

Q20 What do you think of the ALT system?

Answered: 169 Skipped: 2

#	Responses	Date
1	With low pay and high staff turnover, the number of highly competent ALTs is almost nil. This punishes the kids, the teachers, and the parents who actually pay for the system. Still, at least it's funded through taxes, so all the Japanese teachers still get their bonus, no matter how poor the quality of education.	2/5/2015 11:37 AM
2	I think if used appropriately I think it's fantastic. Though seeing it being used in my schools I think it's a waste compared to how teachers are using ALTs in other schools.	1/22/2015 5:21 PM
3	There are a lot of things that I like, but I think it would vastly improve with more communication. (Communication of expectations between ALTs and JTEs, communication of local Block events, etc.)	1/15/2015 8:01 AM
4	It needs to be revised. Give more control to qualified ALTs.	1/13/2015 5:00 PM
5	It's a complicated relationship, impacted more by individual workplace atmosphere than anything else from what I've seen so far. The ALT experience will vary as differently from village to the next as from one prefecture to another so to say there is one system is a bit too broad to be applied. If anything, I believe CLAIR made a terrible mistake in disabling the ALT support system that it had in place because it was the best/most efficient means of receiving direct help; it was the one constant that applied across the board no matter where the ALT was stationed/working.	1/12/2015 10:53 PM
6	While the concept of the ALT is great, you can't force schools to openly accept the system. The boards of education may see ALTs as necessary, but they create extra work for the schools, especially in cases where the ALT speaks little or no Japanese (or isn't allowed by their company to use Japanese). A lot of schools don't know what to do with ALTs. How much of the class should the ALT conduct? What duties should the ALT have? All of this is made harder due to laws relating to contract workers. In my type of contract, gyomu itaku, the school and teachers are not allowed to give me direct instructions on classes, directly contact me about schedule changes, or give me advice, feedback, or warnings directly. Schools really don't expect ALTs to stay more than 1 year. The fact that ALTs live from contract to contract does not give any stability. Being an ALT for one's career is next to impossible with little incentive to improve.	1/12/2015 11:35 AM
7	I think it's outdated and unnecessarily privileges native speakers. I think the money spent by programmes such as JET would be better used to improve the training the JTEs receive. Perhaps send the JTEs to an English-speaking country to study/work for a period of time to improve their own English ability and be exposed to genuine, up-to-date CLT.	1/10/2015 11:33 PM
8	Japanese government is wasting their money. We are underpaid outsourcing should be remove. Hiring and training of teachers should be done by each prepectures. Private schools offer good condensation . Due to Native speakes fallacy a few board of education w ploys non native English speaking teachers.	1/10/2015 11:28 AM
9	I would prefer to see the money spent on sending Japanese English teachers overseas to learn both language skills and also teaching techniques.	1/9/2015 5:07 PM

10	<p>At the moment, there is a lot that needs changing. Most ALTs do not have enough classes to keep them busy in the week and this leads to a feeling of uselessness. Some ALTs are in a situation where even when they go to class they participate for ten minutes by reading from a book. This is a gross use of decent graduates or other qualified individuals. Most feel left out of the faculty by not being informed on schedules or even lessons and some are not even asked for input in making lesson plans. Aside from this the idea of an ALT within a curriculum that focuses mostly on reading and writing to pass exams is ridiculous. If the ALT was employed to support dedicated modules for conversation (where only conversation occurred and no writing or reading) this would make sense. Even the fact that ALTs are expected to teach grammar is a waste of the ALT as a resource as they receive no training in this area. (I do not count the orientation that JETs undertake when they first arrive as training). If there is a system whereby native speakers of a language are hired with no specific qualifications needed for teaching then those native speakers should be put to use doing all they are qualified to do: speaking their native language. If the Board of Education wants native speakers to teach grammar or anything else they should hire those qualified in teaching or provide sufficient training. The system does nothing to create cultural ties as ALTs are usually not accepted as a member of staff in the Japanese teachers room (the word 'pet' is often thrown around by ALTs to describe this). This feeling often filters down among the students and in my opinion is a result of two things. One is that Japanese society is still not sure how to treat foreigner (which is no fault of the ALT system) and the second is that most ALTs are thrown in at the deep end, completely unsure of the job they are doing. This does not help the case of portraying foreigners as competent beings. The general consensus is that most ALTs don't get to grips with their jobs until their third semester working by which point they have spent months messing up and apologising and reputations are already somewhat cemented. In sum, ALTs are a nice idea but at the moment its a waste of resources. The time and workload of an ALT are inefficiently managed, their role is unclear and ALTs are insufficiently prepared for work. Many ALTs cite their only satisfaction in work as getting through to a select few students who are dedicated to learning English and are not deterred by the lessons of an inexperienced and under-qualified 'teacher'. No ALT I have met has ever been comfortable with how they are treated by their colleagues, professionally speaking and most resort to being grateful for being included as the staff pet. I realise that some of this is directly related to the JET Programme but unfortunately that is the only position from which I can speak.</p>	1/8/2015 8:12 PM
11	<p>I'm glad it exists because it got me to Japan and allowed me to immerse myself in the language and culture and see the country. It is far from perfect though. Also, I think it's a good system with great promise, but it requires more polishes on the parts of MEXT, the boards of education, and the JTEs themselves. MEXT needs to more clearly define their goals for English, more clearly define how to teach those goals, update textbooks and other teaching materials with the active participation of native speakers, and be more open to trying out new teaching methods. The boards of education need to be more proactive about analyzing the efficacy of English classes and programs, better train elementary school teachers in how to teach English classes, be more forceful about making sure that JTEs actually use their ALTs, and provide more team teaching training. JTEs need to use their ALTs more, be more supportive, take the time to make efforts to communicate with the ALTs about class content (even if it's just sticky notes and emails), be more supportive towards the students about learning English, etc.</p>	1/8/2015 3:08 PM
12	<p>I think, much like the current English system in Japan, it is dangerously outdated. The ALT job position was designed for fresh college graduates to come to Japan for a few years and then return to their home countries. However, there are a growing number of ALTs (myself included) who decide to stay on for much longer and settle down here. The current system of year-to-year contracts, no pay-raises, no chances of promotion, among other things, is a major deterrent for foreign teachers who might otherwise be passionate about working at schools. Also, with such as system, it will become more and more difficult for the board of education to find and hire ALTs who are serious about their work.</p>	1/8/2015 2:58 PM
13	<p>It is a great idea in theory and is good for bringing foreigners into areas in Japan where they would never live thereby exposing Japanese people in the countryside to different types of people (in other words, cultural education). However, extremely limited opportunity to actually enhance students' communicative abilities, ALTs lack of training in TEFL/TESL, and many ALTs failure to take the job seriously (many view their time in Japan as a one or two year "gap-year" between graduate school) make the system ineffective in terms of English pedagogy.</p>	1/8/2015 2:52 PM
14	<p>I love this system, and I know it can work well, because I have worked with great JTEs in the past. We can work as a team and divide the work to have a great lesson.</p>	1/8/2015 2:44 PM
15	<p>I think it's a great system with a lot of potential, but that the hiring qualifications should perhaps be more strict. If an ALT is a bandaid, most ALTs are good bandaids (though some are the kind that fall off after 20 minutes, to use awkward metaphors), but the system we're sticking the bandaids on is a knife wound. Sure, it helps a little, but there are bigger problems at play than we can address.</p>	1/8/2015 10:45 AM

16	I think it is an interesting system. Personally, I question the true intent of the system as many people employed into the program are not qualified as English teachers and consequently may not provide a quality education when they are lead teachers in the team teaching classroom. Additionally, I think the use of the ALT widely varies. Partly because the need for an ALT will vary school to school, but also because I think JTE's may not know how to best utilize an ALT or if they do know, expectations aren't clearly communicated.	1/8/2015 9:30 AM
17	I think it has great intentions. I also think that education as a whole, worldwide, is in need of reformation. Singapore has excellent ideas and approaches.	1/8/2015 9:07 AM
18	Fine. But it would be better if the ALT will have an autonomy of the English lesson . In such case ALT's Japanese proficiency is a necessity .	1/8/2015 1:04 AM
19	it's working, especially in team teaching; ALTs should not be relegated to just doing the "tape recorder" job	1/7/2015 10:21 PM
20	It is and has always been flawed. It can be reformed. Staff at CLAIR have their hearts in the right place. There's just a lack of understanding between CLAIR and the ALT communities at this time. The program is a great experiment. It is successful and I believe it will continue to be so, but it could be more successful after proper investments are made.	1/7/2015 7:28 PM
21	In theory a great system. In practice, often very good.	1/7/2015 4:10 PM
22	-I think it would be a lot more beneficial to everyone involved if the ALT were stationed at only one or two schools. When you have a situation like mine, I work at seven schools; I think the ALT system loses a lot of its benefits.	1/7/2015 3:49 PM
23	I think it is good for students because the students really seem to enjoy my class.	1/7/2015 3:46 PM
24	I think it's broken.	1/7/2015 2:59 PM
25	It is basically good, but the huge failure of the Japanese system to produce English speakers, despite years and years of English training, is the fault of the university entrance system and JTEs reluctance to use new teaching methodologies (different from the way that they were taught), not the ALT system. Personally I think that ALTs improve any given student's chances of speaking English.	1/7/2015 2:53 PM
26	I am a private ALT and am not affiliated with JET or Interact. I also teach in a very rural area and never interact with other ALTs. So, I have only my experience to base this observation on. In short, I think the system needs to change to focus on bringing stronger teachers in and giving them more freedom and responsibility.	1/7/2015 10:18 AM
27	I think it has run its course. I think that in many schools, the English (or any other foreign language) level has progressed to a point where the ALT system needs to be discarded, and native teachers need to be brought in and given full control of their classroom. In schools where the English level has not progressed, the ALT system is still breaking down, because ALTs are expected to "do the impossible" - that is, teach and work with students who have already been convinced that they 1) hate foreign languages and 2) are terrible students. That is not the case, in my opinion - all people can learn - but the students have been bullied by social constructs into thinking that, in many low level schools. Given that, how is a native speaker realistically to change their opinion, when he or she may see the class sporadically, with very little support from the JTE, and with very long periods of absence in between? Even once per week is too little time for an ALT to change students' attitudes towards English. As such, ALTs in low level schools are set up for failure, whereas ALTs in high level schools are set up to be under-utilized and less than effective.	1/7/2015 9:54 AM
28	It's broken.	1/7/2015 8:56 AM
29	In theory, it's a good idea and I have greatly benefited from the program. Of course, it could be improved but not sure how that could be done realistically.	1/6/2015 11:22 PM
30	I think it can motivate students to think outside of their small towns, and it can challenge JTEs to constantly keep studying English. As a PA, I realise that this works better in some schools than others.	1/6/2015 5:51 PM
31	I think it is wonderful, but the system can be tweaked further perhaps to give more clarity in the roles of both the ALT and the JTE, so that both parties will be able to maximize the benefits of the system.	1/6/2015 5:45 PM
32	It could use some adjustment. Many JTEs don't know how to utilize an ALT, and we're often left to figure things out on our own with little training.	1/6/2015 1:08 PM
33	I think the potential for increasing students' language skills is incredible, but I think in many schools the JTE's don't know how to use the ALT appropriately. I understand that I have zero qualifications as an English teacher aside from simply being a native speaker, but that doesn't mean I don't have any ideas. Ideally, the JTE would allow the ALT more control in the classroom. However, every situation is definitely different.	1/6/2015 12:42 PM

34	I think ALTs should be enabled to bring more to the table in schools. JTEs often employ dated and ineffective techniques, and I feel as though the ALT population isn't always given the attention it deserves.	1/6/2015 11:59 AM
35	I think it works quite well for the most part. I wish I could see my students in 5 years and see how their English has improved.	1/6/2015 10:10 AM
36	Do you mean JET? I know of some private schools that have great systems but they are unique to each school. As far as JET goes, I think it is a huge waste of taxpayers' money in its current form but that it has the potential to be absolutely transformative. During my time on JET I was a regional advisor and AJET rep, so I was intimately aware of the circumstances of around 80 different ALTs and the majority of them were under-utilised, ostracized, bullied, bored or were themselves inadequately prepared and qualified for the job. I dealt with one case of an ALT whose school asked her to sit in a storage closet all day because "there's no room in the staff room and your presence makes other teachers uncomfortable". At the opposite end, I had some ALTs who ranted about trying to "correct" their JTE's English when what they were saying was actually grammatically incorrect. The hiring criteria are driven by the Foreign Ministry's priorities and are inappropriate for educational goals, and although some attempt was made in the most recent reforms to address that, the changes were insufficient for the magnitude of the problem. The one year contract renewable up to five years is an impediment to ALT effectiveness. It takes a year to get familiar with the education system and few ALTs are really good at their jobs until the second year. By the time an ALT has really settled into the community and established some good programs like letter exchanges, become confident and familiar with the staff and students and really on top of their role, they are expected to leave. Many JTEs complained to me that "training" a new ALT was too much effort and they didn't bother trying to get to know or use an ALT until they had been around for a couple of years. In my case the difference between ES and JHS was enormous. At ES I taught solo, designed the curriculum, was treated with respect and inclusion by the other teachers and had a wonderful relationship with the students. I think that was largely because ALTs were being newly introduced into the ES system at the time. In JHS there was a lot of cynicism about ALTs, initial resistance to letting me be active in classes and a sense of general negativity. Although I was able to overcome this and ended my four years with great relationships in the staffroom, much more participation in the classes and general good will it was a long hard battle and one I would not have won in one or two years.	1/6/2015 8:18 AM
37	It is good idea but could be improved upon. I have no doubt that for many students having an ALT in the classroom makes a big difference in their motivation and ability to learn English. I think one of the major flaws is that there is simply not enough training for the ALTs and the JTEs on who to effectively work together in the classroom.	1/6/2015 12:36 AM
38	I believe there is room for improvement. I also believe there should be more training for new ALTs who have little to no experience.	1/6/2015 12:24 AM
39	Its a good system if both JTE and ALT will have a good teamwork. And that they will not be dependent to the ALTs, for sometimes they expect too much from ALTs	1/6/2015 12:15 AM
40	It needs to be standardized so that all students, schools and JTE's are given the same quality educational benefits of ALT'S.	1/5/2015 10:30 PM
41	I think it's not a bad idea, but it is used poorly. A lot of that has to do with how Japanese education works, because I know other ALTs who actually are able to make differences. I guess it's just the luck of the draw on JTEs.	1/5/2015 10:07 PM
42	A joke. A nice idea, but needs so many changes. I feel like my job is akin to an "English mascot" and there is little value in what I do.	1/5/2015 9:29 PM
43	I think it could do with many improvements. I find many of the meetings to be a waste of time because participants don't take it seriously JTE's need to be better trained on how to TT [many of them will have had ALT's during THEIR schooling] ALT's need to be better used. They're here to work, they should be working.	1/5/2015 7:23 PM
44	It needs work, a lot of work. University students studying to become English teachers told me they never really learn anything about team teaching or even teaching in general, rather they learn a lot about grammar and translation. Most of them, even in good universities, seem to be oblivious to the challenges that EFL teachers face in Japan or abroad. In fact, they seem to have a severe lack of knowledge of the success and failures of EFL/ESL again within Japan and outside. Moreover, the "cultural ambassador" role is limited as students are taught about the world through what amounts to a series of slides. They do not engage the notion of being foreign and are never placed in a situation where they are not 100% comfortable. Ideas and "cultural" elements that are shown are those that mark Japan as unique and irrevocably different from other nations, so trying to broaden understanding faces the brick wall of nationalism quickly. These factors combine to create a near worthless system wherein ALTs are seen as a drain on finances rather than a tool. Teachers don't use ALTs or use them inefficiently, they themselves treating teaching as secondary to all the other tasks they are mandated with.	1/5/2015 7:00 PM

45	I think it could work well if it was better structured. I know I'm lucky because I get to create my own lessons instead of being just a human tape recorder. However if both Japanese and native English speakers worked together or showed input into each other's lessons I think it would be more beneficial. Two heads are better than one kind of thing. I have the ability and creativity but maybe the JTE has classroom knowledge and experience.	1/5/2015 6:57 PM
46	I see its purpose, but depending on the situation it can fall short and leave both sides unhappy or even damaged.	1/5/2015 6:47 PM
47	I think the idea of the system is a good one, but there are too many ALTs who are not self-starters and there is not enough training to help the ones who want to be better teachers. Unfortunately, I hear that CLAIR is stripping the JET Programme down. I am not sure how the program will evolve or survive if ALTs on JET are not going to be offered that much more than ALTs hired through the eikaiwa companies in terms of pay, counseling, etc.	1/5/2015 5:57 PM
48	As it is now, I think the ALT system could use a lot of changes. If our role is to simply expose students to foreigners and to hear native English, I believe the government is wasting it's money. I think in some schools the use of an ALT can be very successful, but from what I have observed first hand and heard about second hand, this is the exception. Generally ALTs add little value to the classroom. If the role of the ALT was clearly established, and learning outcomes reflected that, I think ALTs could be a lot more helpful. I also think that in order for any assistant teacher or teacher to be effective they need to build relationships with students . It is impossible to build meaningful relationships with students if you are teaching too many students (in my opinion, more than one school).	1/5/2015 5:55 PM
49	In its current state, we are a severely UNDERTapped resource .	1/5/2015 5:50 PM
50	Potentially it could be absolute gold dust. Currently it is largely wasted.	1/5/2015 5:42 PM
51	I think it's okay, but it can be better. Not sure how, though.	1/5/2015 5:35 PM
52	I think it needs serious review, especially with regards to the junior high school curriculum. Having a native speaker in the classroom is very valuable, but the structure of the curriculum and classes needs to be changed so that there is more talking time with those teachers.	1/5/2015 5:28 PM
53	Flawed but better than nothing.	1/5/2015 5:28 PM
54	Well intentioned, but deeply flawed	1/5/2015 5:25 PM
55	There are so many, so I cannot comment to all. the JET program would benefit extremely from a little bit more ALT teacher training in the early stages of the course - even a few basic lesson frameworks and ideas on instruction or task giving from CELTA - which could be given in two hour workshops at orientation would vastly help. The different backgrounds and native English source of the ALT can be very valuable. The ALT's on JET are generally well vetted, but consist of many inexperienced teachers. As a cultural exchange, the system is generally very good.	1/5/2015 5:09 PM
56	It is good on paper but very flawed in reality. It needs work.	1/5/2015 5:00 PM
57	Slowly improving, but young JTEs need more TT instruction, practice and training time before they are thrown into their first job placement.	1/5/2015 4:59 PM
58	Very hit or miss, love my own current situation but have heard horror stories from others, am thankful I am not in their shoes sort of way but also wondering how things can be made better for the overall ALT experience	1/5/2015 4:42 PM
59	I like the ALT system	1/5/2015 4:24 PM
60	I think like all things it could use improvement. Part of the problem is beyond an ALTs control - curriculum objectives, text book selection, and frequency of visits are all outside of our control. Generally I think it's a good thing, but it's frustrating to want to change and improve things for the sake of the children's learning experience but not really having any power or opportunity to do so. It's never going to be perfect, and it's possible the system won't ever change, but at minimum I think it's a great way to expose students to some cultural variety and spread cultural awareness.	1/5/2015 4:22 PM
61	There needs to be more definition of the roles the ALT is expected to perform. Many JTE's are unsure as to what role they wish the ALT to perform and are concerned that increasing the ALT role will, rightly or wrongly, increase their workload.	1/5/2015 4:07 PM
62	I think it is problematic and needs improvement. Changing the quantity and quality of ALT has little effect on education as they are much underused. There is no room in the curriculum for multicultural lectures and foreigners are not qualified to be educators just because they are native speakers. Japanese English teachers in general do not have the skills or the desire to communicate fully with ALTs (or to any foreigner) but they are the ones with the teaching license and they are the ones who write the lesson plans and monitor their students.	1/5/2015 4:07 PM

63	I think the ALT system is valuable in the classroom.	1/5/2015 4:06 PM
64	It's good but more training needs to be put in place to teach Japanese teachers how to effectively use an alt. Especially in elementary. I have often been told in junior high 'oh this lesson there are no games so i don't need you'...an alt's job shouldn't just be games it should be helping students. My job shouldn't be sitting in the staff room. The use of alts varies so much from school to school, something should be done to stop this variation.	1/5/2015 4:03 PM
65	I think it's good for students gets the chance to talk to foreigners and it will give them more confidence to speak. At first, they are shy but as it goes by they start talking and asking questions and for all you know they get comfortable around you.	1/5/2015 3:49 PM
66	I think it has the potential to be a good system. I think it's a good idea to have native speakers in the classroom. But JTEs need to be trained in how to work with/use an ALT. Likewise, maybe ALTs should have more training or Japanese ability.	1/5/2015 3:48 PM
67	It needs to be reviewed because it seems like it is still living in the 1980's. Also during orientation they should put everyone through a basic 2 week TESOL course. It is also frustrating coming into a school in July, half way through a year. It would be better if placements started in April with the new school year but I doubt that that will happen as it doesn't line up with the USA college year.	1/5/2015 3:45 PM
68	I think, though it may be flawed, it is a system without which the language learning in countries without ALTs would suffer	1/5/2015 3:39 PM
69	I think it has a lot of potential. However, if JTEs continue to undermine the ability and benefits of ALTs in their classrooms then I think the system will remain broken. I feel there needs to be a change in mindset, which will obviously take time and committed teachers. I do feel that I make a difference at my school but I know I could make more of a difference. And I know other ALTs who are not used, ignored, and left to study at their desks. Overall I feel the system needs to change.	1/5/2015 3:26 PM
70	I believe that for Japan, it has been successful.	1/5/2015 3:23 PM
71	I'm still too early into my program to have a hard and fast idea. However, it seems to me that it is too varied and unregulated. I know some ALTs who are required to work until well beyond their working hours nearly every day while others get sent home often because there is nothing for them to do. Some of us have to plan everything about our classes from scratch and are not allowed to use the textbook at all while others can only solely rely on textbook material or even are a part of the planning process and don't know what they will teach until five minutes before class starts. It seems that the ALT responsibilities are so varied it is almost as if we do not hold the same position at times.	1/5/2015 3:18 PM
72	It is poorly designed and the implementation is incomplete. There is a complete lack of interest in long-term teacher development and retention due to a disinterest in having capable teachers . The cost-cutting measures have led to teachers with questionable English skills and non-existent teaching skills. To maintain stockholder value and a large and unnecessary bureaucracy means ALTs need to work multiple jobs to survive, while the government is charge far more than they should be for a poor performance system.	1/5/2015 3:18 PM
73	I think it's broken. I think it should be more consistent across Japan. I think it's ridiculous to have ALT's teach from the Japanese English textbooks. I have no idea what the students have already covered and no one will tell me. I think it would be better if class sizes were ~20 students (versus the 40 I regularly have). I think the focus on entrance exams motivates students to learn English, but demotivates ALTs to teach English. I think teaching with so many JTEs is extremely difficult. I also think it is extremely difficult to be placed at more than one school. I don't like that ALTs start in the middle of the year.	1/5/2015 3:03 PM
74	Sometimes, I think it to be rather ineffective on both sides. The ALT is not properly trained or equipped for the task and the school, primarily the JTEs, is not trained on how to utilize an ALT on their staff. Injecting ALTs as a last-ditch effort to cure Japan's ailing English education system is a misguided goal. ALTs could be useful in a classroom, but the execution just isn't there. Rather than pump exorbitant amounts of money into sending over a horde of untrained fresh graduates, I wonder whether the money might be better spent toward training their own teachers, who too often lack fluency, confidence, and complete understanding in the language. If the students have a competent teacher, the quality of education can, hopefully, only improve from there.	1/5/2015 2:59 PM
75	It's good in theory, and has GREAT potential. When I learned Japanese in college, my department only hired native speakers to conduct the practical classes, which helped me and my classmates with common issues, such as pronunciation, meaning, comprehension, etc. we were able to receive immediate feedback about what we said right or wrong and how to correct it. I think the ALT system was created to allow for this, however it is entirely broken. Without any real regulation or consistency, loads of ALTs are essentially wasted.	1/5/2015 2:53 PM
76	Its a great idea, but at JET we are taught one thing and in practise in the school JTE have other ideas. There is miscommunication	1/5/2015 2:49 PM

77	It's very expensive, and very ineffectively used in the schools. Teachers are under pressure to meet targets, so our influence is not always positive or conducive to their goals. I have small schools so I have a lot of interaction with my students in and out of classrooms. This works well for them and me, and my BOE is happy with this. I think ultimately it hinges on the ALT and Teacher relationship. Unfortunately it is not always a winning combination, but I usually feel this is down to the ALT. We are a support member or tool for teachers to use, albeit an expensive one. We have to fulfil this role, before seeking new challenges, but many ALTs are not clear about this, their role or the teacher's expectations of them. The application process and screening system varies greatly between home nations and as such there is an element of pot luck as to the ALT a school is given, as all ALT's bring different qualities to the role, there is an element of 'has the right tool/ part been sent to the right job', unfortunately I often think some schools and their ALTs are mismatched. This in turn creates disharmony and a negative impression which the Teachers carry with them. Also, as we drop it and fly back out again, we don't really have to face the responsibility of whether the English programmes have been successfully delivered to our students. I think it need a reform, but I think the methodology of teaching English here does too.	1/3/2015 9:56 PM
78	It is a good system as it allows students to meet and engage with foreign people. I wish I had experienced the same	12/31/2014 5:40 AM
79	I think it is a good idea in theory but has some kinks that need to be worked out.	12/30/2014 6:59 AM
80	There are plus and minus to every situation and places where improvements can be made	12/22/2014 10:41 PM
81	I think there should be ALT's. I do believe it helps on some level. Of course if the ALT's had some actual teacher training they might be better utilized. Also, eliminating katakana readings would be marvelous i.e. sports vs. supotsu.	12/22/2014 6:35 PM
82	I don't know.... Now I've got this far, I am wondering if I should have filled this in. Think it is a valuable experience for students and teachers and a great opportunity if it works well. Team teaching done properly can give the students a great role model (the jte speaking english)	12/22/2014 10:44 AM
83	It's very good, but we need help from above. The recent changes from MEXT were a huge leap in the right direction, but in my experience they're not being routinely implemented, and there's been no change in *perception* - many teachers still think teaching English grammar in Japanese and doing nothing else is more than acceptable as an English class, and that students wont be living or visiting abroad so why do they need anything more.	12/20/2014 12:12 PM
84	I have stop teaching for 2 years now.	12/19/2014 10:07 PM
85	Again, I could give you 10,000 words on this.	12/19/2014 7:13 PM
86	Great idea, but everything has its flaws.	12/19/2014 5:20 PM
87	I don't think I am familiar enough with it to make an educated answer. I will say that I don't feel at SHS level that I am an assistant. I feel more like a part-time teacher. I don't have nearly as much work as the other teachers but I still write my lesson plans, I have made and marked exams, and I am in charge of the full 50 minutes that I have with my class. If the JTE wants to talk to them about something they ask me if that's OK.	12/19/2014 3:21 PM
88	Needs to be improved	12/19/2014 2:45 PM
89	I think it's good, but they should solidify the purpose of the ALT. The JET program take the view that ALTs should primarily be involved in international exchange, so ALTs don't need education experience, but I do so much teaching that I wished I had some education background . Even a summer course or handbook would be helpful. I think that JTEs should receive training on how to use ALTs in their classroom, because many still seem unsure of how to work with ALTs	12/19/2014 10:51 AM
90	It's a great way to improve communicative abilities and exchange culture. If an ALT system was present in America, I know for sure I would have improved my language abilities in high school.	12/19/2014 10:30 AM
91	It's no substitute for JETs having fluent English. Many ALTs are not well trained as teachers. Ones with teaching experience or skills are rare exceptions. Japan should focus on encourage JETs to study abroad in order to gain confidence in their English skills. In many foreign countries, one cannot even be certified to teacher a second language without spending at least six months abroad of immerse study. That being said, the cultural exchange that takes place between ALTs and students is priceless are irreplaceable. Having ALTs in support positions in the school (coaches, club leaders, homework helpers, etc) may reap greater benefit.	12/19/2014 9:29 AM
92	Different	12/19/2014 7:29 AM
93	It's broken, but it's just a part of the broken English system in Japan.	12/18/2014 11:16 PM

94	It's a wonderful example of Native Speakerism at work. Simply because we are native speakers of English we are valued more than the trained Japanese teachers. It's true they don't treat me like a real teacher, but when it comes to actual English ability, my English is valued above every other teacher's despite the fact that many of them are proficient and are aware of grammatical rules with I am not familiar with. Also, the revolving door system they have in place makes it difficult for people who want to stay in Japan for more than several years. ALTs are disposable and should be replaced often before their "newness" or "foreign-ness" disappears too much.	12/18/2014 10:21 PM
95	It's a fair system that should be given higher importance by the country, city BOE's through higher compensation and benefits so we'll be more enormously effective in grooming Japan's future leaders.	12/18/2014 10:12 PM
96	The ALT system fails at both the Foreign Ministry's and MEXT's apparent intentions. In terms of exposure to international diversity, students are indeed exposed to more foreigners and, through them, to foreign perspectives; however, the way these exposures are currently handled within the ALT system, they overwhelmingly confirm Japanese cultural myths and stereotypes about foreigners (native-speakerism included) rather than challenge them. In terms of English education, as mentioned in previous responses, even if ALTs are viewed in the light of paraprofessional teachers (restricted to assisting a lead teacher, never leading), even that most basic benefit (of being an assistant of any kind) is often overlooked and wasted. JTEs are not trained to work well with each other, much less with an ALT. In fact, at the SHS level, T-T is often perceived of as a waste of time educationally by both JTEs and ALTs, as evidenced by comments such as: (ALT) "My JTE doesn't tell me anything, so I just play games with the kids. I figure they need a break." (JTE to ALT) "For T-T, just plan lessons that help the kids like English." Or (JTE) "None of this other ALTs lessons were any good, but we couldn't do anything to change it because, you know, T-T is the ALT's lesson." I think that (native-speaking) ALTs can provide many positive benefits to Japanese education, but the present system must be overhauled in order to do so, providing greater training for all parties, clearer guidance, greater time set aside for meeting and planning among all teachers, etc.	12/18/2014 9:23 PM
97	Putting native speakers with no teaching experience and no knowledge of TESOL and no Japanese experience in a school and expecting an experienced Japanese teacher to babysit them and teach with them is a terrible idea. If ALTs had teaching experience then they could make more of a difference in their jobs	12/18/2014 8:51 PM
98	It has good potential, but frankly we are underused and overpaid.	12/18/2014 8:47 PM
99	It could work but there are too many variables to guarantee its success	12/18/2014 7:25 PM
100	Variable.	12/18/2014 6:48 PM
101	Unnecessary. Well, ALTs should at least have some sort of teaching qualifications, if not they really should be delegated to tape-recorder. But if they did that, they would have to give them more responsibility, which is unlikely	12/18/2014 6:44 PM
102	Absolutely redundant. I feel we would be of more use teaching and help in the JTEs directly and not teaching students at all.	12/18/2014 5:18 PM
103	I think it is a great idea but the JTE's need to know how to utilise ALT's better.	12/18/2014 4:16 PM
104	I think it is a wonderful system but the variance between implementation by each school district and each JTE and home room teacher makes the system over all not very effective as a whole. There is minimal support for Japanese homeroom teachers and a lack of emphasis on English being a useful subject of study.	12/18/2014 4:08 PM
105	As explained in an earlier question!!	12/18/2014 4:03 PM
106	They could stand to be more particular about hiring practices and testing.	12/18/2014 3:48 PM
107	It is good but I wish we had a more important place in the English classes (like coming more often to know better the students)	12/18/2014 3:42 PM
108	I think it is a good idea, but maybe not fleshed out quite the way it should be. When learning a foreign language, it can be helpful having a native speaker around. I think it helps mitigate some of the intimidation of being around a native speaker of a language by getting children used to being around at a younger age as they learn.	12/18/2014 3:24 PM
109	I think we are mostly under qualified and the screening process is ineffective. I met a lot of people that lack the fortitude and enthusiasm to teach effectively in a different culture. In short, the progr only helps bring cultural diversity to Japan. The English proficiency gains are minimal at best.	12/18/2014 2:45 PM
110	Good in a way that they are useful in the second language acquisition or learning. In most cases(public schools), it's really a big assistance for the JTEs, because most of the JTEs were not really familiar with the English Language. In my experience, the JTE is a good teacher but not competent. They still need more intensive and extensive learning too or they must really work hand in hand with the ALT.	12/18/2014 2:24 PM

111	I think a native speaker is necessary for language learning. They do however need to be utilized beyond being human tape recorders.	12/18/2014 2:03 PM
112	I believe that in principle it is a very good idea. In practice it can be flawed.	12/18/2014 1:58 PM
113	It's a scam. ALT companies cheat us by giving us small pay and not paying our National Health Insurance.	12/18/2014 1:32 PM
114	The goals of the program are reasonable, but the implementation needs to be more thoroughly regularized. There are too many unknowns when it comes to the position until one arrives at their workplace for the first time, and the lack of consistency between expectations and responsibilities at different placements makes quality control exceedingly difficult, not to mention training and preparation.	12/18/2014 11:43 AM
115	It's a joke.	12/18/2014 10:56 AM
116	It needs some fixing, but what really needs to be overhauled is the entire English education system itself. Send JTEs abroad to English-speaking countries, allow them to foster the communicative skills necessary for English language teaching. Too many JTEs fail to speak English adequately, and too many ALTs are too confused or indifferent to say or do anything about it, myself included. The students focus on tests too much, which harms them in that they have few opportunities to practice real English conversation and see its practical application at work. All in all, ALTs are necessary to introduce native English and internationalization to small communities, but JTEs need to be improved.	12/18/2014 5:53 AM
117	A good system that can be very fruitful, if	12/18/2014 5:15 AM
118	Sinking ship	12/18/2014 2:40 AM
119	Not perfect, but no way to fix it. Can't raise standards, no money.	12/18/2014 1:09 AM
120	I think that it can be a great asset to English education, but I think it HUGELY DEPENDS on the people taking part in it. To get the most out of an ALT, the combination of JTE and ALT must be a good match. ALTs must be willing to engage outside of the classroom, while JTEs need to be willing to share their classrooms and use their ALTs as more than just a parrot. The system can be wonderful, and it can be ineffective.	12/17/2014 9:56 PM
121	In general, it does seem to work and the system has improved greatly in recent years. When I came to Japan in 1992, the job was not taken so seriously by many ALTs (myself included many times!) but recently, the ALTs I have encountered have great pride in their job and in their students.	12/17/2014 8:48 PM
122	In preschool, it's great. When I was an ALT in jr high (I worked in 7 different schools) it varied a lot from school to school. Some teachers do a great job using the ALT. Others do not. Some teachers leave all the planning, etc., to the ALT, who isn't usually qualified to do that.	12/17/2014 7:27 PM
123	I think it would be fine if it was used as a serious tool to help students express themselves and really interact I'm English. I find that the current system underutilizes ALTs or uses them improperly. Japan doesn't need ALTs under the current "learn about other cultures through English" focus of teaching. If the present system shifts towards real and meaningful communication, I think ALTs could actually make a big difference.	12/17/2014 7:20 PM
124	I think it's a great idea in theory, that works well on personal levels to a great extent, but in practice doesn't actually raise the level of Japan's English abilities. It seems to do quite a good job of producing international marriages/children!	12/17/2014 7:17 PM
125	It seems to work just fine.	12/17/2014 7:15 PM
126	I'd like to see trained and qualified teachers doing language classes in schools - whether they are NS or NNS. Japan needs to break away from the NS as the gold standard role model of English, as D Graddol mentions in his work. Doing so would not only help advance language education, but also make Japanese less sensitive about "perfect" English.	12/17/2014 6:58 PM
127	It really depends on how the teachers view ALTs and foreigners. Our main purpose here is to expand our students' horizons, of course, but it should be equally important to realize the impression our coworkers may have of us. A disgruntled teacher can negate an ALT's effectiveness, which is a waste in so many ways.	12/17/2014 6:46 PM
128	It's a bad system which takes advantage of teachers by underpaying them. ALT isn't a stable job.	12/17/2014 6:41 PM
129	It is ridiculous. I think it has potential, but at least in my city, it is completely misused and is a complete waste of everyone's time.	12/17/2014 6:30 PM
130	I think it COULD work... but major changes need to be made!!!	12/17/2014 5:46 PM

131	I think that the system has its heart in the right place, so to speak, but the experience of each ALT varies so greatly that I'm not sure whether or not we're truly effective in the long run. I think that ALTs should receive more training on the Japanese school and office culture so they're not so blind-sighted when they begin, and I think we should also receive more training on language education. In addition, I think that JTEs should receive more training on effective team teaching methods and the experiences of ALTs (for example, what office procedures may be new to them or how little Japanese they can read) to remind them that, in many cases, they are an ALT's lifeline (or at least an important point of contact).	12/17/2014 5:32 PM
132	In my situation, I think it works pretty well. I've heard of other people in different situations where it's just a mess, or where they don't even WANT the ALT present. I think that it can be very effective under the right circumstances.	12/17/2014 4:32 PM
133	I don't think it's great. There is so much opportunity for ALTs to be used in a great way, yet JTEs are ultimately unsure of how to use them.	12/17/2014 3:45 PM
134	It's a good idea but a lot of the curriculum are outdated and the children could learn a lot more and a lot faster if they were not held back by the curriculum	12/17/2014 3:23 PM
135	Fine, if they are being utilized	12/17/2014 3:13 PM
136	I think it has good intentions, but some flaws. I have a very fortunate placement that respects what I can offer to students and staff. I also have enough motivation (and get bored quickly) to find something to do if I find myself sitting on my hands with no direct task. Some ALTs are perpetual desk-warmers, present only because the school wants to have an ALT on the roster and never see them in class. That is not remotely useful to anyone. Some JTEs also clearly dislike working with ALTs, and can choose to cancel classes or ignore them completely. In general, it is beneficial to students and staff. In specific cases, however, the under-utilization can be frustrating for all parties. I am not sure how to address this in terms of improvement, but safe to say I am happy where I was placed.	12/17/2014 2:58 PM
137	I think it has good intentions, but it really should be a 2 year (at least) commitment. It takes awhile to get used to your different schools and to learn what works/what doesn't work. Also, some kids take a long time to warm up to a stranger before they are willing to speak, and if ALTs go in and out every year, that can be scary for kids like that.	12/17/2014 2:55 PM
138	I explained this in #17	12/17/2014 2:44 PM
139	I think that it is, overall, a good system. But I think their needs to be more training before we are placed in schools.	12/17/2014 2:36 PM
140	Honestly? I think in some rare cases it works, but it's 80% broken.	12/17/2014 2:33 PM
141	Love it. Because I love my job and the kids always seem to be happy to be in class with an ALT	12/17/2014 2:18 PM
142	I think it achieves what it is meant to achieve albeit not to the extent some of us would hope for. I'd be very interested to see statistics on what the overall impact of an ALT is on Japanese students learning English.	12/17/2014 1:58 PM
143	It would help to provide lessons to the JTE to study the best ways they can use ALTs in their classrooms. Otherwise, it's an important endeavour. There is no space for introverted ALTs in Japan. Rather than educators, MEXT would do better to send improv actors to Japan.	12/17/2014 1:54 PM
144	Its a great concept, i just think that many teachers dont know how to properly utilize their ALTs in the classroom.	12/17/2014 1:43 PM
145	I wish that ALTs got more training in education , from the government and not just senior ALTs. However, I like the ALT system, and I think that the presence of an ALT in a school can be a very positive experience for the students. It's not perfect, but what is?	12/17/2014 1:31 PM
146	It's good if you work directly for the school or BOE. Private companies screw over their ALTs.	12/17/2014 1:26 PM
147	I think the basis behind it is great, but certainly could use improvement.	12/17/2014 1:25 PM
148	I think it needs some work but overall can be a good way for the Japanese school system to bring in ideas to spice up English teaching.	12/17/2014 1:11 PM
149	It works relatively well.	12/17/2014 1:05 PM
150	I think as a concept it has many potential benefits, but the JET Program could do more to help districts understand how they could utilize ALTs to enhance their classroom and students' interest and abilities in English.	12/17/2014 12:32 PM

151	Nice try! Having a non japanese around the school does make the kids think about what lies outside their world. This is good. Having 2 teachers in big classes is good. JTEs can learn about CLT from the native speaker. Competitive bidding by agencies should be a crime.	12/17/2014 12:29 PM
152	It's pretty useless in its current form. It has great potential, but is not being used effectively in it's current form. Teachers don't care, ALTs don't care, and the system doesn't work.	12/17/2014 12:20 PM
153	I think a lot of things about it. I want to hope that it is useful to schools and helpful, but I really don't know...being that I am a JET, I feel it is a dead end job, there is a ceiling that you hit very quickly. After I finish as a JET, there is no incentive to try to work as an ALT for me, since it seems most private companies that hire have much lower pay than my current spot and don't have the benefits like subsidized housing. I wish they would standardize the system more, so that there could be a job description of what to expect and a way for evaluations to be done. I am currently not evaluated on my performance nor have a job description beyond 'assist with English' and so have no idea if my efforts are valuable or useful. All I know is that on the 20th of every month I get a check for showing up to work. I find it interesting that most ALT jobs do not require any qualifications for teaching and more and more, they don't even require you to be a native speaker of the language taught. I think reforms are needed, but it is an easy way to be able to live in Japan and experience it.	12/17/2014 12:07 PM
154	It could be improved if ALTs were given more responsibility, as the ones that don't get used properly are just a waste of time and money. Otherwise I do think Japan needs to become more aware of other cultures and more accepting of their differences.	12/17/2014 12:05 PM
155	ALTs are often ineffectively used because JTEs are given no team-teaching instruction in university. Also, JTEs often don't (or can't) define the purpose of having an ALT in the classroom. If JTEs don't understand the benefits of having an ALT, they'll never use them in class or tell the ALT to teach whatever they want. However, JTEs were to be given instruction at the university level on the purpose of having an ALT, they could more seamlessly incorporate team-teaching into their English curriculum while accomplishing the educational goals of their English course.	12/17/2014 11:56 AM
156	I believe ALTs should have access to training and possibly there should be a requirement for a qualification. There needs to be more focus on jte ~ alt communication, maybe with regular boe headed workshops etc. It is no golden arrow for students learning english but if implimented effectively there is a role for alts	12/17/2014 11:40 AM
157	Pretty good	12/17/2014 11:35 AM
158	I think its a good way to get kids exposed or aware of cultural differences outside of the Japanese classroom.... Ive met some adults who have had ALTs before as a kid and therefore is more able to meet foreigners with an open mind. It isnt a perfect system though, as I think JTEs need training to understand how they can use an ALT to the best potential for the students... And sometimes honestly an ALT isnt needed if the school education system is so intent on following a textbook to the word. There needs to be a balance I think.	12/17/2014 11:33 AM
159	I think native teachers should be teaching the English classes, from first grade up, completely in English, with radically different methods.	12/17/2014 11:26 AM
160	I think there needs to be more training for jtes to learn how they can use their ALTs. I think ALTs also need to go through more teaching training to be effective.	12/17/2014 11:19 AM
161	Good	12/17/2014 11:14 AM
162	System?	12/17/2014 10:53 AM
163	I loved being an ALT. I loved being able to go into the public schools and teach what I know.	12/17/2014 9:14 AM
164	It seems like a waste. A waste of funds that could be spent on properly training JTEs. A waste of talented foreign staff getting hit with a contract cap just when they were becoming effective.	12/16/2014 11:24 PM
165	I like it I think we should do it more in the US to teach languages from other countries so long as they are being used right. But the thing is in America usually we hire teachers that actually speak the language natively so it's unusual to be an assistant to an English teacher who doesn't speak English fluently or sometimes who doesn't speak English at all. I feel like they are necessary in Japan in order to improve English language comprehension.	12/16/2014 6:47 PM
166	I think ALTs should be better trained before entering the classroom. It would be nice if more ALTs had teaching experience before they came. I think ALTs and JTEs should train together more. There are a lot of flaws with the system. Also the problem Japan has with English education can't be solved by throwing a native speaker into the mix. The greatest issue, given that MEXT's presumed goal is to produce competent English communicators, is the testing system, which does not encourage the kind of language exploration which leads to acquisition.	12/16/2014 5:46 PM
167	It is beneficial. A native speaker is necessary. The system is flawed though.	12/16/2014 5:32 PM

168	<p>It has its advantages but needs much improvement. My wife, who's Japanese, never had ALTs in her JHS or HS English classes. She wishes now that she had. So compared to 2 or 3 decades ago when my wife was in school, at least kids nowadays have chances to have ALTs in their classes. Something my wife never had back in the 1980s and early 1990s. When I was in Korea, most cities and decent-sized towns had a permanent ALT-like foreign English teacher "stationed" at their school for an entire school year. The ALT didn't "bounce around" from one school to another, like they typically do in Japan. In my two years in Korea, I taught at the same boys' high school every day, and nowhere else. The girls' high school in town had their own ALT. So did the boys JHS and the girls JHS. The elementary schools in town had 5 or 6 ALTs who rotated from school to school, but only every two months or so. So, the way the Koreans do it (or at least did it when I was there) involved more ALTs in a given city/town, with greater numbers of chances for the kids to have English lessons with a native speaker. Also, in Korea, I taught the entire class almost all the time. The vice principal and the head English teacher told me that I would, on the very first day I met them. So I knew it was going to be a good year! I'd been teaching English for a pretty long time at that point, so they knew that I knew what I was doing and just let me go with it. That happens a lot in Japan too, but I feel like more of a "guest" every time I go to a school now. In Korea, as I was at the same school every day for my entire contract, I felt like more of a part of the school.</p>	12/16/2014 5:14 PM
169	<p>I feel JET has done what it set out to do. It wanted to provide access to foreigners to even the most remote areas of Japan, and it does. It's not perfect and ALTs aren't a panacea, but I think it's pretty good overall.</p>	12/16/2014 4:23 PM