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## PORTRAITS OF TEAMWORK IN THE EFL CLASSROOM: IMPLEMENTING A TEAM TEACHING MODEL FOR IMPROVING STUDENT TEACHERS' PRACTICE TEACHING

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This paper examines EFL student teachers' experiences and perceptions of team teaching employed during their practicum as part of their teacher preparation (i.e. pre-service) programme at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. The study analyses in detail specially designed team teaching projects (planning, execution and analysis of a single EFL lesson) of five different teacher pairs. The results provide an insight into how teacher trainees approach and perceive teamwork, how successful their teamwork is and which factors affect it. It is concluded that experiences of team teaching may support student teachers of English in meeting their professional responsibilities more effectively. Pre-service teacher preparation programmes need to be more sensitive to student teachers' individual and collaborative experiences to be able better to support them in meeting their future students' needs.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

There is no denying that the profession of teaching is evolving faster than ever. Teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century carries with it a complicated mix of challenges and opportunities. While the core purpose of teaching – transmitting knowledge to the next generation – remains extremely important, the nature of students' 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills and needs is changing very swiftly. These tech-savvy, multi-media, multi-tasking digital natives navigate everyday life far differently than many of their digital-immigrant teachers. Connecting with them, relating to them, and motivating them now requires teachers who are open to new ways of teaching and supporting students.

All this applies to the profession of foreign language teaching as well. Our store of information about how successfully to teach foreign languages has attained a remarkable level of sophistication. Therefore, language teachers must be "technicians, well versed in the pedagogical options available to meet the needs of various ages, purposes, proficiency levels, skills, and contexts of language learners around the globe" (Brown, 2001: xi).

In most educational settings, the usual pattern of teaching is still largely based on an individual teacher bearing responsibility for students in a classroom. Because of this, for **many teachers the professional experience can be a paradoxically lonely one. Teaching is all about communication and relationships, they spend most of their time with large groups of people, yet their position is in many ways isolating.** In an isolated situation it is hard to develop and progress in what you are doing. Developing on your own is hard, and truly moving forward often requires the ideas, encouragement and challenges put forth by others.

Given the increasing difficulty and complexity of (foreign language) teaching, there is obviously a "need for models that enhance teachers' collaborative problem-solving capacity" (Bullough *et al.*, 2003:

58). In some non-ELT and ELT settings attempts are being made to address this in the form of *team teaching*.

## 2. WHAT IS TEAM TEACHING?

There is no one single definition or 'best' model of team teaching. Also known as *co-teaching*, *collaborative teaching*, *co-operative teaching*, *parallel teaching*, *paired teaching* or *partnered teaching*, team teaching is usually used for a situation in which "two teachers share a class and divide instruction between them" (Richards and Schmidt, 2002: 544). Goetz (2000) defines team teaching as "a group of two or more teachers working together to plan, conduct and evaluate the learning activities for the same group of learners." Other authors suggest that team teaching is "a process in which all team members are equally involved and responsible for student instruction, assessment and the setting and meeting of learning objectives" (Bess, 2000, in Yanamandram and Noble, 2005). In sum, team teaching is a pedagogical technique that shifts the role of instruction from the individual to a pair or group and provides students with the opportunity to take a more active role in learning.

Dating from the late 1950s,<sup>1</sup> the concept of team teaching is not new in education, and there are many teaching arrangements that have been promoted in very different educational contexts. In practice, team teaching has found a place in non-ELT and ELT settings, and has been practised in a variety of methods and formats, across subject areas, across all educational and age levels ranging from pre-school to university, in vocational schools, with disabled students, etc. So, confusion about how to define team teaching can be traced to diverse *methods* and *practices* of team teaching, including a diversity of *educational settings*.

### *Team teaching models*

Team teaching involves a continuum of models and practices distinguishable from one another primarily on the basis of the level of collaboration within the teaching team (Yanamandram and Noble, 2005). McDaniel and Colarulli (1997) expand upon this notion of a team

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that by the late 1950s the *modern* team teaching concept had crystallized and started to appear in educational literature, whereas different formats of teaming go back a good deal further.

teaching continuum by suggesting that models of team teaching can be described along four dimensions – namely, (1) the degree of *interaction* between team members and students during the teaching process, (2) the degree of *student engagement* in the learning process, (3) the degree of *interdependence* in the teaching and learning process and lastly, (4) the degree of *integration* in the content and the perspectives of the discipline-based knowledge.

According to Goetz (2000), team teaching implies two broad categories: one is that two (or more) instructors are teaching the same students at the same time within the same classroom (**Category A**); the other is that the instructors work together but do not necessarily teach the same groups of students nor necessarily teach at the same time (**Category B**).

When instructors team teach the same group of students at the same time (*Category A*), there are a number of different roles that these team teachers might perform. There are two basic systems: hierarchic and cooperative. In the hierarchic system, a master teacher supervises one or more junior or assistant teachers. In the cooperative system, the teachers work together as equals, and leadership is determined not by status but by the requirements of the situation or the subject. Drawing on Maroney (1995) and Robinson and Schaible (1995), Goetz (2000) identifies six *Category A* models of team teaching:

*Traditional Team Teaching* is a model in which two teachers within a classroom take equal responsibility for teaching the students and are actively involved at all times. One may be teaching, while the other is writing notes on the board. Some teachers refer to this as having one brain in two bodies. Though most co-teachers consider this approach the most complex, but most satisfying, way to co-teach, it is most dependent on teachers' styles.

*Collaborative Teaching*: This academic experience describes a traditional team teaching situation in which the team teachers work together in designing the course and they teach the material not by the usual monologue, but rather by exchanging and discussing ideas and theories in front of the learners.

*Complimentary / Supportive Team Teaching*: This situation occurs when one teacher teaches the material and the other teacher provides follow-up activities.

*Parallel Instruction* is a form of team teaching in which students are split into two groups and each teacher is responsible for teaching his group.

*Differentiated Split Class* team teaching involves splitting students into two groups based on achievement. One teacher provides remedial instruction to students who are struggling in some skill, while the other teacher provides enrichment to those who have grasped the skill.

*Monitoring Teacher*: In this model, one teacher assumes the role of instructing, while the other teacher walks around the class and monitors students' behaviour and progress.

The successful execution of team teaching rests on the exploitation of a suitable model. It should be noted that *Category A* team teaching often involves a combination of different models according to the personalities, philosophies or strengths of the team teachers as well as the personalities and strengths of the learners, and different types of team teaching may be used within one class period.

The remainder of this paper will focus on the traditional team teaching model within *Category A* team teaching, which we can operationally define as a situation in which two (student) teachers share equal instructional responsibility (i.e. each individual's level of participation is equal) for a single group of students in a single classroom or workspace, and for specific content (objectives), with mutual ownership, pooled resources, and joint accountability (Cook, 2004: 5).

### *Review of the related literature*

There are a number of studies examining different perspectives of team teaching, in both non-EFL and EFL settings. In general, the literature on team teaching in non-EFL settings offers a positive appraisal of team teaching and 'proves' the truth of the proverb "Two heads are better than one."

One domain wherein the worthy status of team teaching was indicated was its benefit for instructors and learners (e.g. Anderson and Speck, 1998; Yanamandram and Noble, 2005; Parente *et al.*, 2007; Gillespie and Israel, 2008;). Often-cited benefits of team teaching in these studies are that students gain multiple perspectives because two teachers offer different viewpoints, and that students who were team-

taught made (significantly) greater gains than those who received traditional classroom instruction. For teachers, team teaching can foster professional development, help overcome the isolation that is inherent in more traditional forms of teaching (Goetz, 2000), and aid in both improving morale and deepening friendships between teachers. However, research studies concerning students with disabilities manifest varying results. A meta-analysis of co-teaching research conducted by Murawski and Swanson (2001) underlined the fact that co-teaching had a beneficial effect on students' outcomes, but results indicated that further research would be needed to substantiate that co-teaching is an effective service delivery option for students with disabilities.

Although the literature, in general, supports the value of team teaching in promoting student learning, there are also voices that throw doubt on the usefulness of team teaching. For instance, Wadkins and Miller (2006) made comparisons between team-taught courses and the same courses taught individually by the same instructors. Results indicated that team teaching did not affect student performance and had no consistent influence on students' evaluations of teaching performance.

Research studies concerning viability of team teaching in *EFL-settings* are far less numerous than those concerning general education. This probably accounts for the fact that so few, if any, of the handbooks currently used in EFL teacher preparation programmes make any but passing reference to team teaching.

In EFL-settings, team teaching is most commonly employed when a particular programme or learner group calls for additional teacher expertise that is not normally held by an EFL teacher (Honigsfeld and Dove, 2008), such as a specialization in young learners, learners with special needs, or another subject which is taught in English (CLIL). Often, team teaching is also employed in EFL to combine a native-speaking and a non-native speaking teacher of English. Most research studies concerning viability of team teaching in this domain (Tajino and Tajino, 2000; Anderson *et al.*, 2001; Pižorn, 2003; Liu, 2008; Igawa, 2009) underline that team teaching contributes to the improvement of teaching quality.

It is also possible, but much less common, to employ co-teaching teams made up of two EFL teachers with equal backgrounds for regular

EFL programmes. Since such team teaching is extremely rare, there is practically no research about its viability.

The impact of team teaching on EFL learners' outcomes has also received some attention in research, but these studies manifest varying results. For example, Aliakbari and Mansoori Nejad (2010) carried out a study which revealed that the difference in method of grammar instruction did not lead to significant difference in participants' performances on a grammar test. Similarly, Aliakbari and Bazayr (2012) examined the extent to which parallel teaching (i.e. team teaching) can affect the general language proficiency of EFL learners. The results revealed that differences in instruction approaches did not result in a significant difference in the subjects' performances. The findings in a third study, however, conducted by Aliakbari and Chalanchi (2013), implied that the implementation of a team teaching strategy for teaching reading comprehension in an EFL context (in Iran) can be salubrious.

While the impact of different team teaching practices in different (mostly non-ELT) settings has received due attention in educational research, team teaching in *teacher education settings* remains largely unresearched. The studies in this domain investigate the benefits for non-ELT teacher educators who collaboratively plan and develop team-taught coursework (Nevin *et al.*, 2009), or who team teach an in-service *English Teaching Methodology* Course (Wang, 2010), or examine non-ELT primary teachers' professional learning in the context of co-teaching (Rytivaara and Kershner, 2012), or non-EFL student teachers team teaching in order to improve their practice teaching (Bullough *et al.*, 2003). But we have been unable to find any articles or sections of books dealing with EFL student teachers team teaching within their practicum as part of their teacher preparation (i.e. pre-service) programme.

### *Team teaching and EFL student teachers' teaching practice*

Increased field experience has become a centrepiece of (foreign language) teacher education (Bullough *et al.*, 2003: 57). In Europe and North America there is a veritable "celebration of experience" (*ibid.*); the value of school experience to teacher education is "accepted almost on blind faith" (*ibid.*). At the same time there is growing recognition of the

shortcomings of traditional patterns of field experience, particularly of student teaching. As Bullough *et al.* (2003: 57-58) state:

The typical pattern of student teaching has remained little changed for 50 years: A teacher education student is placed in a classroom with a single cooperating teacher for varying lengths of time, a term or perhaps a semester. As quickly as possible the student assumes complete responsibility for classroom instruction and management and, while soloing, “practices” teaching. “The university provides the theory, the school provides the setting, and the student teacher provides the effort to bring them together.” [...] The challenge for student teachers is clear: “survival appears uppermost in their minds, with risk taking being minimal and the need for a good grade essential.” While the model has remained essentially the same, the challenges of teaching have dramatically increased.

There is obviously a growing need to rethink student teaching and to generate alternative models of field experience. In particular, given the increasing difficulty and complexity of teaching, “there is need for models that enhance teachers’ collaborative problem-solving capacity” (Bullough *et al.*, 2003: 58). As Howey and Zimpher (1999, in Bullough *et al.*, 2003: 58) argue, “Most fundamental to the improvement of teacher education is addressing how all teachers are prepared to work with one another.”

### *The study*

In the light of these considerations, we re-examined our own institution’s approach to student teaching, which stresses solo teaching, and decided to introduce and explore an alternative model: rather than place one student with a single mentor teacher, we suggested placing two student teachers in one classroom and with one mentor. We then set out to answer the general question, “What are the benefits and possible shortcomings of partnered student teaching as an alternative model of practice teaching?” More specifically, the study sought answers to the following research questions:

How do beginning EFL teachers approach teamwork in lesson planning, execution and analysis?



Which factors affect such teamwork?  
How successful is such teamwork?

### **3 . METHOD**

In view of the purpose of the study, and because we believe that not only teacher knowledge but all teacher performance is 'personal, practical and situated' (Tsui, 2003:2), qualitative methodology was best suited. We attempted to get a detailed picture of a single episode of ELT teamwork by 5 teacher-trainee pairs in five teaching contexts. The teamwork spanned all the key phases of teaching: lesson preparation, lesson execution, and post-lesson reflection and analysis. The participants were 10 beginning EFL teachers, who were all required to team teach a lesson in an assigned EFL class as a final project in their pre-service teacher training program. They were put into pairs randomly, and then each pair was assigned to a mentor-teacher at a public primary or secondary school in the Slovenian capital city of Ljubljana. They were all given the same set of instructions for their project:

- contact the mentor-teacher at least two weeks prior to the date of the lesson they would team teach;
- observe the class in which they would teach twice (both teachers together, using a given observation protocol);
- plan the lesson together, with the help of the mentor-teacher;
- carry out the lesson.

Each of the lessons was observed and assessed by one of the researchers (for the assessment sheet see Appendix 1, for the observation protocol, see Appendix 2). Two instruments were necessary because the standard assessment instrument, while encompassing all the main aspects of an EFL lesson, is aimed at assessing traditional lessons taught by a single teacher and thus could not capture enough information about the two teachers' teamwork in the phase of lesson execution. The same researcher who observed and assessed each lesson then also conducted a post-lesson interview immediately after the lesson with both of the teachers (for the interview protocol, see Appendix 3). The questions in

both the observation and interview protocol were based on a review of literature on team teaching in ELT and they reflect the most commonly identified issues.

The participating teachers, 3 men and 7 women aged between 23 and 30, had fairly similar backgrounds in terms of their education, but there were differences in the scope of their previous teaching experience. Most of them had also had some experience of team teaching before the study, both as learners and as teachers. As preparation for the team teaching experience, they were asked to study an article from the magazine *The Teacher Trainer* (Johnston and Madejski, 1990), an excellent practical introduction to team teaching in the EFL classroom. Since the ten participants were a convenience sample from different teacher education classes and the pairs were formed randomly, all participants except two ended up working with a colleague whom they had not met before.

The dates of the team taught lessons were set sufficiently apart to allow the two researchers the following study procedure. First one pair of teachers was observed, assessed and interviewed by one of the researchers. The resulting notes were reviewed by both researchers to establish whether the instruments used (see the Appendices) needed revisions. Subsequently, two pairs of teachers were observed, assessed and interviewed by each researcher, and then all the compiled assessments and notes were analysed by both.

#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The fairly large amount of qualitative data gathered will first be presented for each team of teachers separately and according to the three stages of teacher teamwork studied (lesson planning, lesson execution, lesson analysis). The data on the lesson planning comes from the lesson plan and the interview with the teachers. The data on the lesson execution comes from the observation and assessment of the lesson. The data on lesson analysis comes from the post-lesson interview with the teachers. To 'distill' the key findings from the data presented, the five portraits are followed by a summative chart and discussion. The ten teachers' names have been changed for the purpose of anonymizing the data.

### *Portrait 1: Mitja and Monika*

#### The lesson planning / preparation:

**Before the day of the lesson:** Mitja and Monika first prepared their own lesson plan draft each, then met to combine them and rehearse the lesson, then revised the joint lesson plan on their own, and met again to finalize it. They said that their first individual drafts of the lesson plan were quite similar.

**On the day of the lesson,** Mitja arrived earlier than Monika and waited nervously. She arrived 10 minutes before the lesson started and was the one who brought their lesson plan and materials. She also walked her partner through the lesson plan.

**Direct evidence of teamwork in the lesson plan:** Verbs in the 1<sup>st</sup> person dual were used in the rubric 'Teacher's activities', but each lesson stage was additionally marked to show who of the pair would carry out which activity.

#### The lesson execution:

**What was the division of roles between the two teachers?** The two teachers planned to take regular turns, simply to make the lesson more varied. This plan was followed throughout. However, as the lesson unfolded, it became visible that the two teachers had different teaching styles, which was both an advantage and a disadvantage. Generally, Monika paid more attention to following the lesson plan and Mitja entered into interactions with the learners more, showing somewhat more sensitivity to their needs. The impression was that this was not entirely conscious or previously agreed upon, and the two teachers made each other slightly nervous throughout the lesson even though they each, on their own, seemed comfortable in the teacher's role and both were in charge of activities for an equal amount of time.

**What was the learners' response to the two teachers and the lesson in general?** There were not any noticeable differences between the responses of learners to each of the teachers. The learners were very disciplined (which was quite a contrast to their rowdiness during the break before the lesson started) and they all participated quite evenly throughout the lesson.

**In which aspect /phase of the lesson did the learners benefit the most from there being two teachers?** The learners received twice the teacher attention during pairwork as both teachers walked around the classroom monitoring and attending any learner pair that needed help.

**How did the two teachers coordinate their actions during the lesson?** In the first part of the lesson they moved around the classroom too much, took turns too frequently and interrupted each other, but this decreased in the second part of the lesson. During pairwork they consulted each other quietly, which was beneficial and did not disturb the learners. There were some cases of successful impromptu assistance: for example, when Mitja could not think of a learner's name, Monika provided it. There were, however, also moments of dissonance which they were not able to resolve. For example, Mitja wanted to skip playing the listening text for the second time, as it was evident that it was not necessary, but Monika felt she had to play it again as it was announced to the class beforehand. This was 'resolved' by Monika playing the tape for the second time.

The post-lesson analysis:

**Lesson assessment in brief:** The lesson was graded 10 / 10 overall. Even though Mitja was slightly weaker than Monika in the areas of personal qualities and language use, the lesson was engaging for the learners throughout and the lesson aims were achieved.

**Teachers' own reflection on lesson success:** The two teachers gave opposite answers. Mitja was happy and Monika was decidedly unhappy.

**Reflection on contributions to the lesson and division of roles:** They showed awareness of their different contributions. They said that Monika was the 'timekeeper', who had anticipated Mitja's lack of structure (she did not want him to 'start chatting with the learners too much'). On the other hand, they said that while she was the one who insisted on using learners' names and preparing a handout, Mitja was the one who 'brought more conversation into the lesson'.

**Feelings about team teaching as compared to teaching solo:** Mitja said he was more motivated and had more fun, and that it was easier and less stressful. Monika, on the other hand, felt it was easier to teach alone as timing was much easier to control.

## *Portrait 2: Ula and Tilen*

### The lesson planning / preparation stage:

**Before the day of the lesson:** Tilen and Ula put off preparations for the team teaching project for so long that they needed an intervention. After the initial contact with the mentor-teacher and the class which they would teach, they divided up the 'subtopics' of the lesson and prepared a draft lesson plan independently, then compared them and realized they had similar ideas. As both confirmed, Ula drove the planning process. They rehearsed the lesson over coffee on the day of the lesson. The mentor-teacher commented discretely to the researcher that they seemed 'lost and scared'.

**On the day of the lesson,** they arrived together, 10 minutes before the lesson, looking prepared but anxious.

**Direct evidence of teamwork in the lesson plan:** None. Verbs used in the rubric 'Teacher's activities' were in non-finite form, lesson stages were not marked to show which teacher would carry out which activity.

### The lesson execution:

**What was the division of roles between the two teachers?** Ula led the first part of the lesson with Tilen assisting, and in the second part of the lesson the roles were reversed. There were no major differences between the two teacher's styles and contributions; they were both relaxed, confident and energetic in interacting with the class, and covered the same amount of lesson time.

**What was the learners' response to the two teachers and the lesson in general?** There were not any noticeable differences– the learners seemed to perceive them almost as one teacher. The level of learner involvement was high throughout the lesson. At the end of the lesson there was a round of applause.

**In which aspect /phase of the lesson did the learners benefit the most from there being two teachers?** The learners got twice the teacher attention during pairwork as both teachers walked around the classroom monitoring and attending any learner pair that needed help. In addition, the two teachers acted out three model dialogues, which contributed

greatly to the success of the lesson. The roles they played were divided meaningfully (Ula played different female roles and Tilen played the male roles), with Ula showing good acting skills. Thus, in addition to being well integrated into the lesson, the dialogues were authentic, lively, and visibly motivating for the learners.

**How did the two teachers coordinate their actions during the lesson?** There seemed to be very little on-the-spot coordination needed, and when it occurred, it was discrete (mostly non-verbal), quick and effective.

#### The post-lesson analysis:

**Lesson assessment in brief:** The lesson was graded 10 / 10 overall. The aims were achieved and learners engaged throughout due to the creative and effective story-line approach and the balanced performance of both teachers, despite their somewhat different minor weaknesses.

**Teachers' own reflection on lesson success:** Both teachers were satisfied with the lesson and were able to analyse it objectively.

**Reflection on contributions to the lesson and division of roles:** It was clear that the teachers had consciously decided to utilize the team teaching opportunities of the lesson the way they did. When asked about the importance of the fact that they were a mixed gender team, they commented that had they each taught this lesson on their own, they would have had to perform differently because they would have had to play different roles in one person.

**Feelings about team teaching as compared to teaching solo:** Ula said that she had been looking forward to trying out team teaching, as she had experienced excellent team teaching of English as a learner in secondary school. They also said that the most difficult part of their team teaching project was making the first contact with an unknown colleague.

#### *Portrait 3: Karmen and Branka*

#### The lesson planning / preparation:

**Before the day of the lesson:** The teachers first brainstormed lesson plan ideas together and then processed them at home individually and made final decisions, consulting each other throughout.

**On the day of the lesson:** The teachers arrived and prepared for the lesson together.

**Direct evidence of teamwork in the lesson plan:** Verbs used in the rubric 'Teacher's activities' were in the first person dual, but the plan was not marked to show which teacher would carry out which activity.

The lesson execution:

**What was the division of roles between the two teachers?** There were no major differences between the two teachers' styles and contributions; they were both relaxed, confident and energetic in interacting with the class, and covered the same amount of lesson time.

**What was the learners' response to the two teachers and the lesson in general?** There were not any noticeable differences between the responses of learners to each of the teachers.

**In which aspect /phase of the lesson did the learners benefit the most from there being two teachers?** By dividing the class into two groups and working with one group each for almost the entire lesson, the two teachers basically improved the teacher-student ratio by 100% and thus individual learners got much more attention than they would otherwise.

**How did the two teachers coordinate their actions during the lesson?** Transitions were smooth and spontaneous. Because of the lesson format, most of the time coordination was not needed (two groups working independently in the same room).

The post-lesson analysis:

**Lesson assessment in brief:** The lesson was graded 9 / 10 overall. Most of the lesson aims were achieved, but the concluding stage was not very effective.

**Teacher's own reflection on lesson success:** The teachers felt that the lesson turned out quite differently than expected and were not entirely satisfied with its success.

**Reflection on contributions to the lesson and division of roles:** They did not manage to bring the two groups of learners together for the final phase of the lesson; they felt this would have been possible if there had been only one teacher.

**Feelings about team teaching as compared to teaching solo:** Both teachers felt that the planning phase was more efficient (ideas appear faster, you are less insecure, you consult more sources, you see things from another perspective). Both teachers also felt that there were differences in the teaching itself: the students get more attention from two teachers and the teachers are less under pressure because they share responsibility, but the shared classroom management is more demanding. Also, you learn more as a teacher as you see everything from an additional perspective.

#### Portrait 4: Maja and Andrej

The lesson planning / preparation stage:

**Before the day of the lesson:** The teachers went through three lesson plan drafts, sending them to each other and revising them based on the feedback they got from their partner.

**On the day of the lesson:** The teachers arrived together and were quite relaxed and excited about the lesson.

**Direct evidence of teamwork in the lesson plan:** Verbs used in the rubric 'Teacher's activities' were in the first person dual, but the plan was not marked to show which teacher would carry out which activity.

The lesson execution:

**What was the division of roles between the two teachers?** The whole lesson was carried out by the two teachers jointly (taking turns within a single activity, spreading attention evenly when monitoring pairwork and groupwork). As they said in the post-lesson interview, this was spontaneous: they had only planned separate roles for two of the activities. They were both relaxed, confident and energetic in interacting with the class, and covered the same amount of lesson time.

**What was the learners' response to the two teachers and the lesson in general?** There were no differences in the learners' responses to teacher A and teacher B. Both were quite experienced classroom performers and kept the class involved throughout the lesson.

**In which aspect /phase of the lesson did the learners benefit the most from there being two teachers?** The learners got twice the amount



of teacher attention during pairwork and groupwork. The teachers successfully modelled target language dialogue with meaningful division of roles (a dialogue between a mother and son). The dialogue was very authentic, lively and motivating for the learners.

**How did the two teachers coordinate their actions during the lesson?** Their turn-taking was very smooth and spontaneous, very little on-the-spot coordination needed.

The post-lesson analysis:

**Lesson assessment in brief:** The lesson was graded 10 / 10 overall. The lesson was well planned and smoothly executed, dynamic and engaging, and the aims were fully achieved.

**Teacher's own reflection on lesson success:** Both teachers were able to analyse the lesson from a balanced, objective point of view.

**Reflection on contributions to the lesson and division of roles:** Both teachers said that the model dialogues they played out were an idea they definitely would not have had if they had not worked on the lesson as a team.

**Feelings about team teaching as compared to teaching solo:** Both teachers felt that the team taught lesson was better and more effective than the lessons they teach individually. They felt more nervous and stressed, but also more motivated as compared to teaching on their own.

Portrait 5: Tina and Ines

The lesson planning / preparation stage:

**Before the day of the lesson:** Tina and Ines were the only team who had known each other before the team teaching project (they were friends from the same teacher training class). Their planning involved sending lesson plan ideas and drafts to each other for feedback and also rehearsing the lesson.

**On the day of the lesson,** they arrived together well before the lesson.

**Direct evidence of teamwork in the lesson plan:** None. Verbs used in the rubric 'Teacher's activities' were in non-finite form, lesson

stages were not marked to show which teacher would carry out which activity.

#### The lesson execution:

**What was the division of roles between the two teachers?** The two teachers lead one activity each. In some activities, the other teacher stood at the side in the meantime, in others Ines wrote on the board as Tina spoke to the class, and during groupwork each teacher was in charge of one group. Despite this varied and meaningful division of roles, which they had planned, another pattern became present as the lesson progressed: Tina was more confident and increasingly dominated the lesson.

**What was the learners' response to the two teachers and the lesson in general?** Both of the teachers were quite reserved at the beginning of the lesson. As the lesson progressed, however, Tina relaxed and began to establish a rapport with the learners, while Ines did not, and consequently they began to respond to Tina more. Ines noticed this and made some attempts to balance it (e. g. she said to the class 'Try to cooperate more'), but as she saw she was not successful she began to withdraw.

**In which aspect /phase of the lesson did the learners benefit the most from there being two teachers?** Twice the amount of teacher attention during groupwork.

**How did the two teachers coordinate their actions during the lesson?** The turn-taking was not problematic. There was one instance of consulting quietly (at the front of the class, during pairwork).

#### The post-lesson analysis:

**Lesson assessment in brief:** The lesson was graded 9 / 10 overall. Despite some inefficient classroom management, the lesson was engaging for the learners and most aims were achieved.

**Teacher's own reflection on lesson success:** The teachers were not too happy with the effectiveness of their lesson. They identified some of its strengths and weaknesses, but not all.

**Reflection on contributions to the lesson and division of roles:** The teachers had planned which activity would be executed by whom, and they also agreed to 'cut in when necessary.' However, they did not

seem to be fully aware of the difference in their performances and how it affected the lesson.

**Feelings about team teaching as compared to teaching solo:** The teachers felt that when team teaching, one is more aware of lesson aims and more confident about classroom management. They also said that one cannot really compare a lesson you taught by yourself with a team-taught lesson, but that you definitely learn more while team teaching: there is constant evaluation even in the planning stage, but you also get feedback on the spot, as you are observed and reacted to by your partner through the whole lesson.

Teachers	Lesson quality	Key data summary
Mitja & Monika	10/10	Teachers with different styles complement each other and carry out a good lesson, but it is a strain.
Ula & Tilen	10/10	Reluctant candidates realize the value of teamwork under pressure. A creative lesson plan that capitalizes very well on the presence of two teachers with similar levels of competence. Main feature of the lesson: dramatic model dialogues. One of the teachers has strong positive experience of team teaching as a learner.
Maja & Andrej	10/10	A creative lesson plan that capitalizes very well on the presence of two teachers with similar levels of competence. Main feature of the lesson: dramatic model dialogues.
Karmen & Branka	9/10	Splitting the class up and working with two groups as if they are two separate classes. Is that team teaching?

Tina & Ines	9/10	Teachers with different styles / personalities / levels of competence. Knowing each other well does not prevent performance imbalance in the classroom.
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*Table 1: Key data summary*

Let's now look at how the data presented answers our research questions.

### **1. How do beginning EFL teachers approach teamwork in lesson planning, execution and analysis?**

All five teacher teams went through a very similar planning process: they first negotiated the division of the tasks, then prepared lesson plans separately and then went through one or more rounds of revisions based on the feedback from their partner. Most of them also rehearsed the lesson at least once. There were no problems evident as far as this phase is concerned (such as procrastination, excess frustration, lack of motivation or creative ideas, inability to find sources or materials, or an inability to reconcile divergent lesson plan ideas). The planning process for all of the teams was thorough and effective. This was one of the key reflections of most of the teacher teams as well: teamwork in lesson planning leads to higher quality lesson plans, and thus to higher quality lessons.

In the phase of lesson execution, the division of roles between the two teachers mostly followed the lesson plans, and, despite the fact that the contexts of the lessons were quite similar, shows a variety of approaches. Most teacher teams decided to take turns during the lesson by leading one activity / lesson stage each in order to add variety and increase the dynamics of the lesson (Teacher A: 1<sup>st</sup> activity, Teacher B: 2<sup>nd</sup> activity, Teacher A: 3<sup>rd</sup> activity, etc.). In addition, they made use of opportunities to support each other within a single activity or lesson stage. The three patterns observed were:

Teacher A leads, teacher B assists. The class is centred on teacher A, who is explaining, giving instructions or moderating class discussion. The assistance of teacher B can take various forms: adding comments,

translating instructions, attending to individual learners, writing on the board or the handling of other teaching aids, etc.

The teachers deliver a prepared target language dialogue. This can be short and simple or take the form of a mini play with the use of props. The aims can range from developing listening comprehension skills to leading into a topic to modelling a dialogue for a speaking practice activity.

Both teachers are engaged in the same teacher activity but attending to a different subset of the learner group. This, for practical reasons, cannot be a teacher-centered activity, but is perfectly suited to monitoring individual work, pairwork or groupwork.

Any of these can be planned or spontaneous, or, most commonly, a combination of both. Two out of the five teacher teams demonstrated all three patterns of cooperation in the classroom, and a further two demonstrated patterns 1 and 3. The fifth teacher team took an unexpected approach by executing the whole lesson separately for two subsets of the class, which certainly increases learning opportunities, but does not fit the definition of team teaching.

The lesson analysis phase was led by the researcher and thus was probably more thorough and the participation of the two teachers in a team was somewhat different than if the lesson analysis had been unprompted and unguided. However, given the fact that in team teaching two teachers invest energy into planning and executing a lesson together, we are certain that the post-lesson reflection would in any case be richer than it usually is for a single teacher, as it would by necessity be dialogic.

Of course, each team had its own unique combination of strengths and weaknesses, which were a combination of the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals on the team. These were mostly present in all of the phases of work (see Portrait 1 in particular), but not always to the same extent. For example, in Portrait 5 we can see how the differences between the two teachers were almost invisible in the planning and analysis stage, but very visible in the execution phase.

## 2. Which factors affect such teamwork?

From the data gathered, we can infer several factors that play a role in the teamwork of two (beginning) EFL teachers. One factor is definitely the (dis)similarity of personality / teaching styles / levels of competence of the two teachers. It is clear even from the five cases we have studied that this factor affects the success of teacher teamwork in a complex way: we saw two excellent lessons given by two teams of teachers who showed very similar levels of classroom competence, one excellent lesson in which the two teachers had opposing teaching styles, and one somewhat weaker lesson in which the two teachers were visibly unequal in terms of classroom competence. Of course, the three variables that we treat as one factor here, while related to each other, are separate characteristics, and their interplay in team teaching would have to be researched in a separate study.

Another factor, related to the previous one, is the rapport between the two teachers. The logical assumption is that in order to achieve good team results, good rapport between team members is a necessary condition. In all of our cases, the teachers seemed to have established a good rapport, which surely played a part in their planning and execution of high quality lessons. It is interesting, however, that how well the team teachers had known each other before does not seem to play a role. The only pair who had known each other prior to the team teaching project gave the weakest lesson and their performance in the classroom was quite uneven. The other four teams were made up of individuals who had never met before, but their performances were much more balanced and the energy that some of them projected together in the classroom was quite surprising.

This is probably related to another factor – the teachers' genders. As can be seen from Table 1, the three lessons which were graded as excellent were taught by mixed-gender teacher teams, and the two lessons of lesser quality were taught by female-only teacher teams. It is of course not possible to generalize from five limited case studies that mixed-gender teams have an automatic advantage, and even less possible to explain how exactly this might come about. However, while observing the lessons and interviewing the participants, we noticed that the dynamic seems to be different when teacher teams are mixed-gender. Generally speaking, the learner groups responded with more

involvement and higher motivation, and there seemed to be more energy and creativity in the intra-team dynamics as well.

Two additional factors have been identified to play a role in the success of teacher teamwork in our context. One was practical classroom team teaching skills. It goes without saying that, as with all skills, these require training. How well a teacher team will function in the classroom thus depends, among other things, on how much previous experience they have had as team teachers – both in general and in teaching with one partner in particular as well. It has to be noted here that the rapport between the teachers seems to be related to the ease of on-the-spot coordination in the classroom. Turn-taking was a problem for only one pair of teachers – the one with the greatest divergence in personalities and teaching styles. Even in their case, however, it improved within the one lesson.

Experience with team teaching does not just mean the amount of time a teacher has spent practicing team teaching, but also his or her experience of team teaching as a learner. In our cases, only one of the participating teachers had had such experience before in a significant measure. Since this experience was very positive, the teacher had a very positive attitude towards the team teaching project from the start. She was highly motivated, creative and comfortable in her role, which probably affected her partner as well, and their lesson was one of the best in the sample.

### **3. How successful is such teamwork?**

The third question can be answered from the point of view of lesson quality as measured by experienced assessors using various holistic instruments and procedures. From this point of view, and given a scale of 1-10, it is clear that the five cases in our study were all above average, and could even be called highly successful lessons. This reflects the fact that the teachers prepared high quality lesson plans, and that the lessons were well executed, with high levels of learner involvement, motivation and discipline, and a lot of different types of interactions in the classroom, which is far from insignificant in language teaching. Also the lesson analysis and reflection – taking into consideration, of course, that this was tightly controlled by the researchers - was very successful; all of

the teachers reflected thoroughly on their lessons and the whole process, and they were able to independently identify their strengths and weaknesses, which is a key ingredient of professional improvement.

Another perspective for evaluating the success of teacher teamwork in EFL would of course be to compare the gains of team-taught lessons (relative to the effort invested) to the gains of lessons taught by one teacher. This goes beyond the scope of the present study, but we did ask the participants to compare the experience of the team project to their previous teaching experience, most of which was teaching on their own. Their responses suggest that there is a variety of potential 'added value factors' such as higher teacher motivation, more effective classroom management, better achievement of teaching aims and increased professional learning (this last item corresponds to the findings of Vacilotto and Cummings' 2007 study of the peer coaching of EFL/ESL teachers).

## 5. CONCLUSION

Our exploratory study of five cases of team teaching by beginning EFL teachers aimed to provide an insight into how future teachers approach teamwork in the phases of lesson preparation, lesson execution and lesson analysis, how successful such teamwork is and what factors affect it. While qualitative studies only allow naturalistic generalising, the results, overall, are very positive: with little training as a team, all five teacher pairs experienced the benefits of teamwork in planning their lessons, the quality of which was documented to be above average. In the phase of lesson execution, the teacher pairs demonstrated practically all of the possible models of team teaching described in the introduction. The phase of lesson reflection and analysis was also enriched by the double-perspective format.

This study opens up several possible directions for further research, such as a quantitative comparison of the effectiveness of team-taught training lesson to 'solo' lessons, the benefits of team teaching to the professional development of teachers in later stages of their careers, and the effects of the various factors affecting EFL teacher teamwork, from contextual ones to the issues of teacher personality, gender, competence profiles, attitudes, teamwork skills and more. Overall,



however, the results of the study suggest that team teaching is a viable component of pre-service EFL teacher training. At the same time, it seems clear that team teaching in EFL has potential benefits and is an interesting teaching option not only in the usual CLIL or native/non-native teacher situations, but also in regular mainstream EFL, where shared responsibility for a class might be one of the solutions for an ever more demanding professional future.

### Appendix 1: Lesson assessment instrument

**TEACHING ASSESSMENT SHEET (4)**

Student teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ School & class: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher mentor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Other relevant information: \_\_\_\_\_

**ASSESSMENT CHECK LIST & GRADES**  
(Tick or appropriate, if not applicable, insert blank)

Code:	excellent (A)	very good (B)	good (C)	satisfactory (D)	weak (E)	insufficient (F)
	excellent	very good	good	satisfactory	weak	insufficient

**COMMENTS**

<b>LESSON PLANNING AND PREPARATION</b>									
Professional approach to planning									
Clarity of aims and stages									
Relevance and variety of learning activities									
Usability of materials and aids									
Lesson start - lively, style, language used									
<b>PROFESSIONAL AWARENESS</b>									
Professional approach to planning and teaching									
Ability to reflect and critically evaluate one's own teaching									
Ability to record constructively to establish from others									
<b>PERSONAL QUALITIES</b>									
Personality, presence, general style									
Ability to establish rapport (relationships)									
Verbal fluency, appropriacy to purpose									
Body language, gestures, movement, eye contact									
<b>CLASS MANAGEMENT</b>									
Including elements that stimulate learning									
Management of classroom interaction (tasks, content, structure)									
Organisation and execution of activities									
Dealing with problems and difficulties									
Clarity of instruction									

<b>EXECUTION OF THE LESSON</b>									
Starting the lesson: introduction and warm-up									
Presentation of new language or teaching points (vocabulary, grammar, phonology)									
Variety and use of techniques for practising new language (controlled and free practice)									
Providing opportunities for productive use of language (free practice or use)									
Monitoring learners and managing learning									
Achieving appropriate balance between accuracy and fluency activities									
Use of blackboard or equivalent and use of other aids									
Checking of learning									
Timing and pace of the lesson									
Lesson staging: sequencing, smoothness of flow, progress through the stages and linkage of sections									
Assessment & correction of errors									
Ending the lesson									
Achievement of aims									
<b>LEARNER'S USE OF ENGLISH</b>									
Correctness of language use (grammar and fluency; appropriacy to learning purpose, relevance to the level of subject matter)									
<b>SUMMARISING COMMENTS</b>									
Observer's name:									Final assessment:
Observer's signature:									

### Appendix 2: Lesson observation protocol

Is there teamwork visible in the lesson plan in any way? How?

The roles of teacher A and teacher B (functionality - what was the division of roles based on, how was it reflected in the timing and in the types of activities, what were the transitions like?)

Describe critical incidents, if any.

Were there any differences in learner responses to teacher A and teacher B?

Did learners get more individual attention and feedback than they would have from only one teacher (monitoring, error correction, adapting lesson to learner response)?

Did the two teachers (effectively, consciously) model target language dialogue for the learners?

### Appendix 3: Post-lesson interview

Ask trainees to describe their process of planning the lesson – what exactly they each contributed, how they felt, what were the advantages and disadvantages of planning the lesson together.

‘How would the lesson planning phase have been different if you had been working on your own (sources you would not have consulted, materials you would not have looked for, ideas you would not have had, aspects of the lesson you would not have thought about as thoroughly)?’

‘How, in your opinion, would the execution of this lesson have been different if you had carried it out on your own? What would you have done differently and why?’

Ask trainees to clarify any points from the lesson you noted in the lesson observation protocol?

Observe the two trainees during the follow-up discussion, note their behaviour and contributions.

‘How would you compare this lesson to your individually taught lessons? Did you learn more, were you more motivated, were you less or more nervous / stressed, do you feel that the lesson was more effective / less effective?’

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**PORTRETI SURADNIČKOG RADA (TEAMWORK) U NASTAVI  
ENGLSKOGA JEZIKA: PRIMJENA MODELA SURADNIČKOG  
POUČAVANJA S CILJEM POBOLJŠANJA RADA STUDENATA  
NASTAVNIKA U STRUČNO-PEDAGOŠKOJ PRAKSI**

U radu se prikazuju iskustva studenata nastavnika i njihovo shvaćanje suradničkog poučavanja koje primjenjuju u sklopu programa stručno-pedagoške prakse Filozofskog fakulteta u Ljubljani. Istraživanje detaljno analizira posebno pripremljene projekte suradničkog poučavanja (planiranje, realizacija, analiza jednoga nastavnog sata) pet parova studenata nastavnika. Rezultati daju uvid u načine na koje studenti pristupaju suradničkom poučavanju i kako ga poimaju, uspješnost takva rada te čimbenike koji utječu na takav način poučavanja. Zaključeno je da iskustva suradničkog poučavanja mogu imati pozitivan učinak na studente nastavnike pri ostvarivanju njihovih profesionalnih dužnosti. Programi za obrazovanje budućih nastavnika moraju biti osjetljiviji na individualna i suradnička iskustva studenata nastavnika kako bi ih se podržalo u nastojanjima da se što bolje pripreme za zadovoljavanje potreba svojih budućih učenika.

*Ključne riječi: engleski kao strani jezik, studentska praksa, program za obrazovanje budućih nastavnika, suradničko poučavanje, planiranje sata, realizacija sata, promatranje sata, analiza sata.*