

Co-teaching between native and non-native English teachers: An exploration of co-teaching models and strategies in the Chinese primary school context

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that co-teaching between native English teachers (NETs) and non-native English teachers (NNETs) can contribute to the improvement of teaching quality of NETs, many of whom cannot achieve a desirable quality of teaching of English in Chinese primary schools largely due to lack of training in professional teaching. In this paper, four co-teaching models are examined—“One Teaching-One Assisting”, “Alternative Teaching”, “Station Teaching” and “Team Teaching”. In the context of Chinese EFL classrooms in Kunming, China, the paper takes the unique position that these four models should be implemented sequentially. That is, ‘One teaching-One assisting’ should be adopted first, moving on to ‘Alternative Teaching’, then ‘Station Teaching’ and finally ‘Team Teaching’, so that NETs can gradually build up their skills and experience in co-teaching. Strategies on how to create effective co-teaching are also discussed to demonstrate how co-teachers with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds can create a dynamic teaching team and improve the quality of their teaching.

KEYWORDS: *co-teaching, co-teaching models, teaching in China, native English teachers*

Introduction

In China, the implementation of the policy of introducing English as a compulsory subject for primary school pupils since 2001 has allowed more Chinese students to learn English at a younger age (Nunan, 2003). This policy change has stimulated more primary schools, especially private schools in major cities, to employ “native” English teachers (NETs) alongside “non-native” Chinese English teachers (NNETs). NNETs teach grammar while NETs separately teach English conversation as a supplement.

The use of the terms “native” and “non-native” is admittedly a very contentious matter, especially in the sociolinguistics of English and its pedagogical dimensions. In theoretical linguistics, the native speaker is considered to be a person who is qualified to judge the grammatical correctness of sentences (Chomsky, 1965), while for Strevens (1982) a native speaker is one who has acquired English during

infancy and childhood. Although Kachru & Nelson (1996) assert that the casual use of the term “native speaker” needs to be questioned and reconsidered, the terms “native” and “non-native” in this paper will be used in their narrow senses to distinguish foreign teachers from Chinese English teachers. To determine this, two criteria have been applied: 1) whether the person acquired English as the first language, and 2) the race of the person (Kachru & Nelson, 1996). The issue is not solved with these working criteria, thus the terms are used in this paper cautiously. The decision has more to do with the practicalities of differentiating between two groups of English teachers, rather than arguments for particular notions of nativeness. In fact, it will be seen below that nativeness does not guarantee good teaching.

In general, the employment of NETs in English language teaching has benefited Chinese students. Noticeable progress has been achieved in the improvement of students’ pronunciation, communicative competence, and cross-cultural awareness. Nevertheless, as the demand for NETs grows across the country, primary schools have often experienced difficulty in recruiting *qualified* NETs. The main reason for this is that primary schools do not offer or are unable to offer NETs the financial advantages that higher education institutes do. Therefore, due to the shortage of NETs for teaching, it is possible for any native English speaker applicant with any academic degree to be accepted and granted a full time teaching job in the primary schools.

Thus, the practice of employing NETs without professional training to teach English to students, in most cases, has engendered unsatisfactory quality of English teaching (Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Mattos, 1997; Tian, 2003). A report by Tian (2003) even highlights the failure of a policy to employ foreign teachers in a key primary school in China. Employing an untrained NET can result in disorganised classroom teaching and a lack of continuity of teaching content. In addition, due to the language barrier, poor instructional presentation as well as class and behaviour management can be issues against NETs as well. However, these problems associated with incompetent NETs seem to have been ignored by schools and parents because what matters more to these stakeholders is where the NETs come from, and not what or how they teach. To some extent NETs in Chinese primary schools function as ‘window dressing’ rather than valuable and effective members of the teaching staff.

There is limited literature on NETs in China. Related studies mainly address issues related to Chinese college students’ perceptions of NETs (Sun, 2007; Wang & Zheng, 2005). These studies attempt to find out students’ attitudes towards NETs and their Chinese counterparts based on a number of criteria such as authenticity in the use of English, teaching methodology, and assessment, and determine the strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers based on the findings. Concerning co-teaching between NETs and NNETs, there are few available studies as well, and usually confined to tertiary education only (Chamba, Luo, Sonam, & Wu, 2006; Huang, 2000; Liu & Hu, 2004; Zhang & Wang, 2005). To this writer’s knowledge, no studies have been done yet on cooperation between NETs and NNETs in Chinese primary schools. Thus, this paper hopes to fill in this gap in the literature by focusing on such cooperation in the primary schools.

The purpose of this paper, however, is not to attempt to discuss the significance of employing NETs or to examine the possibility of co-teaching within the Chinese primary school context. Earlier Medgyes (1992), in his article, "Native or Non-native: Who's Worth More?" has already argued for the usefulness and possibility of co-teaching English between NETs and NNETs. In particular, the paper seeks to explore the feasibility of implementing different co-teaching models in the classroom and identify strategies that will make such implementation possible.

Co-teaching and co-teaching models

Co-teaching

Co-teaching has been well studied since the 1970s. The practice of co-teaching initially emerged from the field of general education in the USA (Dieker & Murawski, 2003), and was introduced to address mainly the issues of teaching disabled students in an inclusive classroom (Cook & Friend, 1995; Dieker, 2001; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Gately & Gately, 2001; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Stanovich, 1996; Tobin, 2005; Vaughn, Schumm, & Arguelles, 1997). According to Cook & Friend (1995), co-teaching is composed of four key components: *who* are involved (two or more professionals), what *action* is expected (deliver substantive instruction), *to whom* instruction is delivered (a diverse group of students), and *where* co-teaching occurs (in a single classroom). Gately & Gately (2001) also add that co-teaching in an inclusive classroom usually refers to the collaboration between general and special education teachers in sharing responsibilities in teaching students within that classroom. Therefore, co-teaching is characterized by having two or more teachers taking the same or different teaching responsibilities for all students grouped in the same physical classroom.

Co-teaching terminology

Terms referring to co-teaching through collaboration are often interchangeable or synonymously used (Jang, 2006). Reinhiller (1996) notes that co-teaching was known in the 1970s as team teaching, and is also called collaborative teaching or co-operative teaching. Jang (2006) contends that co-teaching, team teaching and cooperative teaching refer to a similar instructional delivery system. In essence, these three terms all refer to two or more teachers contributing to the same group of assigned students through collaboration. Yet, each term has different implications on how this teaching methodology is implemented. *Team teaching* values the contribution of every participant and all the participants enjoy the same status. *Collaborative and cooperative teaching* emphasizes the process of collaboration, and the degree to which each participant's function may be different. *Co-teaching* is a general term with broader implications and has been adopted to name different approaches to improve teaching through collaboration.

Rationale for co-teaching

The power of co-teaching lies largely in the assumption that all the participants will make a greater contribution than the combination of the participants' individual work (H.S. Davis, 1996); that is, $1 + 1 > 2$. In the Chinese primary school context, co-teaching implemented by NETs and NNETs together will greatly benefit students because NETs are expected to provide adequate feedback on correct use of grammar and acceptability of particular uses of English, while NNETs are deemed to understand the learners' needs and difficulties more (Medgyes, 1992). According to Dieker & Murawski (2003), classes in a co-teaching environment can provide students more effective monitoring and input than what a single teacher can accomplish, and therefore can better facilitate the learning process. Gately & Gately (2001) also note that the arrangement of two teachers to teach one class is one good way of providing efficient instruction to increasingly diverse groups of students in general education classrooms. With co-teaching gaining popularity, more recent studies have shown that co-teaching has resulted in better quality of teaching and learning, and has helped promote the career development of both experienced and novice teachers (Benjamin, 2000; J.R. Davis, 1995; Jang, 2006; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2000; Letterman & Dugan, 2004; Speer & Ryan, 1998; Stanovich, 1996).

Thus, because of its benefits co-teaching has been successfully used in a wide range of areas, including intensive foreign language programs (Greany, 2004), mathematics and science subjects (Jang, 2006; Roth, Tobin, Carambo, & Dalland, 2004), interdisciplinary courses (J.R. Davis, 1995; Ivan A. Shibley, 2006; Letterman & Dugan, 2004), and bilingual teaching (Bahamonde & Friend, 1999). Furthermore, the adoption of co-teaching is not confined to the school level alone, but also extends to tertiary education (J.R. Davis, 1995; Greany, 2004; Ivan A. Shibley, 2006; Wilson & Martin, 1998), not only in western countries, but also in Asian regions and countries as well (Carless, 2006; Davison, 2006; Han, 2005; Jang, 2006; Macedo, 2002; Tajino, 2002; Tajino & Tajino, 2000).

The necessity and possibility of co-teaching in Chinese primary schools

Teaching in Chinese primary schools differs greatly from teaching in NETs' home countries, and also differs from Chinese secondary and tertiary schools. The class size of Chinese primary schools is usually large, about forty students or even more. Students' abilities in English are not adequate enough for them to understand NETs' English-only instruction. Moreover, primary students need more support and guidance in their learning and other daily life problems than older secondary schools students. In China today there has also been a change in classroom dynamics with students coming from more diverse regional and ethnic backgrounds because of flexibility in the recruitment policy concerning national and international students. These factors indicate that NETs in Chinese primary schools need to collaborate with NNETs in order to fully understand these often subtle factors that make up the classroom. Collaboration with NNETs will help NETs confidently manage their big classes, successfully deliver their instructional content and eventually achieve quality teaching. NETs in this sense

need NNETs to become effective teachers of English in the context of Chinese primary schools.

Primary schools, on the other hand, enjoy an advantage over higher educational levels in conducting co-teaching. Carless (2006) argues that primary school teachers have no pressure of examination since no uniform examinations are required at the end of each semester. Students, because of their younger age, would be more interested in the communicative activities, tasks and games that NETs usually are capable of carrying out in the classroom. Furthermore, primary schools have fewer subjects which help school administrators to adjust timetables and even reset the curriculum to meet the requirements of co-teaching. In summary, co-teaching between NETs and their Chinese counterparts seems to be a practical and also desirable practice to be implemented in Chinese primary schools.

Co-teaching models

However, successful implementation of co-teaching hinges greatly on the adaptation of appropriate co-teaching models into classroom practice. Five models of co-teaching have been identified by Friend, Resing, & Cook (1993). They are: *one teaching–one assisting*, *station teaching*, *parallel teaching*, *alternative teaching*, and *team teaching*.

The first model, *One teaching–One assisting*, is characterized by one teacher taking the major responsibilities of the class and delivering instructional presentation while the other teacher monitors or assists students individually. In the second model, *Station Teaching*, each of the co-teachers repeats only a part of the instructional content to small groups of students who move among stations. With the third model, *Parallel Teaching*, students are divided into two groups and instructed separately with different teaching content by two teachers. With the fourth model, *Alternative Teaching*, one teacher instructs the larger group while the other teacher works with a smaller group of students to re-teach, pre-teach, or supplement the instructional content received by the larger group. Finally, the fifth model of *Team Teaching* is achieved by both teachers sharing the responsibility and instruction of all students at the same time (Cook & Friend, 1995; Vaughn, Schumm, & Arguelles, 1997).

Co-teaching models in the Chinese primary school context

The necessity of choosing an appropriate co-teaching model

These five common models of co-teaching widely accepted in inclusive classrooms have shed some light on how two or more teachers can better facilitate student learning and enhance their own teaching in a co-taught setting (Cook & Friend, 1995; Vaughn, Schumm, & Arguelles, 1997). However, among these five models, “no one approach is best or worst; each has a place in a co-taught class” (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 5). No co-teaching model will be suitable in all co-taught settings because not all students and teachers are the same. This is

especially so when a co-teaching methodology is adopted into EFL classrooms in Asian countries.

EFL classes in Japan, for example, do not employ all the models of co-teaching either, but mainly Team Teaching—NNETs working as the lead teachers while NETs as assistant teachers (Macedo, 2002; Tajino & Larry, 1998; Tajino & Tajino, 2000). In this context, Team Teaching in essence refers to the approach of One teaching–One assisting. Although Tajino & Tajino (2000) have developed five patterns of co-teaching in Japanese EFL classrooms, these patterns are just modifications of three models of co-teaching formulated by Cook & Friend (1995)—One teaching–One assisting, Paralleling Teaching and Team Teaching.

Therefore, in Chinese primary EFL classrooms, NETs and NNETs cannot simply adopt the models that have been proven to benefit co-teachers and students in other countries. Critical consideration and careful examination of each co-teaching model within primary classroom settings seem to be crucial before any model is adopted. Cook & Friend (1995) suggest that “clearly, approaches to co-teaching should be selected on the basis of student characteristics and needs, teacher preferences, curricular demands, and pragmatics such as the amount of teaching space available” (p. 8). In other words, hardly can co-teaching, without careful consideration of the realities of all participants, contribute to the improvement of NETs’ teaching quality and benefit students. According to Dieker & Murawski (2003), teachers, without any prior experience, attempt to carry out co-teaching in a challenging teaching context, often find themselves overwhelmed and unwilling to participate in similar endeavours in the future. Therefore, it is essential to examine how different co-teaching models can be adapted to facilitate the collaboration between NETs and NNETs in the Chinese primary school context, and then to find out what developmental sequence may be most effective. These local initiatives can help NETs establish their confidence and overcome challenges as they go through the developmental stages of co-teaching: the beginning stage, the compromise stage, and the collaborative stage (Gately & Gately, 2001).

Examining co-teaching models

What are the most suitable or best models of co-teaching for students, NETs, and NNETs in Chinese primary schools? Speer & Ryan (1998) argue that co-teaching is not only beneficial to students, but also to teachers themselves because it promotes career and personal development. Davison (2006) also contend that co-teaching can help promote the growth of inexperienced teachers. NETs are often unqualified as teachers, therefore co-teaching for them is initially a strategic approach to help them gain some teaching experience and a better understanding of teaching methodologies. As their teaching skills improve, NETs may adapt co-teaching into their teaching practice and address issues arising from the diverse or blended groups of students within the same classroom. Taking different variables involving NETs, NNETs and students into consideration, five models of co-teaching (Cook & Friend, 1995) have been examined within the Chinese primary school context as follows.

One teaching–One assisting

Co-teaching between NETs and NNETs may start with the “One teaching–One assisting” model where NNETs take the leading role and NETs work as supportive teachers. Cook & Friend (1995) believe that this model is simple and does not require much teacher planning. NETs, who have little teaching experience, would probably feel comfortable with this approach to co-teaching. At the same time, this approach allows NETs to obtain a greater opportunity of learning to teach (Roth & Tobin, 2004; Roth, Tobin, Carambo, & Dalland, 2004) and of accumulating their experience in classroom management. Therefore, it is appropriate for NETs to take this easier and less challenging co-teaching approach to commence their co-teaching. At the beginning stage, the important thing for NETs is to increase their basic knowledge of how to teach conversational English to Chinese pupils, and establish effective interpersonal communication with their Chinese counterparts.

In classroom practice, NNETs are in-charge of lesson plan preparation, instructional presentation, and classroom management, while pronunciation demonstration, learning activity participation and individual student assistance will be performed by NETs. In this model of co-teaching, the NNET acts as a head teacher, director, interpreter, and behavioural manager, while the NET functions as a co-teacher, model, authentic English linguistic knowledge provider, and activity participant. Both take different responsibilities but perform collaboratively to achieve the same goal.

Concerning students, this model allows them to adjust gradually from Chinese-dominated instruction to an English-dominated one, and therefore benefits students in the course of their learning of (Bahamonde & Friend, 1999). In addition, this model also helps students get used to being taught by two teachers in a class and respond to instructions from them. As the NET gains more teaching skills, he can attempt to exchange roles with his Chinese counterpart and temporarily be responsible for some class sessions. This way, he can build more confidence in his co-teaching experience and prepare for trialling a more advanced model.

Alternative Teaching

With the improvement of teaching skills, NETs can move on to another model of co-teaching—“Alternative Teaching”—which requires NETs to deliver instructional presentation independently. Gately & Gately (2001) suggest that beginning teachers should first start with small groups. Considering NETs’ less-than-ideal qualifications, it would be better for them to take charge of a small group of students while NNETs instruct the larger group.

Of course, teaching even a small number of students involves more responsibilities for NETs, such as teaching plans, teaching aids preparation, instructional presentation, and behaviour management. However, this helps NETs to put their learned teaching methodologies, theories and skills into classroom practice. They can also help a small group of students who are relatively weaker to “catch up” with the rest of the students. In other words, this model is particularly

useful in classes where some students are not at the same stage of language development as the rest of class.

It must be noted, however, that "Alternative Teaching" can be problematic if not handled appropriately. According to Cook & Friend (1995), teachers should avoid stigmatising students by repeatedly grouping them according to their language abilities alone. Periodically, teachers may need to mix students of high English competence with students of low English competence, and encourage everyone to undertake cooperative learning. Occasionally, it would help if competent students are the ones to be grouped for alternative teaching.

Station Teaching

The same concept of independent instruction underlies "Station Teaching" but it differs from "Alternative Teaching" because it allows NETs to teach or supervise more than one group of students. This might mean that more small groups of students are given greater attention, but this would also require NETs to even take on greater responsibility and to be more skilled at employing appropriate principles and methods of instruction and communication with students. Therefore, this model is more advanced than both "One teaching-One assisting" and "Alternative Teaching"; indirect assistance is involved here because it is difficult for teachers to provide equal amount of instruction to all groups at the same time. Any attempt to implement this model requires that it be undertaken only after successfully trying out the previous two models.

Indeed, there are reasons for the cautious use of this model in Chinese EFL classrooms. First, the main challenge lies in large class sizes which make classroom management very difficult. Second, most students are used to traditional approaches to language teaching (e.g., teacher-centred and grammar-translation teaching), and mostly likely do not know how to practise their oral English within this model because of their unfamiliarity with indirect teaching methods. Therefore, a class involving "Station Teaching" might end up in chaos and be most counterproductive to good student learning outcomes if not carried out skilfully. Nevertheless, students can still benefit from "Station Teaching" because of the lower teacher-to-student ratio; this means that they will receive more attention from teachers individually and obtain more opportunities to practise. In fact, it does have great promise in improving learning and teaching if successfully implemented. It is particularly useful and effective when group work is conducted, and thus can help address the issue of large class sizes in Chinese EFL classrooms.

Here is one possible way of implementing this model: the class is divided into four to six groups, with a head student being nominated out of each group and an atmosphere of "team learning" (Tajino & Tajino, 2000) promoted through inter-group competition and/or collaboration. With the support of head students, it can be easier for both NETs and NNETs to supervise just one or two groups and conduct relevant teaching and learning activities by rotation. However, because of large student numbers and limited time, it would be more realistic and effective if both NETs and NNETs have the same teaching objectives and present the same instructional content to all groups. If there are different teaching objectives, it is

likely that NETs and NNETs will fail to accomplish scheduled learning activities on time which, in turn, might confuse students and result in further diversification of learner abilities because of uneven provision of instruction.

Team Teaching

With “Team Teaching”, both NETs and NNETs in class enjoy the same status. They jointly plan, teach, assess, and assume responsibility for all students in the classroom. They work in a coordinated manner (Friend, Reising, & Cook, 1993) and students view each of them equally as their teacher (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006). NETs no longer function merely as an assistant and a resource, but also as a director and facilitator. In collaboration with NNETs, they will have become skilled through the employment of the previous three models and will have reached a collaborative stage where mutual planning and sharing of ideas have become the norm (Gately & Gately, 2001). In other words, the two teachers can effectively supplement each other and their instructional presentations can be integrated together for even more efficient and effective teaching and learning in class.

But “Team Teaching” can only be successfully implemented if co-teachers’ skills and relationships are strong and mature because it requires more time, coordination, knowledge of and trust in each other’s skills (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006). “Team Teaching”, therefore, assumes adequate experience in co-teaching because both NETs and NNETs need to know when or how to clarify their roles and when to take turns in leading discussions or activities in class (Dieker, 2001). In fact, it can jeopardize good relations between NETs and NNETs because of possibly wrongly perceived competition, rather than collaboration, in the implementation of this model. It requires experience with the less challenging models of co-teaching through which confidence shall have been gained for them to see the wisdom behind equal sharing of time, effort and knowledge in class.

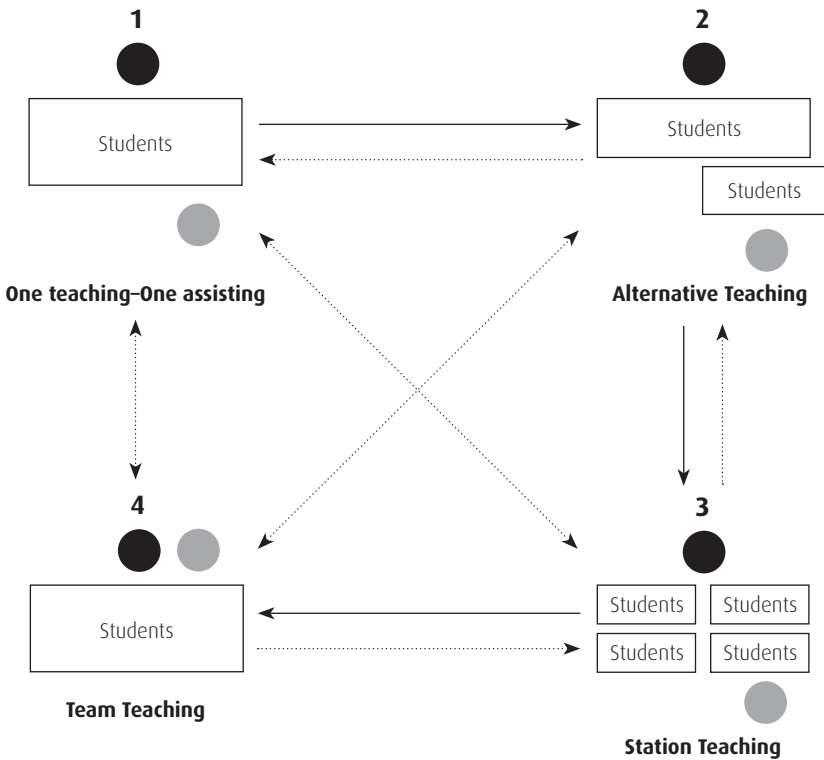
Employing appropriate co-teaching models

It must be noted that the different models described above are designed to maximize both co-teachers’ teaching competence and minimize their weaknesses as individual instructors. Thus, choice of co-teaching models becomes pivotal when teachers and administrators implement co-teaching in Chinese primary schools. In other words, co-teaching models should not be chosen without a great deal of thought and consideration for the specific contexts within which they are going to be implemented. As has been emphasized a few times in the earlier sections, the four models present different responsibilities and challenges so co-teachers need to critically examine all factors before they implement one or more of them. To reiterate the unique stance of this paper, it is more practical and effective for NETs and NNETs at the beginning stage to practise co-teaching models by following this suggested sequence—“One teaching–One assisting” first, “Alternative Teaching” second, “Station Teaching” third, and “Team Teaching” fourth. Such a sequence is based on the belief that any move from an easily implemented model to a more advanced one involves an increase in professional

experience, mutual trust and commitment (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006). This is beneficial to both NETs and NNETs since the collaborative nature of co-teaching requires that they accumulate experience through it to make it work. NNETs especially will be helped by this sequence as they gradually take on more responsibility in classroom teaching.

However, when NETs and NNETs move to an advanced model, they still can adopt one or more less challenging model(s) into a single class. For example, NETs and NNETs can employ two or even three models within a single lesson given the demands and nature of specific situations (Cook & Friend, 1995). The point here is that as the teachers develop professionally through the deployment of different models in sequence, they can now experiment with a variety of them at the same time. This requires advanced skills from the teachers but this is exactly the reason why it is not advisable that they experiment with all of them at the start. An explicit explanation of the relationship among these models is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Models of co-teaching and their sequential orders



● stands for the NNET ● stands for the NET
 → stands for the sequential order at the beginning stage
 ⋯→ stands for the sequential order after the beginning stage

Strategies to achieve successful co-teaching

Indeed, it is clear from above that successful implementation of co-teaching in the Chinese primary school context hinges on two important factors. First, it requires co-teachers to have a good grasp of co-teaching as a concept from which may develop positive attitudes towards this teaching methodology. And second, there must be a strong supportive environment provided by the school leadership and other colleagues, especially in the context of pre-semester preparation, instructional planning and administrative support.

Pre-semester preparation

Preparations towards co-teaching should start at least one week before a semester commences. This means that NETs' early arrival in the school is very crucial because it is most likely that they have no or very little prior experience teaching in China. Culture shock could be painful if these teachers come unprepared and unsure about what they are expected to do in class (Brown, 2000). In addition, each school differs. NETs need time to familiarize themselves with the cultures of the school, including information about how school leaders, teachers and students interact with each other and negotiate content and relationships within their context. An orientation for NETs initiated by the head NNET should include the following information and issues:

- 1) an overall introduction to the school (e.g., history, population, hierarchy, culture)
- 2) the general situation of teaching English at the school (e.g., methodologies, textbooks, weaknesses)
- 3) learner/social characteristics of their targeted students
- 4) their Chinese counterparts
- 5) school's expectations (e.g., from NETs, from teaching English)

After this orientation, NETs might need to be paired with NNETs to discuss more fully how to teach their targeted students. The discussion should first focus on a review of students' performance in the previous semester. The NNETs should share with NETs what they think their students have learned from the past semester's work and what issues need to be addressed in the coming semester. With such information and issues articulated, the co-teachers should proceed to work out plans on what to teach in the coming semester. This is very important because there is no syllabus for conversational English in primary schools yet. The teachers together must articulate the goals and objectives of their teaching, and from these they must develop relevant topics and themes for co-teaching for the whole semester. This one-week preparation will allow both NETs and NNETs to know and understand each other better; NETs especially will develop a sound understanding of how the teaching system works in their future workplace, and thus will also develop confidence in teaching.

Instructional planning

A number of studies and reports have noted the importance of instructional planning between co-teachers before they start any class (Cook & Friend, 1995;

Dieker, 2001; Dyck, Sundbye, & Pemberton, 1997; Gately & Gately, 2001; Murawski & Dieker, 2004). For example, Gately & Gately (2001) emphasize that regular planning is essential if co-teachers want to work in a real collaborative situation. Therefore, it is necessary for NETs and NNETs to schedule their time properly and work out their lesson-to-lesson and unit-to-unit teaching plans before they teach. The following issues are important in course planning (Vaughn, Schumm, & Arguelles, 1997):

- 1) what are students going to be taught?
- 2) what materials are needed?
- 3) what kind of role does each teacher perform?
- 4) what responsibilities does each teacher take when implementing different tasks?
- 5) how will co-teachers evaluate students' learning?
- 6) what follow-up measures should be taken to help students who need further attention?

Effective and perhaps in-depth discussion of these issues is critical so that neither NETs nor NNETs will simply follow the other. In other words, both NETs and NNETs should have a say in instructional planning and contribute to the writing of integrated teaching plans. Planning in this sense requires co-teachers to reconcile individual and group demands and tailor their plans to benefit all the students in the classroom (Dyck, Sundbye, & Pemberton, 1997).

Administrative support

Studies have called attention to the fact that administrative actions are required to support the development of co-teaching (Cook & Friend, 1993; Tobin, 2005). In his case study, Tobin (2005) has found that co-teachers need more planning time and additional administrative support. Moreover, not all NNETs and NETs welcome the practice of co-teaching because they are concerned that their weaknesses as teachers might be exposed to another colleague (Dyck, Sundbye, & Pemberton, 1997). Thus, a successful implementation of co-teaching requires school administrators to undertake or implement a number of measures, especially the following:

- 1) set favourable conditions for NETs and NNETs to give them more time to prepare and plan their lessons; for example, reduce their teaching load;
- 2) allow NET and NNET to co-teach students from not more than two different primary year levels; and,
- 3) create more social activities for NETs and NNETs to improve their understanding of each other and help them establish a harmonious and productive interpersonal relationship.

Furthermore, school administrators need to develop a strong awareness of many of the issues concerning co-teaching in order to create a positive and encouraging environment for the professional development of NETs and NNETs. Without support from school administrators, the NETs and NNETs' willingness and passion for co-teaching will be replaced by frustration and the practice of such collaborative work might therefore result in ineffective teaching and muddled learning.

Conclusion

In the present paper, issues about co-teaching between NETs and NNETs in the Chinese primary school context have been discussed. There are fundamental issues that co-teachers need to pay close attention to and address thoughtfully before co-teaching becomes effective in the classroom. The important conditions are effective collaboration between co-teachers, their desire to improve learning outcomes for their students, and support from school administrators and other colleagues. While co-teaching is certainly not a solution to all problems in the classroom (Davison, 2006), given the constraints of teaching English in primary schools in Kunming, including large classes and the rising number of so-called native speakers of English who teach in these schools, the implementation of co-teaching in Chinese primary schools is feasible, practical and, in fact, necessary.

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