

TEAM-TEACHING & THE M.E.F. PROGRAM IN ASHIKAGA

Last June, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting for MEFs in Japan. At one of the lectures Mr. Minoru Wada, of Mombusho, told us his hopes for the MEF program. In addition he described what the primary duty of the MEF should be, that of a 'motivator'.. He laid out the motivator's functions as follows:

- to show that English is a living language
- to give the students the chances to communicate in English with the native speaker of English
- to show that learning English is fun
- to facilitate the elimination of students' psychological inhibitions

He continued to point out the steps in developing communicative competence in a foreign language; 1) Knowledge about grammatical rules 2) Internalized knowledge through practice and drills 3) Psuedo-Communication and 4) Real Communication. Steps 1 and 2 are the usual types of activities found in an English lesson, yet, Mr. Wada stressed the importance of the MEF's involvement in steps 3 and 4. Psuedo-Communication may include such activities as, 'dialogues', 'role-plays', 'skits', and 'games'. They are categorized as language activities, or gengo katsudo. Step 3 invariably leads to step 4, Real Communication, and 'real' communicative ability is the goal to reach.

Of course, this is only a very breif synopsis of what Mombusho spokesman, Minoru Wada, hopes for the MEF program. In comparison, how do our own hopes for the MEF program in Ashikaga stand? What has been happening in our own city? Have we in some ways succeeded? Can we improve?

These and other questions crossed my mind while reviewing 18 months of school visit evaluation reports. I have now worked with over 40 teachers, went on over 234 school visits, and have helped in more than 767 classes. Even so, I feel no more qualified to teach the English language, but I do feel confident expressing some of my oppinions and advice on the MEF program and team-teaching in Ashikaga.

In the following I will outline the types of team-teaching I have done, the types of lessons I have found to be the most successful, samples of good teaching plans, and guidelines to follow while planning your own lessons with the MEF.

It is difficult to generalize about the types of lessons and team-teaching I have done, there has been a delightful variety. However, it is possible to categorize them according to the chart on the following page.

Types of Team-Teaching & Responsibilities

<u>MEF (Mombusho English Fellow)</u>	<u>JET (Japanese English Teacher)</u>
a) MEF as observer; active participant - Joins activities with students; encourages.	JET in charge of class and activities.
b) MEF as Assistant: assists with new words, pronunciation, model reading, Qs & As, encourages students.	JET as Leader: introduces new material, makes requests of MEF.
c) MEF as Team-Teacher: drills review work, psuedo-communication activities, real communication with Q's & A's, other language activities.	JET as Team-Teacher: gives knowledge of grammatical rules, internalized practice of drills, demonstrates psuedo and real communication activities with students and MEF.
d) MEF as Leader: reviews old material, Q's & A's language activities, makes requests of JET.	JET as Assistant: organizes and controls students, translates key words when necessary, encourages students to try, demonstrates lang. activity with MEF.
e) MEF in charge of class and activities.	JET as observer, active participant, joins in activities with students, encourages positively.

Often times the above types of lessons and MEF/JET responsibilities are mixed, making it difficult to specify clearly which category it falls under. Yet, it is easy to see how most lessons will fall under one of the groupings more than another. In any case, these are the important questions to ask. Which category do your lessons with the MEF most often become? Which do you feel most comfortable with? Which do you think is best for your students? Would you like to try a different approach with the MEF next time?

As I promised in my introduction, I will discuss the types of lessons and activities involved, that I have found to be the most successful. If I chose to, I could go on for pages and pages telling about specific successful classes I have experienced. Instead I'll talk about the types of lessons and activities that have been the most productive in my eyes, and my assumptions on why they worked well.

All successful lessons to date have contained all or in part the following: psuedo or real communication activities, supplementary materials and visual aids, and MEF and JET team work. In the following outline I will explain each of the above.

Psuedo and Real Communication Activities

There are a variety of ways this goal can and has been met. One of the most fundamental ways is through Q's & A's between students, MEF, and JET. Of course these need to be questions of a personal nature, not questions based on the textbook. But the good news is that the question patterns can and should be taken directly from the text, reinforcing what the students have learned as well as communicating ideas.

Next, dialogues and skits have been used, either to reinforce an old grammar pattern or introduce a new one. In fact, the already prepared dialogue in the text can meet this goal, however, teachers must be very careful that the communicative objective is being met. More often than not, students will simply read the dialogue, or memorize it word for word. While this is good reading practice and pattern drill, it is not a psuedo-communication exercise.

The most successful dialogues and skits, in terms of psuedo-communication, are those which are original, or slightly adapted versions of those found in the text. Both JET and MEF can be responsible for creating them. Regardless, it is important that the conversational aspect of the dialogue or skit be stressed. It usually works better when the MEF and JET demonstrate the dialogue/skit before the students attempt it. In this way the students are encouraged and they know what is expected of them.

Last, but by no means least, are the psuedo and real communication activities that the students themselves, with the aid of the JET, can create. In terms of the learning process, it is a last step in acquiring communicative competence, therefore very important. I have witnessed many such lessons. Students have dramatized the text, created and performed their own mini-plays and skits, created original stories with pictures to tell me, taught me about Japan, showed me slides about their families, friends and school life, sang me songs, and believe it or not, all in English. When students strive to create their own activities in the foreign language, a step past mere psuedo-communication towards real communication is made. This is a very important goal to be reached. How often has 'real' communication taken place in your class? Have you ever used any of the above activities?

Supplementary Materials and Visual Aids

There are many ways in which the learning process can be helped by the usage of supplementary materials and visual aids. I have found that lessons with such aids are extremely successful. The materials are used in class to make the English in the text come to life. Such materials may include slides, letters, stamps, newspapers, magazines, money, or other 'realia' from America or foreign countries. To date I have shown slides of my home town, American jr high school life, Southeast Asia, Great Britain, and other countries. They particularly correspond well with the lessons, 'A Day at School', 'A Trip to Southeast Asia', 'Keiko's Stay in London'. Of course it is possible to team slides with any lesson in the text, and they can be made at the audio-visual center in the Board of Education from a photograph, or

made from a picture in a book. In addition such 'realia' from foreign countries can help the students' cross-cultural understanding.

Visual aids are very important to catch and keep the students' attention. Often times I have worked with classes when the JETs have asked the students to bring their own prop to help with the English lesson. A baseball bat, a tennis racket, a soccer ball, are all great props to use which makes ordinary drills become pseudo-communication activities. Needless to say, much more interesting for the students as well.

One of the most successful lessons I took part in was while using two play telephones. The JET gave one phone to a student and one to me, and then took turns calling each other and having a short conversation. It was a big hit. With the telephone in hand, the student seemed to forget his/her own nervousness. Less attention was directed at the individual student and more on the telephone prop. Consequently the students could speak quite naturally, and pseudo and real communication took place.

Finally I'd like to stress the success that music has had in the English classroom. You may think that if a student can't speak English, he/she surely cannot sing it. I assure you that such is not the case. I've heard songs in English, and have seen remarkable effects on even the slowest of classes. The simplicity of it is, that students' are interested in music, and American and British singers are very popular among them. English songs are an excellent form of supplementary materials.

M.E.F. and J.E.T Teamwork

One of the most important ingredients for a successful English lesson with the MEF is teamwork. Both JET and MEF should be clear on precisely what their own responsibilities are. Each should have his/her own time allotment, and the other should encourage students, while making sure they are listening and behaving. Though it is not a big problem, some students think that it is play time when the MEF visits. JETs should tell their students that the MEF's visit isn't a free lesson. Though special, and hopefully enjoyable, it is a very important and serious time. Perhaps lack of leadership is the main reason why some students 'act off' in class when the MEF visits. If the JET and MEF are clear on their roles in the classroom, then the students will be more sure of their own. JETs should let the MEF and students know what is expected of them in the classroom.

So then, time allotment and shared responsibilities is important to team-teaching, and as I said before, the teacher should always remain in control of the class. But, what is the best way to split responsibilities and divide time? One of the most successful combinations of duties is outlined in the graph on the preceding pages. Lesson type C where the MEF leads review work, the JET introduces new material, together demonstrate language activities, and assist the other at all times, while maintaining classroom enthusiasm and involvement.

At last I'd like to say something about review and new materials. Due to the fact that in most cases the MEF is not a trained English teacher, it is best that the JET introduce the new grammar patterns. The MEF can assist you in this area, but should not teach a new and complicated sentence structure. For the basic and easy to follow pattern, it is a possibility. Yet, since it is important that the students understand the fundamental rules and usage of the pattern, it is best that the teacher be able to explain briefly in the native language. Of course, there are exceptions, and the MEF can always help with examples, and new pattern drills. The basic rule teaching should be left to the JET.

The MEF, however, is the ideal person to do review work, which is necessary to reinforce what students have already learned, and to make sure they understand before moving on to something new. I'm sure it is much more gratifying for the students to be familiar with the grammar pattern that the MEF is using. When the MEF only drills the students on new material, they are always unsure, and this may make them even more reluctant to respond. When the MEF uses material that they are familiar with, the learning process is reinforced, and self-confidence is built. The students can thus feel good about what they have learned, instead of worrying about how much they still don't know.

Teaching Plans

One of the surest ways of the JET and MEF to successfully team-teach is to have a clear and precise lesson plan. The function of the lesson plan is to: outline the lesson by a sequence of events; state the lesson's aim; inform the MEF of his/her duties; to let the MEF know what is expected of the students; to make special requests of the MEF. On the whole, I receive fairly good teaching plans, that are informative and helpful. Remember, the more helpful your lesson plans are, the better the MEF can prepare for your class.

On the following pages are two samples of what I consider to be a very helpful teaching plan. Note that the aims are clearly stated, the procedures outlined, and the responsibilities of the MEF are easily understood. With such a lesson plan, the MEF will feel confident walking into class, even if the meeting time with the teacher before class is short.

In addition, I have found it very helpful to know if I have visited the class before, and if so, how many times. Equally helpful is to know what lesson in the text and what page they are presently studying. Furthermore it is imperative that the JET inform the MEF of any students in the class that may have a particular learning disability or handicap. The MEF should be forewarned of those students with hearing, speaking, visual or emotional problems.

English Teaching Plan

by —

The text ~ Book I Lesson B. P. 73

— chu

The class ~ 1-7 (this is the second visit of Gretchen.)

The date ~ 2/7 (Fri) the first period. (9:10 ~ 9:55)

The Aims ~ ① To let the students have fun with talking to Gretchen.

② To let them familiarize with using the interrogative sentences beginning with "When".

The procedure

1) Greetings by Mr. — and Gretchen.

2) Talking to Gretchen.

(The two students of each group have talk or questions to Gretchen about many things. There are seven groups in this class.)

3) Presentation.

① Review ~ Skit Show. (Some pairs of them give skits which I gave to play at the before lesson.)

Let's observe them and admire them after their skits.

② New Materials.

(1) The skit by Mr. — and Gretchen.
(using "When-?")

(2) The same skit by some students.

(3) Explanation of today's key sentences.

(4) Reading aloud. P.B. after Gretchen.

4) Consolidation

(1) Assignment of homework.

5) Closing

The following are ten guidelines for you to follow while preparing your teaching plan for the MEF's visit.

- 1) What class, what time, what page and lesson in the text ?
- 2) Has the MEF visited this class before ?
- 3) What should the MEF know in particular about these students ?
- 4) What is the aim of the lesson ?
- 5) What is the grammatical point/points to be reviewed or taught ?
- 6) Is there anything you'd like the MEF to bring or prepare ?

- 7) What should you , the JET, do to prepare the students to get the most out of the English lesson with the MEF ?
- 8) What are you, the JET, responsible to prepare for class ?
- 9) How will responsibilities be split between MEF and JET ?
- 10) When can the teaching plan be discussed with the MEF ?

I hope that the above will help with the difficult task of making teaching plans, which are essential to effective team-teaching. It is a sure step to improving the already successful MEF program in Ashikaga.

T H E P L A N

The place : Junior High School
 The date : February 7th, third period
 The class : Low ability class (*The 2nd class under the special education*)
 The instructor :
 The aim : Enjoy English with Gretchen
 The procedure :

1) Greeting

First of all, they can say Greeting like this.

T : Hello everyone

S : Hello Miss and Gretchen

T : How are you?

S : I'm fine thank you and you?

T : Fine thank you

It took about two months to teach them.

(one lesson a week)

2) Game

Some of them know only alphabets, but maybe they can't understand English. But before, I have tried alphabets cards game to them. That went well. So I'm going to try it again. The game is to put mixed cards from A to Z as fast as possible.

*** The way ***

1. They decide their partner by a lot.
 2. Give cards and start the game (take the time)
 3. Winner can get a reward (small gift)
- . Perhaps we can do this five or six times.

3) Closing

Attention: I want Gretchen to explain the way of game to them in English and Japanese and gesture. And please prepare a reward.(small gift) for example, seal, folding papers, etc. Anything is OK. I prepare two sets of alphabet cards. But if you have, please bring. And I'm going to make some lot. I think, they will be very happy that you are in this room with them.

I'd like to close with these final ideas and suggestions.

- a) Be wary of translating the MEF's English too much. It should be done sparingly, instead of whole sentences, just translate a few key words or terms. It is important to let students 'hear' natural spoken English. Allow them the chance to guess at the meaning through context and gesture.
- b) Try using the MEF as a judge or special audience for your students. Allow them the chance to perform and 'try out' their English abilities.
- c) Set a good example in front of your students. Students are much more hesitant to use English if their teacher hesitates to speak with the MEF.
- d) From time to time, create a more communicative atmosphere. Try putting chairs in a semi-circle, or rearranging desks.
- e) Try to keep the class atmosphere relaxed and encouraging. Reassure students that mistakes are o-kay. Not trying is much worse than making a mistake.
- f) Ask the MEF to bring a small gift or reward to give to the students who do well in language activity competitions. This is a great incentive, and makes even the shyest of students take a chance.
- g) Always be sure to praise your students for trying, and praise them two times as much when they succeed.
- h) Be creative. Don't be afraid to try something new with the MEF and your students. If it doesn't work, you throw the idea out. If it does, you have a new teaching idea that you can use for years to come.

In conclusion I want to stress that I'm aware that each of you have your own teaching methods and ideas which you have developed through years of experience. Yet, I point out that team-teaching with the MEF is a little out of the ordinary, and therefore calls for special attention. I hope that this article has made the principles behind the MEF program, and the strategies of team-teaching a little more clear. Perhaps it will spark a few ideas.

Truely, it has been a most rewarding experience working with JETs in Ashikaga. I hope you will continue to challenge yourselves to become even better English teachers and speakers. I hope you will venture forth, and strive to make team-teaching and the MEF program the best it can be. I am grateful for all of your encouragement and support. Remember, wherever I may be, I continue to send you my best wishes and respect.