

ABSTRACT

In recent years, team teaching in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms where native and nonnative English teachers work together has been commonly implemented in several East Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. For these countries, importation of foreign teachers from English-speaking countries to team teach with local English teachers is viewed as a strategic way to bring authentic language input to EFL classrooms, facilitate cross-cultural communication, enhance students' English ability, and promote local English teachers' professional development.

Research has confirmed that collaboration among teachers makes valuable contributions to their ongoing growth. However, little attention has been paid to teacher learning in the EFL team teaching context, and there is a lack of empirical research in this area. To fill the gap, this study, following the design of qualitative case studies, aimed to explore the team teaching experiences of foreign and local English teachers in Taiwanese elementary schools as well as to illuminate team teachers' ongoing growth in this context.

Research data included observations, interviews, and document analysis collected over a six-month period. A constant comparative data analysis method was employed to provide an in-depth description of the team teachers' teaching practice, interactions, and professional learning in elementary English classes, and to understand the factors that facilitated and impeded team teachers' collegial interactions and their learning process.

This study reveals that each team developed divergent team teaching styles as well as diverse collegial relationships, depending on the different combinations of the team teachers. Despite the variations among the three teams, team teaching was mainly manifested as the division of labor of pedagogical responsibilities and duties as well as in the providing of consultation by the Taiwanese teachers. In addition, their collegial interactions were influenced by eleven factors: age, gender, personality, language, professional respect, assumptions about teaching and team teaching, communication styles, stereotypes, workload and scheduling, administrative roles of the Taiwanese teachers, and amount of teacher training.

With regard to teacher learning, findings of this study suggest that the team teachers benefited from the team teaching experience in six aspects: language knowledge and skills, knowledge of culture, teaching skills, understanding of students and schooling, development of partnerships, and development of professional identity. The learning opportunities were afforded by classroom observations and collegial conversations. The quality of the team teachers' collegial relationships and their educational backgrounds were two major factors influencing the extent to which they learned and what they learned through team teaching with their teaching partners in the elementary school English classrooms in Taiwan.

Finally, this study identifies the vital role that the government and the administration played in determining the successfulness of team teaching and promotion of teacher learning in this context, and, thus, this study concludes by providing suggestions on how to improve the team teaching practice.