

A STUDY OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON TEACHING JAPANESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (JFL) BETWEEN THAI TEACHERS AND JAPANESE TEACHERS OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THAILAND

Mika Shaura (Tanasarnsanee)
Graduate School of Education
Assumption University of Thailand

Abstract This is a concept paper which aims to explore the importance of transformational leadership between non-native speaking teachers (NNST) and native speaking teachers (NST) teaching Japanese language as a Foreign Language (JFL) in Thai universities. Currently, Japanese language is one of the major foreign languages, which are learned by Thai people nation-wide. According to the survey by the Japan Foundation in 2006, Thailand has the seventh largest number of learners of Japanese language in the world. Nearly 40 percent of teachers are Japanese. In this context, teacher collaboration between Thai NNSTs and Japanese NSTs is vital. JFL teachers and researchers have begun to explore the significance of teacher collaboration, yet, the interactions between NNSTs and NSTs has been seldom analyzed from an aspect of leadership. Regarding teacher collaboration as a process of transformational leadership, the researcher reviews research in leadership and teacher collaboration in JFL and arises needs for new research in roles of NST in Thailand, gaps between expectations and practices in NNST-NST collaboration, factors which affect NNST-NST collaboration positively, and development of teacher education program in terms of NNST-NST collaboration.

Key words: Transformational leadership, Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL), Native and non-native speaking teacher (NST-NNST), Teacher collaboration

Introduction

In this era of globalization, foreign language learning is vital to gain and share new knowledge especially for university students. On the one hand, English competence is regarded as essential for both academic and business activities. On the other hand, the current of cultural diversity emphasizes the importance of learning other foreign languages besides English. Reflecting the needs of society, the number of Thai universities, which offers new BA programs for students who are majoring in Japanese, is increasing. According to the Japan Foundation Bangkok (2008), 14 national universities out of 24, 15 Rajabhat Universities out of 40, 4 private universities out of 64, and 2 Rajamangala Universities out of 9 provide annually approximately 1,000 students bachelor degrees in Japanese.

In such a context, collaboration between Thai teachers and Japanese teachers in practices of teaching language is essential to provide students language programs with quality. In Thai-JFL, there is a small amount of research that focuses on NNST-NST collaboration. Recently, several JFL researchers attempt to define the quality of Japanese JFL teachers who are native speakers of Japanese (NST) abroad. Differentiating from JFL in domestic, NSTs abroad need to be more competent in different cultural awareness and interacting with administrative superiors, colleague teachers as well as with students. (Hirahata, 2008) NNST-NST interactions in collaboration may exist not only in teaching classes but do also in administrative levels including setting policy, material and curriculum development, and in conducting outside curriculum activities. In this sense, NNST-NST collaboration is regarded as an implementation of leadership theories.

Bringing the theories of transformational leadership into NNST-NST teacher collaboration and studying how people are empowered in setting goals, commitments, and decision making by interacting with each other, the roles of NSTs abroad become more clear. In this study, the researcher reviews the theories of transformational leadership and attempts to clarify the significance of these theories to understand the nature of teacher collaboration between NNST-NST of JFL abroad.

Transformational Leadership

The principal concept of transformational leadership is, as seen in its name, the power of transforming people through interaction. It may be regarded as the power pushing people beyond their self-interests and toward the shared goal of the whole organization (Bush, 2008; Treslan, 2006). The traits of transformational leadership are understood, for example by Yukl (1989) as a power, which increases followers' motivation by:

- 1) Activating higher needs of followers
- 2) Appealing to moral ideas;
- 3) Empowering followers (Yukl, 1989, p. 230)