

〔研究論文〕

「生徒にやる気がない場合、問題は生徒にあるのだと決めてしまわないでください。」

—生徒の英語学習への動機付けに関するJETプログラム参加者の見解—

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要 旨

JETプログラムは世界でもっとも大きな交流プログラムの1つである。大いに異なる3つの省により運営されており、その目標は日本人の英語運用能力の単なる改善を超えるものである。そこでJET参加者の大部分は比較的若く、大学を卒業したばかりの者である。このため、学校現場で日本人教師との間に摩擦がおきている。本著者はさまざまな教育委員会の要請でワークショップや講演をおこなってきており、その経験を踏まえて、本稿では教室現場に関与する両グループ、すなわちALTと日本人英語教師たちが、このプログラムをいかにとらえているかを示し、また、このプログラムにいかに貢献するべきだと彼らが考えているかを示そうとするものである。とくに生徒の動機付けに関するALT側の見解がとりあげられる。

“Young! They’re so young!”

That was my first impression when I, as a guest lecturer, found myself standing in front of the more than 120 Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) of Shiga Prefecture in 2005. There was a sprinkling of comparatively older faces amongst the crowd, but the overall atmosphere was one of amazing youthful energy. Who were these people and what had brought them here?

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) website states:

The purpose of (*the JET Programme*)¹ is to enhance mutual understanding between our country and other countries, and to contribute to the promotion of internationalization in our country through promoting international exchange at the local level, as well as strengthening foreign language education in our country. (MEXT, 2003)

In fact, the JET program was created not by MEXT alone, but by three large ministries, all three with very different areas of concern and thus goals and agendas. It is interesting to note what officials of each Ministry had to say on the program, as quoted by McConnell, (2000):

- Frankly speaking, the purpose of the JET Program was never focused on the revolution of English language education. The main goal was to get local governments to open up their gates to foreigners. It’s basically a grassroots regional development program. (A Ministry of Home Affairs Official)
- Our main hope for the JET Program is to increase understanding of Japanese society and

education among youth in the participating countries. (A Ministry of Foreign Affairs official)

- If Japanese students and teachers improve their communicative competence in English, then they have become more internationalized. This is the goal of the JET Program from the point of view of our ministry. (A Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture official) (p.30)

Prior to the creation of the JET Program, two relatively small programs did exist to bring foreigners to teach English in Japan: the MEF (Mombusho English Fellows) and BET (British English Teaching) schemes. However, they pale in size compared to the JET Program, which the JET Programme Official Website describes as, “one of the largest exchange programmes in the world.” (n.d.)

In any program of considerable size, there is going to be some differences in the experiences of the participants.

The difference between a big city junior high school and one in a rural village is so extreme, it's hard to believe you're talking about the same animal sometimes. And of course the ALT's experiences in these schools vary as widely as the schools themselves. (Marck, 2002, p.59)

As one Japanese teacher notes, “Each school has different expectations of their ALT.” (Miyashita, 2002, p.86) In fact, the mantra of the JET Program is often described as, “Every JET position is different.” (Parkinson, 2002, p.110) What is interesting is that despite the thousands of schools and differing ministries involved, many of the topics being discussed about the JET Program and its apparent problems are relatively similar throughout Japan. In discussing these, the concerns of the JET participants and their JTE counterparts are often quite different. While this paper is primarily concerned with the JET participants, it would be incomplete without some indication of the view of Japanese Teachers of English.

The Japanese Teachers of English (JTE) View

In 2003, I observed a workshop in Kyoto involving 2 ALT supervisors (foreigners) and about 130 junior high and high school JTEs. They were discussing the good points and bad points of having ALTs. Here are the results of what they discussed in that session (what was on the board at the end of the session):

Good points for having ALTs

- good chance to hear native/natural English
- students very active when with ALTs

- time saver for preparation (can help)
- help make listening comprehension tests
- students get a cross-cultural experience

Bad points for having ALTs

- students nervous
- teacher (ALT) handwriting bad
- teachers (JTEs) nervous too
- ESL experienced ALTs – but teaching EFL
- his/her countries' music exactly right
- students like ALTs better than teacher (too popular, too excited – negative)

The problems listed here are of very practical concern. While the ALTs can help prepare for classes, motivate students and expose them to 'native' English and foreign culture, there are problems with many of the participants being nervous (especially the JTE who may feel that their position as the authority in English may be being challenged), and the ALTs perhaps having relatively strong views on their own culture and how to teach, or maybe lacking in training in classroom practice such as good boardwork.

The ALT supervisors comments in response were that while it is true that games and excitement can take up too much time, many ALTs are being used for games and communication activities only. As one Junior High School JTE explains, Japanese teachers are incredibly busy and have little time to go over things with the ALT. "Whereas the ALT could have been used more effectively by the JTE in her textbook lesson, it was easier for the JTE to just ask the ALT to play games." (Sakai, 2002, p.75) This lack of time (and sometimes willingness) to work together is further complicated by the lack of information about the JET Program and its goals provided to teachers of other subjects apart from English in the schools. (Kootnikoff, 2002, Sakai, 2002) The supervisors in the workshop stated that there are many ALTs who feel that they are unwanted and in the way, and end up with lots of free time. The supervisors encouraged the JTEs to use the ALTs more.

Another concern that came up during the workshop in Kyoto in 2003 was that the JTEs wanted to see more trained teachers. McConnell (2000) points out that JTEs often complain that, "ALTs are too young and inexperienced and that the government should send qualified teachers." (p.222) This illustrates the sharp differences between the ideas of the program and the classroom realities and participants' (both JTEs and ALTs) understanding of the program. As one participant, who is an experienced and trained TEFL teacher, notes,

The word "teaching" is all over the official literature of the JET program. The T in AET,

JET, and ALT all stand for teacher. But the reality is that few really do anything remotely resembling what is traditionally thought of as teaching. (‘Sobaman’ on BigDaikon.com)

This is particularly interesting when one considers the difference in requirements set for ALTs (as noted, Assistant Language Teachers) and SEAs (Sports Exchange Advisors), both positions being part of the JET program. The official JET program site (which has a MOFA url (MOFA (b)) states, under eligibility, that “For ALT applicants in English-speaking countries: TEFL qualification is helpful, but not required.” However, just under that, for SEA (Sports Exchange Advisor) positions, applicants need to,

Excel in a certain sports field and be recommended by either the participating countries’ National Olympic Committee (NOC) or government organisation. Alternatively, the applicant should have equivalent abilities and recommendations. Furthermore, it is necessary to have a recognised and prestigious coaching certification/qualification from a vocational college or to have at least 3 years of coaching experience in one’s specialised sports field. (MOFA (b))

Both positions were established to encourage exchange – “SEAs engage in international exchange through sports” (MOFA (b)) while ALTs, “are engaged in language instruction under the guidance of Language Teachers Consultants or Japanese teachers of foreign languages” (MOFA (b)) However, while SEAs must have significant background in the sport and coaching ability, TEFL qualifications for ALTs are merely “helpful, but not required” in the application process.

Support for ALTs also seems to require little teaching training or background. An advertisement in 2006 for an ALT advisor at MEXT (to be a part-time position) stated that duties included providing “advice to ALTs concerning teaching at Japanese schools” and that, in terms of requirements, applicants should:

- # Have experience as an ALT on the JET program
- # Be a native speaker of English
- # Have a good command of the Japanese language
- # Be interested in and be willing to deepen his or her knowledge and appreciation of JET program, teaching foreign languages and international education
- # Be under 45 years old, in principle (MEXT (c))

Note that they do not need a teaching background or formal training, just experience as an ALT (a position for which a teaching background is, as we have seen, “helpful, but not required”), and an “interest in” teaching foreign languages (amongst a range of other things – seemingly an aside.)

In 1987, “35.6 percent of JET participants indicated they had formal teaching experience, but it is hard to know what this means since “teaching experience” was not defined.” (McConnell, 2000, p.57) McConnell goes on to quote information from CLAIR (the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations) that in 1991 11.7 percent of ALTs had TEFL certification. (2000, p.59) In fact, soon after the JET Program began, the fact that most of the participants were not trained teachers was challenged by an academic at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. The Ministry of Education response was that, “they felt that experienced teachers were too set in their own teaching strategies to adapt effectively to Japanese schools.” (McConnell, 2000, p.76)² I asked the JET participants in my lecture/workshop in Shiga in 2005 to raise hands to various questions about teaching experience, and found the numbers of trained and experienced teachers surprisingly small, reflecting the situation in 1991.

Miyashita, a senior high school teacher, states that ideally an ALT should be bilingual (2002, p.94), but at the same time, McConnell, who was involved at times in recruiting ALTs in America, notes:

I discovered quite by accident that too much fluency in Japanese could actually work against one’s chances of being accepted... Apparently, ALT applicants with outstanding Japanese ability are seen as working against two major purposes of the program: the teaching of English and the introduction of Japanese language and culture to a new generation of foreign youth. (McConnell, 2000, p. 54-5)

Assistant Language Teachers who, despite what Japanese teachers of English ask for, have no language teaching background. Assistant Language Teachers who do not speak fluent Japanese, despite what Japanese schools ask for. The explanation for this dichotomy comes from the goals of the controlling three ministries mentioned at the beginning of the article. As McConnell (2000) notes, “One of the most striking features about the JET Program at the national level is the complex relationship among the several bureaucracies involved, each with distinct interests in seeking internationalization.” (p.229) The JET Program is as much about creating ambassadors for Japan in overseas populations as exposing the Japanese themselves to foreign language and culture.

This is reflected in the five prize-winning essays in the Foreign Language Division of the Fifteenth Annual JET Programme Essay Competition published in the 2007 JET Journal, none of which is directly about teaching. They are all about personal contacts in terms of ‘grassroots internationalization.’ They are often rather dismissive of JET language teaching abilities: “Most of us have never planned a lesson before” (Moraes, 2007, p.175), “For people who consider the purpose of a JET teaching English to Japanese people, I failed miserably (*to teach an old lady I met*

regularly English)...But I think a greater number of us believe that the JET Programme offers life's unexpected moments." (Walkzewski, 2007, p.167) They are almost universal in their idea that, "The main purpose of JET is to promote a mutual exchange and respect of cultures on the community level." (Bellew, 2007, p.195)³ Despite what JTEs want, it would seem that foreign JET Program participants are and will continue to be comparatively young college graduates with relatively limited training and experience in teaching.

However, "The wild card in this... is the overwhelmingly positive reaction of Japanese students to the ALTs and to team teaching." (McConnell, 2000, p. 214) Kootnikoff (1999) notes, "Schools have been guilty of not appreciating the enthusiasms their ALTs have, both in and outside of the classroom." (p. 105) As a JTE states, "ALTs often have fresh ideas and insights, simply by virtue of being from a different culture." (Sakai, 1999, p. 71) ALTs are predominantly young graduates, and thus have had a lot of experience in education as students. Their age, combined with their experience and their 'fresh' outlook prompted me to ask the Shiga ALTs in 2005 to write advice to JTEs on how to motivate their students. Their replies are what follows.

The Assistant Language Teachers' Views on Motivation

Before discussing the replies, it is important to note that, as many of the ALTs have little or no background in the academic examination of motivation, their understanding of 'motivation' comes from the vernacular. The Penguin English Dictionary, 2nd edition (2003), defines 'motivate' as "to provide (somebody) with a motive or incentive to do something" and motivation as, "the act or an instance of motivating or being motivated... a motivating force..." There was simply not the time for an introduction to the many aspects of the study of motivation.⁴

To organize the replies, I relied on the six comments that to me were the most telling and summarized others best. The most telling comment was, "If they are not motivated, please don't just assume that the problem is with the children." This would seem to indicate that there are practical things a teacher can do. The remaining five comments introduce five rough areas of possible teacher action:

1 - You can't motivate people other than yourself - but you can inspire people, so inspire your students. (This covers two areas, to which I have given the titles: '*Have a good relationship with students*' and '*Use your ALT well*'))

2 - Give them reasons to want to learn English - some reason to use and have fun with the language (your ALT can really help with this) (Once again, '*Use your ALT well*' and another area '*Make lessons fun and informative*'))

3 - Show an interest in things they are interested in – ask them! (Again, '*Make lessons fun and informative*'))

4 - Make English relevant to the students by giving them activities related to what they are interested in (The fourth area, '*Classroom activities*'))

5 - Don't be a slave to the textbook (The fifth area, '*Classroom management*' as well as, '*Classroom activities*'))

Rather than summarize what the ALTs had to say, it would seem more appropriate to list their responses.

1 - Have a good relationship with students

- make them (*students*) like you
- be interested in what they like
- talk to them outside of class
- give them a chance to answer (lots of JTE' s answer before giving the students the opportunity and because the students know they will not have to answer they do not try)
- tell stories occasionally or talk about your trips or weekends and ask the students to listen, say what they understood, then ask them questions about them.
- the students can sense if a teacher is excited and it will reflect in their enthusiasm
- be positive and praise students
- be a good role model – both as a person and as a non-native English speaker

We have seen that Japanese teachers in some ways feel threatened by ALTs as native English speakers, but we have also seen that they may feel threatened by the ALTs popularity with students. These comments become even more pertinent when one remembers that many ALTs have only just finished being students themselves.

2 - Use your ALT well

- interact with your ALT in English
- ask your ALT to move through the hallways and chat outside the classroom
- work with ALTs to make activities
- give ALTs better feedback about what you do or don't like.
- use English with your ALT in natural, fun, interesting situations or skits to introduce a grammar point – get the students laughing, listening carefully, and guessing the meaning
- use the ALT to their full potential and get them to fill in where you are not so confi-

dent. Human tape recorder is boring for both the ALT and students.

- let the ALT speak English more (without translation)
- some JTEs turn the flashcards on the ALT so the ALT is being quizzed on their Japanese. The students love it. Then the JTE says ‘ALT-sensei can do it in Japanese, you can do it in English...’
- get the students to teach the ALTs Japanese or about Japanese culture

As one Japanese teacher stated, “I think of the ALT as a motivator. For Japanese, it’s very strange to speak only in English with each other. But if I have an ALT, it’s much easier for me to speak in English.” (McConnell, 2000, p.216) Another JTE, Sakai Hideki (1999), states that, “I feel it is important to fully utilize the ALT’s presence within the school to teach beyond language to include an exchange of cultural information as well. I feel the textbook is a key part of this multi-cultural approach, but the attitudes of the JTE and ALT are most important.” (p.69) There would seem to be a wide range of methods to involve the ALT more in class and in the school as a whole, both as a resource as well as a motivation to students to learn English.

From the ALT point of view as well, it would seem healthy to have a self-image as a motivator, as one previous ALT comments on an ALT-associated website:

I, along with many others, consider myself an entertainer first, and an educator second. In my observation, I am here to motivate, not educate. Seeing students only once a month is no way to teach English, know that you are going to be more of a motivator than an educator and you won’t be disappointed. (Sobaman on BigDaikon.com)

3 – Make lessons fun as well as informative

- use the textbook less
- use student-centered content -- materials and props they know (movies, music, manga) – something they feel will be relevant
- have students suggest ideas of what and how they want to learn
- there is a time for games
- communication activities so they can see English ‘works’
- challenge the students – they like the feeling of accomplishment
- use running games and song singing
- teachers participate in the games too
- use any kind of competition
- teach ‘real’ English – slang, incorrect grammar/pronunciation

- use movement ! Any small break from sitting and listening during a lesson helps a lot!
- use rewards (stickers, *hanko* points...) – and have prizes/rewards
- use time limits for activities (ten second countdown works well)
- allow creativity in student writing and let them write about what interests them
- show students the benefits of speaking another language and show them its importance (teach it as a practical skill)
- let them discover things by themselves – promote individual thinking !
- you can write/talk about pop culture just as easily as any of the stories in the textbook, using the same grammar and much of the same vocabulary, but the students will find it more interesting

The comments by ALTs above certainly reflect McConnell's point that,

ALTs generally believed that English classes in Japan are in need of livening up, and they therefore often tried to use games and other “fun” activities in their team teaching... the ALTs seemed willing to try anything to energize the class, use “living English,” and produce evidence, in the form of critical thinking and self-expression, that “real” learning was taking place. (McConnell, 2000, p. 213)

There is a struggle in Japanese schools between the demands of the curriculum along with the realities of the entrance exam system on the one hand, and the desire of many teachers to teach more communicative ‘real’ English on the other hand. While there are many Japanese teachers who see the textbook as an indispensable core for the lesson, there are others who seek to try other approaches, such as this one JTE:

I decided to give (not using the textbook when team teaching) a try. The risk is high and it's more work, but I'd never done it before so I wanted to try it... The students have the mind-set that team-taught classes are fun because we don't use the textbook. I think the best part of team teaching is that it motivates students to take an interest in English. (McConnell, 2000, p. 175)

So, what sort of classroom activities do the ALTs see as being of benefit?

4 - Classroom activities

- allow time for warm-up activities
- do more speaking activities
- storytelling/kamishibai
- homemade videos
- use funny pictures and props (visual aids)

- bulletin boards
- use authentic material
- students create their own manga (fill in the speech bubbles)
- students make something using English instructions
- students talk about their favorite item, star, etc using the English they know
- play a sport/game using English, then teach others how to play using English
- use role play/simulation/interview activities
- get students to write their own skits/situations using vocabulary from the textbook
- get students to make stuff (e.g. – must/must not, have to/don't school rule posters)
- teach 'ummm' and 'hmmm'
- get students to make materials for their peers to use
- teach practical English and English that real people might say
- have students give one minute speeches on different things. Use this regularly
- make minor modifications to the textbook lessons and or scripts to test the students understanding
- use unusual equipment - for example, a fly swatter as a pointer
- use material that encourages cultural knowledge as well
- pictionary
- use race games
- show and tell – encourage students to ask questions

Miyashita (2002) makes the important point, “One of the major problems that the teaching of English has had for a long time, is that productive and interactive aspects of the language learning process have been almost totally neglected.” (p. 92) The JTE Sakai (2002) agrees that the approach to using the text by many Japanese teachers is indeed dry, and suggests that the text can actually be made to come alive through effective use of the ALT. (pp.76-77) The above suggestions provide a wealth of ideas as to how that may be carried out.

But what of the day to day running of the classroom ?

5 - Classroom management

- use more English in the instructions (students like to know Japanese people can use English well)
- have the students translate directions into Japanese to see if they understand them.
- don't correct everything
- tell students that mistakes are important – they will learn from them

- allow students to see that you also make mistakes
- students can correct/give feedback to each other
- don't correct students while they are speaking – let them finish or don't correct them at all
- don't be rigid in the use of the textbook – don't follow it so closely. Take a break from it or enhance it
- don't over explain
- have at least one 'fun' or 'interesting' activity in each lesson
- use a variety of approaches and change activities often – keep things different and moving
- follow a rough outline with warmer, skill building, practice and personalization
- don't forget the low level students and don't bore the smart students. Use activities which can be used by different levels. If students finish early, talk to them.
- students should get used to speaking out, going to the front of the class and participation in English conversation
- be confident (even in making mistakes)
- be creative and spontaneous
- less teacher centered, more student centered.
- a change of location can be very good
- use classroom behavior as part of your grading system. Active participation gets higher grades
- call on students frequently and use a random method of selection
- walk around the classroom – don't just stay at the front
- break students out of passive learning. Convince them that asking questions is better than taking notes and is not a bad thing.

Kootnikoff (1999) stated that during his time as a ALT, "One of the weaknesses I noticed in the system was the overall teacher-centred approach. In a class of forty students such an approach may be effective in maintaining discipline and may be OK for non-interactive subjects, but for acquiring a language and developing communication skills it's sorely inadequate." (Kootnikoff, 1999, p.98) While it may be difficult to change the reality of class size in schools, the above suggestions would certainly seem to offer a variety of methods to make the classroom a more interactive and lively place. As a JTE stated, "Teachers need to be a performer, a comedian, an actor, as well as a teacher." (Sakai, 1999, p.80)

Conclusion

The ALT comment that affected me the most, and actually impacted on my own teaching, was, “If they are not motivated, please don’t just assume that the problem is with the children.” Hence its presence in the title.

Many of the ALTs are in general younger, and thus closer in generation to the students than their teachers. In addition, they are just out of education themselves, and they are also outside of the regular system, so it could be argued that their ideas on what might motivate or interest students could be very illuminating to Japanese teachers of English. In fact, many of the comments are applicable in almost any teaching situation in the world.

Their presence in Japan, while debatably not primarily for the teaching of English and also debatably not causing the rapid change in education that many predicted or even feared, is causing a quiet revolution. McConnell (2000) quotes a veteran Japanese teacher of English, “I think new English teachers in Japan are increasingly going to be judged by a higher standard because of ALTs.” (p. 256) McConnell does go on to state that, “Though its effects on English education have been gradual and mixed, the JET Program has achieved phenomenal success as a cultural exchange program.” (McConnell, 2000, p. 258)

ALTs are just what their name indicates, assistants, however, as one ALT notes, “We arrive as ‘assistants’, but one of Japan’s greatest virtues is that it can be highly flexible when it wants or needs to be. I have found that, with a positive attitude and a degree of tact, a fully satisfying relationship can be realized with your school and colleagues.” (Kootnikoff, 1999, p. 100)

The JET program was conceived at a time of conflict between the U.S. and Japan over trade and has been described as an attempt on the part of Japan to, “provide tangible evidence of good faith efforts being taken to open up the Japanese system at local levels and to rectify the imbalance in the flow of goods and personnel.” (McConnell, 2000, p.1) It is certainly having a great impact in many ways and bringing in thousands of young foreigners to experience and be experienced in Japan. What effects this will have on the future of Japan remain to be seen, but when one bears in mind the overall objectives of the MEXT 2003 Elementary and Secondary Education Course of Study for Foreign Language for Junior High School, it is having a positive benefit.

To develop students’ basic practical communication abilities such as listening and speaking, deepening the understanding of language and culture, and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages. (MEXT (b))

Note

- 1 JET stands for The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program(me). During this article, I will refer to it as the JET Program. I will also use ALT to refer to Assistant Language Teacher and JTE to refer to Japanese teacher of English, as these are the terms widely used in the associated literature. While it is true that participants in the JET Program are not all ALTs, more than 90 percent of participants do become ALTs – hence the literature often seems vague in distinguishing between the JET Programme as a whole and the practice of having ALTs in Japanese schools.
- 2 This was the case in this writer's experience. In 1993, I was interested in becoming an ALT and went to the Japanese Consulate in Sydney, Australia for information. At that time an embassy official recommended that I not apply as I was a trained and experienced ESL/EFL teacher and thus would not be accepted.
- 3 The 1991 book, 'Learning to Bow: Inside the Heart of Japan' by New York Times 'bestselling author' Bruce Feiler takes a similar approach, although he does make some more direct comments on teaching in his writing.
- 4 While this is certainly a weakness in this paper from an academic point of view, it should be pointed out that the primary reason the author has chosen to publish this in this format in this publication is to try to bring to the attention of JTEs in training the circumstances surrounding the JET program and the views and opinions of those participating in it, in particular in regards to motivation.

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