

How to Interact with Assistant Language Teachers

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1. Introduction

The year 1987 was a special year for many Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs) and their students. This is the year when the Ministry of Education initiated “the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program” and Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) started to teach English with JTEs in schools. Since then, for about 20 years ALTs have played important roles in English classrooms. Tsuchiya & Hirono (2005) show their roles as follows:

1-1-1: ALTs can offer authentic and natural English.

Because JTEs rarely use English outside of the classroom, their English can often be unnatural. ALTs can offer authentic and natural English to students and teachers.

1-1-2: ALTs can embody English-speaking cultures.

ALTs have their own cultures which are considerably different from Japanese culture. They can help students and teachers understand foreign cultures.

1-1-3: ALTs can help students communicate with non-Japanese people.

It is often unnatural for Japanese students to use English in order to communicate with their classmates because English is not their native language. Students, however, can use English as a tool for communication in a natural way with ALTs.

It is clear that English classes will be more active and practical when ALTs can sufficiently come into their own in the classroom. However, as Ushiro (2001) shows, team teaching (TT) with ALTs faces some problems as follows:

1-2-1: Some ALTs do not have the knowledge and skills for teaching English.

1-2-2: Because ALTs do not stay at one school for a long time, they often meet some difficulties in planning continual and intentional teaching.

1-2-3: The few number of ALTs teaching in Japan is disproportionate to the large number of students.

1-2-4: JTEs and ALTs encounter difficulties in making situations in which students use English in natural ways.

1-2-5: Team teaching with ALTs is often considered rather useless when studying for high school entrance examinations.

Aihara & Nagasawa (2004) add two problems:

1-2-6: JTEs do not have the knowledge and skills for TT with ALTs.

1-2-7: JTEs can not spend enough time to discuss their classes with ALTs.

Shiozawa (1993) also takes the problem 1-2-6 as one of the five keys to successful TT with ALTs (see 1-3-4).

1-3-1: JTEs should regard TT with ALTs as regular and not as special.

1-3-2: JTEs should use English as often as possible in regular classes.

1-3-3: JTEs should use their textbooks in TT with ALTs as well as in regular classes.

1-3-4: JTEs should make every effort to make a good relationship with ALTs.

1-3-5: JTEs should have their own idea of ideal TT and have the English ability to explain properly their idea to ALTs.

Aihara (2004) and Aihara & Nagasawa (2004) consider the problem 1-2-6 from the viewpoint of JTEs. In this paper, we will consider it from the ALT's point of view. From this consideration, we may find other clues to successful TT with ALTs.

2. "Teaching of English"

The topic of this paper would be discussed in classes like "Teaching of English" or "Principles of English Language Teaching" at universities. Let us take my class entitled "Teaching of English" at Ibaraki Christian University and Ibaraki University offered in 2006 as examples. The classes purpose that students acquire the knowledge and skills which is necessary to teach English as junior high school teachers. The syllabus of the classes is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that the contents of learning in the 10th and 11th sections of study are concerned with TT with ALTs. In the 10th section, students briefly learn TT with ALTs; its history, purpose, existing condition, and problems as shown in the first part of this paper. In the 11th section, Mr. Rodney Littlejohn¹ (at Ibaraki Christian University) and Mr. Christopher Rosser² (at Ibaraki University), who have worked in junior high schools in Mito city as ALTs, talk on the "dos & don'ts" for TT with ALTs. After question and answer, some students actually team-teach with them for ten

minutes. Aihara shows the basic teaching plan as shown below and students alter the plan as needed.

Table 1: The Syllabus of “Teaching of English”

| Section | Content of Learning | Textbook-Unit |
|---------|--|---------------------------|
| 1 | Some difficulties in teaching English in junior high schools | |
| 2 | <i>The Course of Study</i> | |
| 3 | Teaching plan | |
| 4 | Evaluation | |
| 5 | Micro-teaching 1 (New words) | NHEC 2 - Unit 7 |
| 6 | Micro-teaching 2 (Grammar) | NHEC 1 - Unit 6 |
| 7 | Micro-teaching 3 (Reading) | NHEC 3 - Unit 2 |
| 8 | Micro-teaching 4 (Speaking) | NHEC 1 - Word Box 1 |
| 9 | Micro-teaching 5 (Listening) | NHEC 2 - Listening Plus 2 |
| 10 | Team teaching with ALTs | |
| 11 | Micro-teaching 6 (Team teaching) | NHEC 2 - Unit 6 |
| 12 | Report on “Student Teaching” | |
| 13 | Micro-teaching 7 (Phonetic guidance) | |
| 14 | Micro-teaching 8 (Culture) | NHEC 3 - Unit 2 |
| 15 | Test | |

NHEC: *New Horizon English Course*



(1) Greeting & Question and Answer (2')

JTE and ALT greet the students.

ALT asks some questions and students answer the questions.

(2) Review (3')

JTE and ALT show a dialogue in order to review the key sentences:

There is a present under the tree.

There are some presents under the tree.

(3) Activity (5')

JTE and ALT make a situation in which students practice how to use the key sen-

tences.

3. The DOs for Team Teaching with ALTs

As mentioned in the previous section, Mr. Littlejohn and Mr. Rosser show some “dos & don’ts” for TT with ALTs in my class entitled “Teaching of English“. Their accounts can be good data for us to understand how to interact with ALTs. Let us begin by considering what JTEs are expected to do when they team-teach with ALTs. The “dos” for TT with ALTs presented by Mr. Littlejohn and Mr. Rosser are shown in 3.1 and 3.2.

3.1 The DOs (A)

- 3-1-1: ALTs appreciate getting to know the JTE as a person not just a teacher.
- 3-1-2: ALTs appreciate the JTE when the JTE backs them up in class and in the teachers' room.
- 3-1-3: ALTs appreciate when the JTE challenges the students and use English outside of class.
- 3-1-4: ALTs appreciate the JTE when they understand ALTs are foreigners but don’t treat them like one.
- 3-1-5: ALTs appreciate the JTE when they speak up for the ALT.
- 3-1-6: ALTs appreciate JTEs when they take the time to plan.
- 3-1-7: ALTs appreciate when JTEs walk to class with them on time.
- 3-1-8: ALTs love when JTEs tell the schedule of the school before something happens.
- 3-1-9: ALTs love when JTEs take an interest in helping them become a better teacher and treat them like a “real” teacher.
- 3-1-10: ALTs love when their JTE shares culture and language in a natural way.

3.2 The DOs (B)

- 3-2-1: Make a strong relationship with your ALT outside of the classroom.
- 3-2-2: Prepare for class a few days before.
- 3-2-3: Talk about how to improve your classes.
- 3-2-4: Encourage and compliment each other.
- 3-2-5: Use your ALT.

3.3 Consideration

From the observation of Mr. Littlejohn’s and Mr. Rosser’s accounts, we see that JTEs have three roles. Firstly, JTEs should be a bridge between two cultures. JTEs need to realize that ALTs can experience stress because they work in foreign cultures, and then help them get accustomed to Japanese culture and the culture of Japanese

schools, like why teachers visit each classroom to teach English, why lazy students are allowed to stay in classes, why teachers eat lunch with students in classrooms, and so on. JTEs need to introduce Japanese culture at every opportunity in order to help their ALTs understand and consequently make the work place more pleasant. Primarily, JTEs can share culture and language with ALTs because many other Japanese teachers hesitate to talk to ALTs.

Secondly, JTEs need to realize that ALTs have to figure out the school situation from limited information. In fact, ALTs often have some troubles because nobody tells them the schedule of the school. One ALT would feel ashamed when he/she comes to school without knowing that all teachers are decently dressed for the yearbook photograph. Another ALT would be alone in the teachers' room without knowing that an urgent school assembly is being held in the gym. If JTEs relate the schedule of the school before something happens, ALTs could work more pleasantly.

Thirdly, JTEs should be conscious that they are professional teachers. They need to appreciate TT with ALTs and make every effort to make their classes effective. In this respect, they need to prepare for TT a few days before, discuss their teaching plan with ALTs, and improve their classes with ALTs.

3.4 Students' Remarks

We will next observe the students' remark on the "dos" for TT with ALTs. Figure 1 shows what percentages of students accept each description of the "dos" shown in 3.1. 3-1-1 is indicated as A-do-1 in Figure 1. We see that A-do-1 (ALTs appreciate getting to know the JTE as a person not just a teacher) and A-do-8 (ALTs love when JTEs tell the schedule of the school before something happens) are accepted by many students (A-do-1=64%, A-do-8=55%). We also see that no students commented on A-do-7 (ALTs appreciate when JTEs walk to class with them on time). This may simply because they regard it as common and not as one of the top of ten "dos". We shall show the evidence in the fifth part of this paper. By observing students' remarks, we see that students do

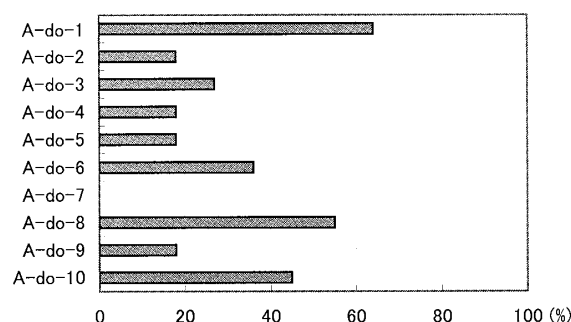


Figure 1: Students' Remarks on the DOs (A)

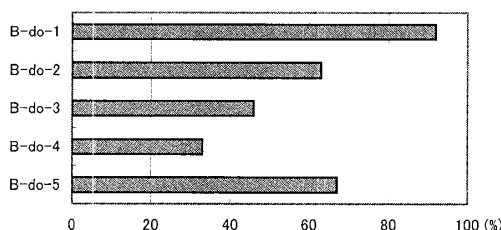


Figure 2: Students' Remarks on DOs (B)

not direct their attention to the descriptions which are concerned with managing classes. The main reason is that they have little experience in teaching English in schools.

Figure 2 shows the students' remarks on the "dos" shown in 3.2. 3-2-1 is indicated as B-do-1 in Figure 2. We see that 92% of students accept B-do-1 (Make a strong relationship with your ALT outside of the classroom), 67% of them accept B-do-5 (Use your ALT), and 63% of them accept B-do-2 (Prepare for class a few days before).

Table 2: Students' Remarks & the JTE's Roles

| JTE's Role | Description of "dos" for Team Teaching |
|------------|--|
| Role A | A-do-1, B-do-1 |
| Role B | A-do-8 |
| Role C | B-do-2, B-do-5 |

Let us contrast five descriptions (A-do-1, A-do-8, B-do-1, B-do-2, B-do-5) accepted by over 50% of students with the JTE's roles. We need to recall the roles for our accommodation: Role A (JTEs should be a bridge between two cultures), Role B (JTEs should show deep understanding toward ALTs), and Role C (JTEs should be conscious that they are professional teachers). The five descriptions are classified into three groups in terms of the JTE's roles as shown in Table 2. Since the descriptions cover three roles, we may say that students more or less realize the three roles of JTEs. We shall discuss this subject again in next section.

4. The DON'Ts for Team Teaching with ALTs

We will turn our attention to the "don'ts" for TT with ALTs. The accounts presented by Mr. Littlejohn and Mr. Rosser are shown in 4.1 and 4.2. Let us observe what JTEs are expected not to do when they team-teach with ALTs.

4.1 The DON'Ts (A)

- 4-1-1: ALTs dislike when JTEs say ALTs do a good job to their face but tell their boss they are terrible.
- 4-1-2: Being a human tape recorder is not fun.
- 4-1-3: The JTE doesn't listen to the ALTs ideas and focuses only on the test.
- 4-1-4: ALTs dislike hearing all the time when JTEs say they are busy.
- 4-1-5: ALTs dislike being told to rest or sit down.
- 4-1-6: The JTE doesn't understand working in a foreign place can be stressful and sometimes ALTs just need a day off.
- 4-1-7: ALTs dislike having to eat with or play with the kids if they don't feel like it.
- 4-1-8: ALTs dislike grading tests and notebooks for the JTE when they say they are too busy but they are really not.
- 4-1-9: ALTs dislike being told to plan a lesson (or print) for a class they will not attend.
- 4-1-10: ALTs dislike being compared to past ALTs.

4.2 The DON'Ts (B)

- 4-2-1: Forget to talk with your ALT.
- 4-2-2: Leave your ALT in the teacher's room.
- 4-2-3: Prepare alone.
- 4-2-4: Expect the ALT to prepare or teach alone.

4.3 Consideration

We will consider the "don'ts" for TT with ALTs in terms of the JTE's roles. Firstly, 4-1-1, 4-1-3, 4-1-4, 4-1-6, and 4-1-7 are grouped together in the sense of that they are caused by cross-cultural misunderstanding or lack of understanding. This means that they are concerned with the Role A. Let us take 4-1-1 as the first example. In fact, many JTEs hesitate to speak out to their ALTs in order to keep good relationship with them just as is natural for Japanese people. They, however, should speak out to their ALTs if necessary in order to make their classes better. They should not merely resign themselves to being shy, modest Japanese people. 4-1-7 serves as the second example. Actually, some ALTs can not enjoy their lunchtime because they feel awkward with students and homeroom teachers who are too shy to talk with them. However, lunchtime is the time at which teachers can observe their students in a different way from in classes. JTEs should introduce this merit to ALTs and request homeroom teachers to imbue their classrooms with a sociable atmosphere in which ALTs can enjoy their lunch with students.

4-1-1, 4-1-4, 4-1-5, 4-1-10, 4-2-1, and 4-2-2 are concerned with the Role B. The first

examples are 4-1-5 and 4-2-2. Actually, some JTEs tell their ALTs to rest or sit down in the teacher's rooms when they could not spend time to prepare for classes and discuss with ALTs, they have other plans in which they want to teach by themselves, and so on. This inconsiderate behavior will discourage not only ALTs but also their students. 4-1-10 also points out that some JTEs may hurt ALTs' feelings unintentionally and carelessly by comparing their ALTs to past ALTs. It is clear that this behavior exhibits a lack of concern for ALTs. JTEs should realize that their work is not only to teach English but also to develop students' personality, as shown in the Fundamental Law of Education³. By showing deep understanding toward others including ALTs in front of students, JTEs can train their students to be builders of a peaceful state and society.

4-1-2, 4-1-5, 4-1-8, 4-1-9, 4-2-3, and 4-2-4 are concerned with the Role C. 4-1-2 provides an example. Actually, some ALTs feel bored when they can only play their part as human tape recorders in classes. JTEs should realize the roles of ALTs shown in the first part of this paper and design their classes in which ALTs can be active in classes. 4-1-8, 4-1-9, and 4-2-4 show the examples in which some JTEs are neglectful of their duties when they are busy. We see that JTEs should realize their own roles as well as the ALTs' roles and devise ways to effectively use their ALTs in their classes.

4.4 Students' Remarks

We will observe the students' remark on the "don'ts" for TT with ALTs. Figure 3 shows the students' remark on the "don'ts" shown in 4.1. 4-1-1 is shown as A-don't-1 in Figure 3. We see that A-don't-1 (ALTs dislike when JTEs say ALTs do a good job to their face but tell their boss they are terrible) is accepted by 73%, and A-don't-5 (ALTs dislike being told to rest or sit down) is accepted by 55% of the students. This figure shows that A-don't-4 (ALTs dislike hearing all the time when JTEs say they are busy), A-don't-6 (The JTE doesn't understand working in a foreign place can be stressful and

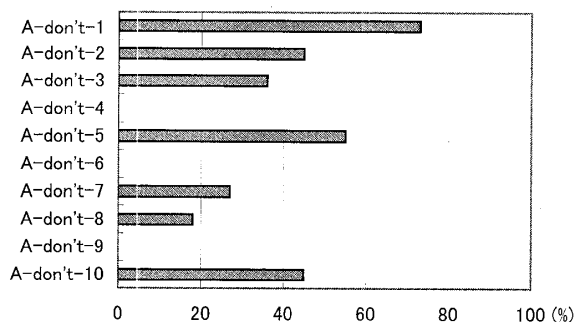


Figure 3: Students' Remarks on the DON'Ts (A)

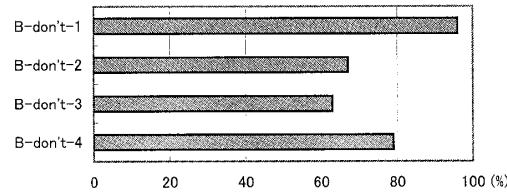


Figure 4: Students' Remarks on DON'Ts (B)

sometimes ALTs just need a day off), and A-don't-9 (ALTs dislike being told to plan a lesson or print for a class they will not attend) are too practical for students to be chosen as three bests of ten "don'ts". This result reflects the lack of students' experience as well as mentioned in 3.4.

Figure 4 shows the students' remark on the "don'ts" for TT shown in 4.2. We see that all descriptions are accepted by over 60% of the students. Of all others, B-don't-1 (Forget to talk with your ALT) and B-don't-4 (Expect the ALT to prepare or teach alone) are accepted by many students (B-don't-1=96%, B-don't-4=79%).

Table 3: Students' Remarks & the JTE's Roles

| JTE's Role | Description of "dos" for Team Teaching |
|------------|--|
| Role A | A-don't-1 |
| Role B | A-don't-1, A-don't-5, B-don't-1, B-don't-2 |
| Role C | B-don't-3, B-don't-4 |

Let us contrast six descriptions (A-don't 1, A-don't-5, B-don't-1, B-don't-2, B-don't-3, B-don't-4) accepted by over 50% of students with the JTE's roles. These descriptions are classified into three groups in terms of the roles as shown in Table 3. It is possible that one description contains more than one factor, as we see that A-don't-1 is grouped into both Role A and Role B. From the observation of Table 3, we may say again that students realize the three roles of JTEs.

5. Observations of Present Conditions

It may be worth observing present conditions of TT with ALTs in junior high and high schools. Let us begin by showing four types of TT presented by Mr. Rosser in order to observe existing conditions from the viewpoint of ALTs. The first type is "Human CD Player" which means that ALTs function only as CD players in classes. This is also referred in 4-1-2 as "Human Tape Recorder". The second is "One Man

Show” type in which ALTs are instructors and JTEs are observers. In excessive cases, JTEs do not even function as observers: they mark examination papers, water plants, and practice golf in the back of the classrooms while ALTs give lessons. The third type is “All Alone” in which JTEs are instructors and ALTs are observers. And the last is “Super Team” type in which JTEs and ALTs work well together. Needless to say, this is the ideal of TT with ALTs. It is surprising that many ALTs have experienced all of these types.

Let us next observe these present conditions from the viewpoint of students. Although students’ observations are rather imperfect because they have experienced TT as students and not as teachers, they will give us good information when we consider how to interact with ALTs. Figure 5 indicates the types of TT which students from my class entitled “Teaching of English” experienced when they were junior high school students or high school students. As might be expected, no students experienced “All Alone” type of TT. They, however, experienced “Human CD Player” and “One Man Show” types.

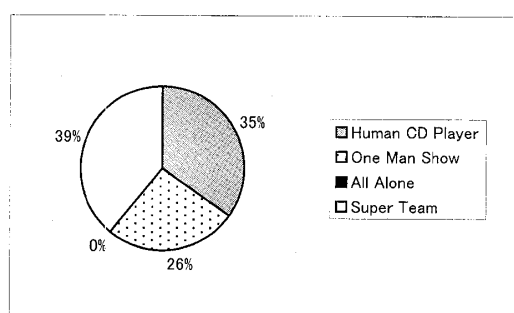


Figure 5: Four Types of Team Teaching

It must be noted that some students who experienced “One Man Show” felt uneasy in classes: they felt unhappy to see their JTEs not friendly with their ALTs, suspected their JTEs not to be able to use English in order to communicate with their ALTs because their JTEs only translated what their ALTs were saying, and could not understand when their ALTs taught English without any help from JTEs. It must be also noted that 39% of students experienced “Super Team” teaching in the past. They enjoyed learning English with ALTs and longed to use English as a tool for communication like their JTEs did. Since they got a good impression of TT with ALTs, they are looking forward to teaching English with ALTs in the near future. The relationship between JTEs and ALTs significantly influences students’ motivation for learning.

In order to look closely at this subject, we will next observe what percentage of students have experienced each description of the “dos & don’ts” for TT. Figure 6

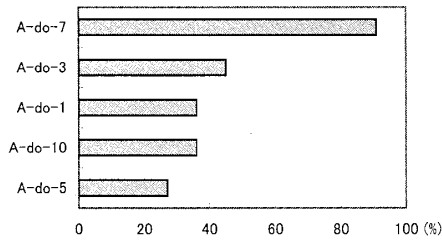


Figure 6: Students' Experience (DOs)

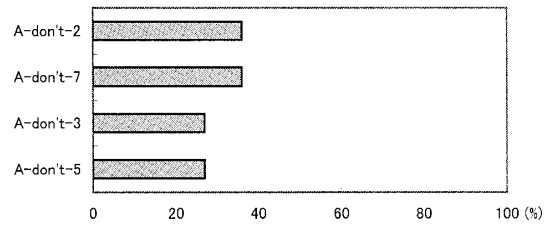


Figure 7: Students' Experience (DON'Ts)

shows the five descriptions of the “dos” which over 20% of students have met in junior high or high schools. For example, 91% of them have met A-do-7 (ALTs appreciate when JTEs walk to class with them on time). We have observed that no students choose this description as one of the candidates in Figure 1 in 3.4. We now see that it is not because they do not accept it but because they regard it very common. Figure 6 also shows that many JTEs challenge the students and use English outside of class, regard their ALTs as persons and not just teachers, share culture and language with ALTs in a natural way, and speak up for their ALTs. Their attitudes instruct students on how to interact with ALTs, since some of these students will team-teach with ALTs in the future.

Figure 7 shows the four descriptions of the “don'ts” which over 20% of students have experienced in the past. For instance, 36% of them have experienced A-don't-2 (Being a human tape recorder is not fun) and A-don't-7 (ALTs dislike having to eat with or play with the kids if they don't feel like it). A-don't-3 (The JTE doesn't listen to the ALTs ideas and focuses only on the test) and A-don't-5 (ALTs dislike being told to rest or sit down) are familiar to 27% of them. These descriptions will be imprinted in students' minds as negative examples. They will be careful not to interact with ALTs in these ways.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have attempted to consider how to interact with ALTs. It is because I believe that this topic is one of the keys for successful TT with ALTs that I have written this paper.

Aihara (2004) and Aihara & Nagasawa (2004) considered TT with ALTs from the viewpoint of JTEs, especially in respect to managing classes. In this paper, we considered TT from the ALT's point of view. This paper owes much to the great help of Mr. Rodney Littlejohn and Mr. Christopher Rosser who have worked at junior high schools as ALTs. By observing and considering the “dos & don'ts” for TT with ALTs presented by them, we see what JTEs are expected to do and not to do. We show JTEs'

roles inside and outside of the classrooms which they need to fill in order to work well together with ALTs. We also observed the university students' remarks on "dos & don'ts" for TT. This observation shows us the present conditions and problems of TT with ALTs.

As TT with ALTs becomes more popular, JTEs come to be expected to have many abilities: the ability to speak English, to listen to English, to read English, to write English, to teach English, moreover, to work well together with ALTs. Since TT is like a team sport, JTEs should not continue to see themselves as self-sufficient. They need to bend their ears to the voice of their partners. Bay (1997) and their ALTs will give them a lot of useful information. If JTEs do admonish themselves, they could develop into more attractive teachers.

Note

- 1 : Mr. Rodney Littlejohn has worked at Mito the fourth junior high school as an ALT with Aihara in 1999.
- 2 : Mr. Christopher Rosser has worked at Mito Midorioka junior high school as an ALT with Aihara in 2000.
- 3 : ARTICLE I. Aim of Education. Education shall aim at the full development of personality, striving for the rearing of the people, sound in mind and body, who shall love truth and justice, esteem individual value, respect labor and have a deep sense of responsibility, and be imbued with the independent spirit, as builders of a peaceful state and society.

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外国語指導助手とのインタラクション

相 原 和 恵

外国語指導助手 (ALT) とのチーム・ティーチング (TT) がそれほど珍しいものではなくなり、その授業内容も自己紹介やゲームだけでは済まされなくなった今、多くの日本人英語教師 (JTE) は ALT との授業展開に頭を悩ませていることだろう。TT は共同作業であるから、JTE の英語力や指導力もさることながら、ALT とのインタラクションが重要な意味を持つことは明らかである。本論では、元ALT の Littlejohn 氏と Rosser 氏の報告を基に、ALT と JTE のインタラクションのあり方について考察する。更に、相原の「英語科教育法」(茨城キリスト教大学・茨城大学) の受講生を対象としたアンケート調査から、ALT との TT の現状と彼らの抱く JTE の理想像を探る。