'd like you to look back on how TT should be done, by putting together all the stored notes that have been collected daily. At least spend an hour or so to do this. The time may be limited, but it's the best time to improve your TT plans.

6. Use this book as an opportunity to make ALTs more accessible to students.

By working together with ALTs on the activities listed in this book, and by involving them in regular tests, performance tests, writing long passages, correcting English essays, and so on, ALTs can be given the responsibility of being a real colleague. As they gain more experience, the ALTs will be able to offer more ideas.

For example, ALTs can DJ the lunchtime broadcasts, exchange group notes with the students (relay notes cut into thirds), plan grade level assemblies based on their ideas, hold debates, and create graduation books. Actually, even after ALTs returned to their home countries, some students kept in touch with them or reunited with them when they ever studied abroad. After returning to Japan, one of those students has expressed a desire to be more involved in something related to English in the future to help others.

All our lives are often stressful, with worries, anxiety, and frustration that can pile up. In those cases, teachers can help students ease some of these problems, and help them find a pathway to their dreams. I think it's a blessing and an honor. Don't dwell too much on what you haven't done yet. Why don't you move forward together in your TT lessons? Your students will look forward to it.



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