

Interdisciplinary Team Teaching as a Model for Teacher Development

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Abstract

The education literature has increasingly called for collaboration between teachers as a way to enhance the quality of teaching. In the TESOL field, content-based language teaching and English for Specific Purposes approaches are being more widely adopted. These developments call for increased collaboration between language teachers and colleagues in the subject-area disciplines. This study investigates how interdisciplinary contact between language and content specialists might be viewed as a possible model for teacher development. By teacher development we mean the ability to make adjustments to one's teaching practices according to the demands of a curriculum, learner needs and the institution where a teacher works. For this study, fourteen practicing team teachers were interviewed over a two-year period at an English-medium liberal arts college in Japan. The interviews were all recorded on video tape and were transcribed for later content analysis. Analyses of these interview transcripts generated a model for effective partnership in interdisciplinary team teaching. This model is presented in the paper through the words of the team teachers. The paper concludes by highlighting what the interviewees said were the elements of effective partnership in team teaching, as well as recommending what institutions and individual teachers can do to encourage effective partnership in team teaching.

Introduction

With the growing popularity of content-based language teaching (CBLT) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in many parts of the world, TESOL educators are increasingly called upon to work with discipline specialists in the social sciences, humanities, natural sciences and professional fields. Still, interdisciplinary team teaching is rare in education generally and is an unusual experience for teachers in the TESOL field. While it can be troublesome and costly, however, the attraction of team teaching remains. Barth (1990) is only one of many educators to make the claim that for real change to take place in schools, teachers must begin helping, observing and talking with each other. Cross-disciplinary team teaching, for some, holds this promise. The crossing of disciplines in teaching has been heralded as: a postmodern pedagogy with enough flexibility to reinvigorate democratic education (Kulynych, 1998); a way to reduce the isolation of teachers, as they help to support one another and gain insights that can serve to revitalize their teaching (Austin & Baldwin, 1991; Gray & Halbert, 1998); and, a means to affect curricular change (Austin & Baldwin, 1991).

As more and more non-native speakers of English enter schools in English-speaking countries, the language proficiency of these students can be frustrating to content-area teachers (Ferris & Tagg, 1996; Johns, 1997). "Unfortunately, professors who would like to help ESL students often don't know where to begin or what to do. They may be experts in their academic disciplines but know little or nothing about the linguistic needs of the ESL students enrolled in their courses" (Rosenthal, 2000, p. 77). Increased integration with language educators could help close this knowledge and sensitivity gap and help content teachers make adjustments when teaching ESL students in mainstream courses.

With the expanding need to help ESL students achieve academic success, it is natural to wonder what effect, if any, interdisciplinary team teaching between English and content-area teachers might have on teacher development. This paper is the result of a research project in which 14 interdisciplinary team teachers practicing in an EFL setting in Japan were interviewed to learn their opinions on the essence of team teaching partnerships. We utilize the interview transcripts to display the teachers' impressions of interdisciplinary team teaching, as we outline the stages of the team teaching process these teachers have experienced. It is our goal to try to reveal some of the basic elements of effective team teaching partnership and to discuss whether this model of team teaching influences teacher development.

At the outset of our discussion, we need to address the question of what we mean by "team teaching." Team teaching can take on different shapes, such as teaming or pair teaching. Sandholtz (2000) has identified three configurations for team teaching: 1) two or more teachers loosely sharing responsibilities; 2) team planning, but individual instruction; and 3) joint planning, instruction, and evaluation of learning experiences. Buckley (2000) provides the following definition: "Team teaching involves a group of instructors working purposefully, regularly, and cooperatively to help a group of students learn" (p. 4).

Clearly, teaching partnerships can function in different ways. Collaboration can be broadly categorized as: "a cooperative endeavor that involves common goals, coordinated effort, and outcomes or products for which the collaborators share responsibility and credit" (Austin & Baldwin, 1991, p. iii). We conceptualize team teaching as being part of a continuum of collaboration that varies according to levels of coordination and shared responsibility. At the low-collaboration end of the scale would be courses planned by a group of faculty and later taught individually by members of the group. They might plan the general content of these related courses, but would teach and evaluate the courses separately; they would not observe each other's classes. The highest level of collaboration is courses that are co-planned, co-taught and evaluated by a pair or a group of teachers. These courses are self-contained with instructors working simultaneously in the classroom. In other words, all aspects of the course, including instructional time, are a collaborative effort. Team teachers trade off the lead and supporting teaching roles as they orchestrate instruction.

If we accept that both of these extremes can be designated "team teaching," then it follows that most team-taught courses fall somewhere between them. The literature contains descriptions of team teaching in single courses in a program (Davis, 1995); across a program (Katsura & Matsune, 1994; Rosenkjar, 2002); institution-wide (Stewart, Sagliano & Sagliano, 2002); district-wide (Sturman, 1992); and nation-wide (Wada & Cominos, 1994). At the University of Birmingham, for example, a course is taught by a content specialist, and a separate tutorial for dealing with problematic language is directly linked to it and led by a language teacher (Dudley-Evans, 2001). Similarly, foreign languages across the curriculum (FLAC) often involves an interdisciplinary pair of instructors working in a single discipline-based course (Jurasek, 1993), generally with limited involvement by the foreign language teacher in course design. A much more collaborative approach has been termed "four-handed" instruction (Corin, 1997), in which two teachers typically work in the same classroom with interchanging faculty roles involving one leading the activity and the other assisting.

The type of interdisciplinary team teaching this article investigates involves combining the study of an academic content-area with foreign language study. In this situation, courses are team taught by one TESOL specialist and one content specialist in the humanities or social sciences. The faculty members interviewed joined a small experimental liberal arts college in Japan where content-language team teaching has always been an institutionalized norm. That means these teachers have little choice but to collaborate in their teaching. This article examines what teachers involved in such extensive collaborative teaching efforts see as the benefits and drawbacks of cross-disciplinary collaboration.

For many years now, collaboration amongst teachers has been trumpeted, but few actually do it. Of the five types of curricular models used in CBLT described by Shaw (1997), for instance, all but one involves team teaching. The genesis of this interview

research project was to investigate what could be learned about the teaching process from language and content teachers who are actually engaged in interdisciplinary team teaching. In this paper we will present the perceptions of team teachers in their own words. By using the words of the team teachers, we attempt to illustrate their impressions of what they feel are the benefits and obstacles in place in team teaching relationships for promoting teaching effectiveness. Here, "effectiveness" is a subjective measurement by an individual teacher of the level of personal satisfaction with his/her teaching overall. After outlining the methodology of the study, we present a model of team teaching partnership. The four parts of this model are examined through quotations taken from the interview transcripts. Finally, the partnership model is explained in more general terms and the elements of team teaching relationships gleaned from the interviews are explored more deeply.

Methodology

We conducted this study on team teaching at a small four-year college located in Japan. It is an English-medium institution accredited by the Japanese government. The university's mission is to develop students who are fluent in English and Japanese and who can analyze problems critically; the students acquire these skills through pursuing a liberal arts degree. All courses, except those in Japanese Expression and some in teacher education, use English as the language of instruction. First- and second-year credit-bearing courses are team taught by ESOL faculty and discipline specialists. That is, pairs of language and content-area faculty work together extensively: they co-plan syllabi and lessons, and teach together in the same classroom. Courses are jointly taught in English by discipline and language specialists in order to provide students with concurrent instruction in content concepts, language, and critical thinking. Like so many ESL students entering mainstream classes in, for example, Canada, the UK and the USA, emphasis is on the simultaneous learning of both language and content.

The published research on team teaching is heavily slanted toward descriptive studies. The descriptions are either of actual team-taught courses (e.g., Eisen & Tisdell, 2000) or resemble "how-to" manuals advising would-be team teachers (e.g., Buckley, 2000). This article focuses on partnership issues in team teaching by asking team teachers to express their thoughts on what they do, why they do it, and how effective they feel it is. Data for this study were gathered from two sets of videotaped interviews conducted in 2001 and 2002. In the first interview set, teaching partners were interviewed in pairs. The questions asked in the interviews of teaching teams in pairs were:

1. How do you distinguish between language and content in your team-taught class;
2. What are the challenges of content-based team teaching; and
3. Do you think content-based team teaching is effective?

We acknowledge that the final question could be difficult to answer, however, our intention with these interviews was to capture the honest reactions of experienced team

teachers, rather than a precise measurement of effectiveness. The questions were provided to all interviewees in advance.

The length of each of these four interviews was approximately 20 minutes. We analyzed the transcripts of these interviews in an effort to uncover common themes. The themes that emerged from the first interview set of eight faculty members related to the roles of teachers in team-taught courses, communication between teaching partners, and opinions about the effectiveness of interdisciplinary team teaching in a liberal arts college setting.

After analyzing the four pair-interview tapes from 2001, we decided to continue the study by talking to partners individually. We saw this as a potentially data-enriching tradeoff that meant losing a sense of the dynamic interaction between teaching partners in pair interviews, while possibly gaining greater candor in individual responses. Therefore in 2002, we interviewed three discipline-area professors (political science, literature, psychology) and three ESOL specialists separately. We conducted the six interviews with individual faculty members focusing on the three main themes gleaned from the first set of interviews. All of the interviews were recorded on videotape for later transcription and analysis.

In the two sets of interviews, we elicited reflections on partnership in team teaching from seven ESOL and seven discipline specialists. Thus, we have compiled data on team teaching from over one-third of the faculty members at the college. Eight of the interviewees had over two years of team teaching experience, while the remaining six had under one-year. There were six female teachers and eight males. The sample was composed of one Indonesian, two Canadians, three Japanese and eight faculty members from the United States. In the following section, we present a model based on data gathered from these 14 practicing team teachers.

A Model of Effective Partnership in Team Teaching

The model (see Figure 1) introduced in this section is a representation of the process of team teaching experienced by the 14 interviewees. It was created out of an analysis of interview data gathered in the procedures described above. Selected transcript excerpts are used to illustrate the significance of each of the four parts of the model related to the goal of achieving effective team teaching. The stages presented in our working model are: 1) beginning a partnership, 2) committing to a partnership's continuation, 3) making partnership work in the teaching process, and 4) realizing effective partnership. We introduce the model stage by stage.

Figure 1: Model of Process in Effective Team Teaching Partnership



Stage 1 -- Starting a Partnership

A team teaching relationship starts with consent or agreement between partners. At this initial stage there are a variety of reasons to choose to move forward with a partnership or not. Our interviews with the team teachers helped us to isolate several key factors related to "consenting to a team teaching relationship." In addition to administrative considerations, the pairing procedure at the institution studied involves an expression of intention to teach together by the potential partners. From the team teacher's perspective, factors such as personality and individual teaching style play an important role in agreeing to a partnership, as illustrated in the following interview statements:

- Partnerships sometimes simply cannot work because of the two personalities. I really believe that just as people can be incompatible in relationships, that they can be incompatible in partnerships.
- You can't put a wildly flexible person with a tight person because a flexible person is always wanting to do things, change things, create things at the last minute.
- Out of all of my partners I think I've only had one where there was much tension about the actual conduct of the class. And that was because we had really very incompatible styles.

The key issues touched upon here relate to an overarching factor in team teaching relationships: the right to choose one's partner. It appears that the optimal situation for teachers is to self-select the choice to team teach, as well as to choose their own teaching partner. The teachers interviewed had both of these advantages, yet irritants still emerged. This speaks to the long-term commitment demanded by team teaching.

Experience is also a key factor in the initial stage from both a team teacher's and an administrator's perspective. One would expect experience to play an important role in the pairing process as articulated below:

- Honestly I was very scared. This is my first-ever teaching experience. So going into the classroom itself was a very frightening experience at the beginning. But I have someone . . . [so] psychologically I felt very confident going in.
- I think in any partnership situation there is the potential for a kind of leader/subordinate relationship to come in. And I think that probably occurs with most new teachers who come in. I think that sort of relationship tends to disappear as the new teacher becomes established at the institution.

These comments suggest that Wallace's (1991) idea of the "craft model" of teacher education might be functioning in these interdisciplinary teams of language and content instructors. In Wallace's model, the experienced teacher, as an expert in the craft, guides the inexperienced teacher so that "expertise in the craft is passed on from generation to generation" (p. 6).

These teachers work in a context where they are paired either by mutual agreement or through an administrative structure that usually includes faculty choice. At this beginning stage, the development of a team teaching relationship can usually be curtailed if people do not wish to be paired. Major reasons stated for not wanting to work with another teacher were conflicts in personality and incompatible teaching styles. The administrative considerations may include matching experienced teachers with inexperienced ones as well as decisions made for expedience and out of necessity (e.g., the need to pair a teacher whom no one chooses as a potential partner).

- I think team teaching is effective with proper partnering and with proper hiring. If one is going to be team teaching, it's paramount that when faculty are recruited, people are found who can work with others. And if you have a faculty composed of such individuals then as a collectivity you can have a really positive atmosphere [for team teaching].

While mutual agreement between teachers to partner for a course is the most desirable situation, it is not always possible nor is it a guarantee of mutual satisfaction regarding teaching effectiveness. In the end, it is best to always maintain a professional manner, resting assured that the course will soon end and a new teaching partner can be found for the next term.

Stage 2 - Committing to Continuing the Partnership

The second stage in our model is personal commitment on the part of the team teachers to the partnership. Our interviews revealed how beliefs about the relationship between language and content and the partners' perceptions of their respective roles in the relationship influenced the nature of the commitment made to the partnership.

The words of the team teachers illustrate a wide range of beliefs and perceptions that are clearly connected to the kinds of commitments that can be made to the teaching partnership. The first set of comments show the importance of preserving a role distinction (language/content) in planning, but allowing that distinction to be less prominent in the actual classroom.

- In this class . . . the language is so integral with the content it's very difficult to draw a clear line.
- In planning there's more of a distinguishing. My partner tends to select the content, and I tend to say if it'll work or not, as far as the language learning aspects of it.
- As the language person, I am very conscious of my need to defer to the content person when an issue about content comes up, when it's really explicit. And I think my partner does the same when an issue of language comes up, but for the most part I think the students are unaware of that kind of division.
- [A problem is] a sense of territoriality -- I'm the language teacher and this is my

area and you're not supposed to cross this boundary. And this is your area, content, and so you shouldn't expect us to cross each other. I think this kind of rigid boundary between content and language gets in the way of getting things done. . . . because when you start thinking "well, this is my stuff and I want to see it work," . . . as if it's a competition for who is the better teacher between the two teachers. This kind of ego involvement is in the way of actually serving the students.

However, some team teachers believe in more rigid language/content boundaries and in a stricter delineation of roles.

- . . . the content basically drives the language instruction. I expect the partner to be able to find language activities that will coalesce with what I am trying to teach in terms of content. I leave it up to the language partner to decide what a particular group of students needs to focus on at that time. I don't in any way enter into those decisions. I shouldn't be usurping my partner's role in that way.
- For me content is important, but it seems to me language is more important. At some point, my language partner was saying that content should be priority, so we were arguing for each other's position.
- Individual teaching styles depend a lot on reactive teaching or improvisation. Going with the moment of what's happening in the classroom, reacting to it and then teaching from that. And you can't really do that when you're with a team because if I go off on some direction where does that leave my partner?

If there is a mismatch between beliefs about language and content or in the partners' perceptions of their classroom roles, we argue that effective partnership will be difficult to achieve. If, however, the partners have a shared understanding of language and content roles in planning and in the classroom, they will be capable of making a stronger commitment to the partnership, and the potential for effective team teaching will be increased. This commitment is dynamic and constantly evolving, as partners interact and gain more experience with team teaching. These comments also indicate that "team teaching" involves much more than what happens in the classroom. Planning before courses and lessons is a vital aspect of the process when goals will need to be verbalized, negotiated and explained. This, in effect, is the essence of the dynamic and it carries on into the lesson and afterwards.

Stage 3 -- Making the Partnership Work

This stage naturally follows the pairing and commitment stages. In an effort to promote effective team teaching, the partners find ways to meet challenges, assess benefits and evaluate the costs of ineffective partnerships.

The following comments underscore the importance of understanding the challenges in order to keep a partnership functioning.

- One of the areas that could be a source of friction is deciding what material you want to get across to the students and how you're going to do it. I think sometimes that might be an area where you have to really work hard to compromise.
- You have to openly communicate with one another when there is a problem. You have to say what the problem is and be honest about it, and hopefully the other person would also openly communicate and try to find solutions to the problem.
- Another aspect that I think helps make a good partnership is actual interpersonal friendship between the two teachers. I think you can be better partners if you're also friends in addition to colleagues. [You need to] start knowing the person from another, not just a work, point of view. The whole person is bigger than just the worker.

Team teaching as a professional relationship is a series of negotiations. Thus, as in any relationship, communication is the thread for success. It is useful to have a sense of humour and to develop a thick skin. To be effective, team members must feel that they have the trust of their partner, and develop an open, non-aggressive communication style.

Some of the clear benefits that develop during planning and the actual teaching process are expressed in the following quotes:

- We work together before class to decide what we want to get across. We both go back and forth with emails checking each other's work to make sure that the language we're using isn't too difficult, to make sure the concepts are being gotten across in a clear manner, and we work together to determine things like the writing assignments we want them to do, and what kind of oral assignments we want them to have.
- You can always come back together and discuss "what happened," "what went wrong," and "what could be improved in the next class."
- If you have an energized, focused partner, you can feed off each other's energy.

The benefits to a "four-handed" approach to team teaching are evident in these comments. The old adage of two heads being better than one can be a major plus for team teaching. If the teachers are satisfied with the partnership, they can begin to trust each other enough to make their teaching more effective. That is, two (or more) sets of eyes and ears can cooperate in developing materials, teaching and assessment. This natural process of peer coaching can easily become formalized at the request of a partner. But whether or not it's formalized, partner's can reflect on lessons, learners and their teaching in an energizing process that only collaboration with others offers.

At the same time, team teachers are also acutely aware of the signs of an ineffective partnership. The comments below illustrate some of their key insights on potential problem areas.

- For me the biggest disadvantage is just the time involved when you're team teaching. It seems to take me about twice as long for the team-taught class.
- It can become quickly ineffective if there are problems between the partners. If there are any bad feelings or tension, the students pick it up right away.
- When it doesn't work, it's a very painful experience ... and when you are in front of the class with someone who you had just had major disagreements with, it's like trying to run a family with children while you are on the verge of a divorce. There's a lot of energy that gets wasted on trying to look neutral or look undisturbed.
- If a marriage doesn't go well, you don't want people watching. If a partnership doesn't go well, you don't want students watching. And so you devote a lot of your energy to trying to keep the veneer of everything going.
- A couple of times I had a difficult time team teaching mostly because of a sense of rhythm that's different. I think teaching is very much like a dance, and if you don't have a sense of rhythm together, then you're bound to step on each other's toes and then things don't go right. So it's not my fault or the partner's fault, it's just sort of "off"!

The kind of paired interdisciplinary language-content teaching that these teachers were engaged in clearly has potential benefits and drawbacks. Many teachers emphasized that working with a partner takes a lot more time. They talked about not only the time involved in planning, teaching and evaluating a course, but also the extra effort needed to keep good collaborative relations. A "good" team teaching partnership can energize a person, while an ineffective partnership can become a burden. Clearly the team teachers felt that there are things to be gained by co-teaching a course, but many factors, such as those laid out in the descriptions of the first two parts of the model, had to be addressed appropriately.

Stage 4 -- Realizing Effective Partnership

The fourth stage of the model is the final evaluative stage where we draw on comments from the team teachers that highlight the rewards for partners who have worked through the three previous stages. Their comments focus on two key areas: 1) providing more attention and multiple perspectives for students and, 2) the opportunity for teacher growth and creativity.

The comments below illustrate the teachers' perceptions that collaboration through team teaching benefits the students.

- Two teachers means there are two people who can give individual attention to the students. They don't have to wait for you to be free because there are two of you, and they can ask either person.
- It's very effective because we are coming from different perspectives. I'm a

sociologist and I see from sociological perspectives. But my partner comes from different perspectives to see the same issues.

- Having two teachers enriches [the students'] experience and it gives them the same thing in two, three, four different ways. You not only get the input from the content teacher, you also get input from the language teacher, and you also get the sort of synergistic input from the two teachers collaborating. So by having two teachers, the perspectives are actually getting multiplied by four to eightfold.

The following comments indicate that teachers too gain from this experience. The process, when it is effective, can lead to increased creativity and growth as a teacher.

- The main advantage I see in team teaching is that, for me especially, with two teachers working together on a class, I have someone to bounce ideas off of, and vice-versa. And I find it's made me very creative in that class.
- I think that ideally . . . the language teachers are also teaching content at the same time, and the content teachers are teaching language. And I think that's as it should be. I think that makes both of them better teachers in the end.

This final stage of the model represents the evaluative process that team teachers instinctively engage in as they consider whether or not to continue a partnership. A negative team teaching experience will likely result in the end of that partnership, but even good teaching partnerships might end due to scheduling conflicts or the desire of individual teachers to move on to a new challenge. Most times, however, co-teachers try to work together several times to develop a course. This choice to continue to work together or not is represented in Figure 1 by the loop back to committing to continuing the partnership.

Discussion

The model presented in this paper shows the progression from initial pairing of team teachers through the realization of "effective" partnership. At each stage in the model, the partnership either continues toward perceived effectiveness or ends. Although partnerships actually continue in many cases when they should end based on the findings reported in this paper, our purpose is to focus on how a teaching team can become effective in their relationship.

Our model helps us account for decisions that can be made regarding a team teaching partnership. At each stage, decisions are made that determine whether or not the team moves toward what we have termed "effective partnership" (a teacher's satisfaction with his/her teaching overall). Beginning with initial pairing and re-starting, our model shows the cyclical nature of the process with the decision of whether the team teachers choose to work together again.

According to the statements of the teachers we interviewed, it is clear that pairing

decisions at the initial stage should be based on a thorough assessment of personal compatibility, experience and the ability to work with others. Teachers who have previously taught together can typically make this decision easily, but in cases of new partnerships, it is incumbent upon administrators or other decision-makers to make this difficult assessment. Our experiential information indicates that the majority of ineffective partnerships result from poor decisions at this stage. Others have concluded similarly (e.g., Johnson, 1999).

Once a partnership has been formed, team teachers face the task of making a commitment to the enterprise as described in the second stage. The interview data support our position that two key elements must be connected to this commitment: flexibility and the acceptance of the fluidity of content and language roles in the partnership. Teachers with rigid conceptualizations of their roles may be more likely to experience frustration with team teaching because the dynamic nature of the process requires constant re-evaluation of pedagogical beliefs and priorities.

The third stage of our model focuses on what happens between teachers as they strive to make the partnership work. This process involves a dynamic awareness of potential challenges and problem areas. Team teachers who are able to successfully negotiate the challenges which naturally emerge from the everyday teaching process, begin to realize the powerful pedagogic and professional development potential of team teaching.

The fourth stage of the model marks the realization of the effectiveness of a partnership by individual teachers. At this point both members of the team have the option of renewing the commitment at Stage 2 with the same partner or of pairing with a different teacher. There are, of course, numerous professional and personal reasons for not continuing with the same partner; however, our research focuses on the overall process and benefits of team teaching, not on individual instances of choosing not to continue a successful partnership.

Students benefit from an effective partnership because the team teachers offer the students two perspectives on key issues and concepts in the course. In effective partnerships, this input is often multiplied by the collaboration: the students benefit from the synergy of a successful partnership. Exit surveys completed by graduates of the college since 1998 bear out this conclusion. In these questionnaires interdisciplinary team teaching has consistently been rated highest in terms of student satisfaction, along with study abroad (Miyazaki International College, 2003, p. 158). The individual teachers also grow through effective partnership. Our data shows that the teachers claim the communication demands implicit in the team teaching process helps them to become more creative and insightful. It appears that this type of collaboration can lead to increased reflection and teacher growth (see three examples in Sagliano, Sagliano, & Stewart, 1998).

Conclusion

After reviewing the interview transcripts of the 14 practicing team teachers, we can offer some general guidelines on partnership issues in team teaching. The model presented in this paper emerged from the interview transcripts and is also supported by our combined 25 years of personal experience with team teaching. Figure 2 below illustrates what the interview transcripts revealed as the most substantial elements in team teaching relationships. Each teacher discussed all of these elements during the interviews. Pritchett (1997) outlines the same elements in a team teaching handbook for American educators. It is important to note that communication between the partners about these elements is the underlying factor in developing effective partnerships.

Figure 2: Elements of Effective Partnership in Team Teaching



Sharing a common pedagogical philosophy and an understanding of roles and expectations was very important for the team teachers. Experience and knowledge appeared to be a two-edged sword: some of the interviewees adapted a more submissive role readily as they learned from a more experienced team teacher, while others felt a need to compete for a leadership role in the partnership. Personal incompatibility and inadequate communication skills were certainly the most frequently cited reasons for the failure of a partnership. Therefore, team teachers are strongly advised to get to know potential partners before selecting a teaching mate. Have coffee or lunch with colleagues in order to get a feeling about whom you would like to partner with. Ask them what they are doing in their courses and how they feel about their students. If possible, visit their lessons. Administrators can ease this process by hiring flexible individuals who are interested in enhancing the quality of their teaching through faculty collaboration.

Problems seem to emerge and often escalate when one partner feels lack of respect as a professional i.e., one partner refuses to respect the knowledge and experience of the other and may even try to direct the course. Being explicit about your expectations for the team teaching relationship is imperative for the success of the partnership.

In summary, there are several things that institutions and individual teachers can do to encourage effective partnership in team teaching:

Decision-makers should do the utmost to recruit faculty members familiar with reflective teaching, be attentive to the elements of successful partnership described above and finally, provide ongoing support for effective team teaching. Workshops aimed at developing openness and trust in partnerships may be necessary. Successful teams are not developed by chance. Communication is crucial and administrators can facilitate this factor by providing enough preparation time, as well as regular forums for open discussion of teaching issues.

- Team teachers should be willing to develop their own practice. Faculty members need to learn as much as possible about reflective teaching and be willing to make a strong commitment to it in their partnerships. Teachers should be encouraged to engage in collaborative action research projects. The idea of the "scholarship of teaching" may be alien to many content (and language) teachers who might need to be persuaded about the value of teacher research (see Stewart, 2004).
- Interdependence among content and language teachers should be valued equally, and partners should accept soft boundaries between language and content. It is vital for partners to be clear on their own responsibilities in a team teaching partnership and to agree upon and be committed to the same outcomes. A narrow focus on one's own specialization is a sign of weakness in the partnership. Each teacher needs both to share what s/he has to offer and to accept what others offer. This process of consensual validation builds the necessary synergy of effective partnerships. Each member must think "team," and about the learners first.
- An initial orientation for new team teachers and an on-going series of faculty-led workshops should be established to aid teachers in their understanding of the dynamics of team teaching (see Stewart, Sagliano, & Sagliano, 2002). In a larger group of concerned peers, issues can be discussed in a depersonalized way and the act of sharing common challenges may serve to build a more effective institutional teaching culture.

The team teachers we interviewed enthusiastically expressed their personal experiences and impressions of team teaching. As with any innovation, commitment to interdisciplinary team teaching comes only after teachers experience it. The initial belief that team teaching is too time consuming frequently shifts as a partnership develops. Team teaching certainly "requires planning, skilled management, willingness to risk change and even failure, humility and open-mindedness, imagination and creativity" (Buckley, 2000, p. 11), but when teachers can make a partnership work, the benefits in terms of student learning and teacher growth can be very rewarding. One of our team teachers summarized it this way:

I think any form of collaboration forces you to articulate your own assumptions and thought processes. Having another person there that you have to communicate with before classes in planning and also in assessing after the activity makes you more of a reflective teacher than if you were just teaching alone. Teaching alone you probably naturally go through the same processes, but there's nobody else to enrich your reflection with another perspective.

The effectiveness of team teaching partnerships ultimately depends on what each team member brings to the endeavor.

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