

## Supports and Challenges to Language Teachers' Self-efficacy at Japanese Universities

メタデータ	言語: English 出版者: 公開日: 2014-03-31 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: Prayer, Max メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	<a href="https://doi.org/10.14945/00007658">https://doi.org/10.14945/00007658</a>

# Supports and Challenges to Language Teachers' Self-efficacy at Japanese Universities

日本の大学における語学教師の自己効力感  
(self-efficacy) を強める要素および弱める要素

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**Abstract:** One type of belief that has gained popularity in educational psychology research over the past four decades and that is informative when examining teachers' attitudes and capabilities, is that of self-efficacy. Research has established that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs have a considerable impact on a wide variety of features that are important to both teaching and learning. The current study, in order to complete the essential groundwork for a new and methodologically sound quantitative teacher self-efficacy scale, qualitatively examined what potentially supports and challenges Japanese university English language teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Four themes found in the data (Autonomy, Colleagues, Money, and Students) spoke to qualities that could potentially support teachers' self-efficacy. Three themes found in the data (Administration, Students, and Limited-term Contracts) spoke to qualities that could potentially weaken teachers' self-efficacy.

**Keywords:** Self-efficacy, Teacher interviews, English education, Japanese universities

論文概要：過去 40 年間にわたる教育心理学に関わる研究において広く支持を得ており、また、教師の態度および能力を検討する際に有益でもある考え方の 1 つが、自己効力感 (self-efficacy) の強さである。教師の持つ自己効力感の強さが教育と学習の両方にとって重要なさまざまな面に大きな影響を与えることは、研究によって立証されている。本研究は、教師の自己効力感に関し、理論的根拠を持つ定量的尺度を新しく設定するために不可欠の基本原則を完成させるため、日本の大学の英語教師の持つ自己効力感に対し、それを強める可能性のある要素および弱める可能性がある要素について、定性的な調査を行った。得られたデータから見いだされた 4 つのテーマ（自律性、同僚、金銭、学生）が、教師の自己効力感を強める可能性のある要素を示し、得られたデータから見いだされた 3 つのテーマ（管理業務、学生、任期付き契約）が、教師の自己効力感を弱める可能性のある要素を示していた。

キーワード：自己効力感、教師のインタビュー、英語教育、日本の大学

## Introduction

Self-efficacy is concerned with people's beliefs in their capabilities to produce given attainments (Bandura, 1997) and a growing body of literature has provided strong evidence that teachers' self-efficacy, which is defined as “a teacher's

judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student learning” (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001, p.783), is related to commitment to teaching (Coladarci, 1992), teachers' persistence in the teaching field (Milner, 2002), and teacher burnout (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000). Bandura (1997) suggested that efficacious people show more effort and persistence when faced with

difficult tasks.

Over the last fifteen years, there has been much debate among academics about the maturing of the teacher self-efficacy construct in terms of both meaning and measure (Henson, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). As Labone (2004) explains, it is sensible therefore, to explore new research methods and models that may extend our understanding of teacher efficacy and hence move teacher efficacy research into adulthood. In his definitive Paradigm Wars paper Nate Gage (1989) presents numerous paradigms in educational research that may potentially limit or extend our understanding of teaching. The study of teacher efficacy has not been immune from the influence of these competing paradigms (Labone, 2004).

As such, teacher self-efficacy research, grounded largely within Locus of Control (Rotter, 1966) and Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), has been set within the conceptual and methodological approaches of psychology. Such focus has resulted in teacher efficacy research being dominated by quantitative methodologies exploring antecedents and consequences of self-efficacy. While such research has been successful in establishing the power of teacher efficacy, Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998, p. 203) note that recognition of the limitations of such research is necessary "to expand and enrich conceptions of teacher efficacy to include other perspectives and the methodologies appropriate for their investigation." In other words, qualitative methods have been severely lacking within the teacher self-efficacy research. Methods such as interviewing, focus groups, observation, etc... are critical for not only providing a clearer picture of teacher self-efficacy, but also essential in expanding and contextualizing quantitative results. Additionally, the construction of quantitative scales designed to measure teacher self-efficacy requires

necessary preliminary work of a qualitative nature to identify the challenges and impediments the teachers face. Teachers must be asked in open-ended interviews and pilot questionnaires to describe the things that make it hard for them to complete their day-to-day necessary activities. Once these challenges are identified, only then can they be built into quantitative efficacy items.

Finally, despite the well-documented importance of fostering teacher self-efficacy and in light of its predictive benefits to instructors and students, an internationally accepted examination of teacher self-efficacy at universities in Japan has never been addressed. Several smaller scale teacher self-efficacy studies have been conducted in Japan by Japanese researchers, but none have specifically focused on language teaching at universities (李榮晚, 2002; 鈴木真雄 & 松田惺, 2002; 淵上克義, 今井奈緒, 西山久子, & 鎌田雅史, 2006; 真金薫子, 2010; 谷口弘一, & 田中宏二, 2011). Bandura (1997) cautioned against assessing self-efficacy by using measures that do not consider domain specific dimensions, and in fact, trying to measure the self-efficacy of Japanese university teachers at this point in time would prove futile, as no appropriate instrument exists. Teachers, for example, who judge themselves highly efficacious teaching English grammar in a junior high school classroom with 40 students, might be much less self-assured of their efficacy to teach a 15-person university seminar on English debate, and vice versa. In other words, there is a dilemma because no currently available measure of teacher self-efficacy encapsulates not only the work, but also the work environment at Japanese universities. The development of such a questionnaire is challenging, given that self-efficacy is not uniform across different subjects or domains of instructional functioning (Bandura, 1997), and a self-efficacy measure designed for one type of teacher in a specific context is not necessarily

appropriate for another. Furthermore, the findings of this study could and most likely overlap with other disciplines within the university spectrum; however, in order to satisfy the domain specificity emphasized by Bandura (1997), the current study puts its stress on English language teachers only. Therefore, in order to complete the essential groundwork to pave the way for a new quantitative teacher self-efficacy scale, the main purpose of this study is to qualitatively investigate what potentially supports and challenges Japanese university English language teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. The following two research questions were posited:

1. What potentially supports strong language teacher self-efficacy beliefs?
2. What potentially challenges language teacher self-efficacy beliefs?

## Methodology

### Participants

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 English language teachers currently teaching at Japanese universities. The teachers were selected using a stratified purposeful sampling method. Stratified purposeful sampling is a non-random sampling strategy, where the researcher selects information-rich cases for in-depth study (Patton, 2001). This sampling strategy allowed me to help illustrate characteristics of particular subgroups of interest and facilitate comparison between different groups. There were eight male and four female university teachers who were interviewed in this study. Seven teachers were tenured (i.e., they hold permanent positions) and five were on non-renewable limited-term contracts (see participant information below for the exact length of contract). Seven were native Japanese speakers and five were native English speakers. Finally, two teachers had between zero and ten years of English

teaching experience in Japan, seven teachers had ten to twenty years of experience, and three teachers had more than twenty years of experience. Table 1 displays the bio-information of the teachers who participated in the interviews. Under Table 1 is a more detailed description of each participant and their specific teaching situation. The names listed are pseudonyms to protect the identities of the participants.

Table 1. *Teacher Bio-Information*

Name	Gender	Tenured	Nationality	Experience
Robert	Male	No	American	14 years
William	Male	Yes	American	11 years
Matt	Male	No	Australian	12 years
Kenta	Male	Yes	Japanese	25 years
Masato	Male	No	Japanese	27 years
Akira	Male	Yes	Japanese	12 years
Kohei	Male	Yes	Japanese	17 years
Yoshi	Male	Yes	Japanese	6 years
Kate	Female	Yes	American	23 years
Michelle	Female	No	American	10 years
Yuka	Female	Yes	Japanese	16 years
Rie	Female	No	Japanese	5 years

*Robert is a 45 year-old American Associate Professor working at a prestigious National University in eastern Japan. He is in year four of a 6-year limited-term contract and has a total of 14 years of teaching experience. He is stationed at the Language Center within his university and teaches students from several different departments with various levels of English and motivation. He mainly teaches first and second year students their required English courses.*

*William is a 42 year-old American tenured Associate Professor working at a large mid-level private university in western Japan. He has been at his current job for 2 years and he has a total of 11 years of teaching experience. He teaches in the Business department to low and mid-level students. He teaches first and second year students their required*

*English courses as well as elective courses to third and fourth year students.*

*Matt is a 37 year-old Australian lecturer working at a mid-level private university in eastern Japan. He is in year two of a 6-year limited-term contract and has a total of 12 years of teaching experience. He is stationed at the Language Center at his university and teaches students from several different departments with various levels of English and motivation. He mainly teaches first and second year students their required English courses.*

*Kenta is a 57 year-old Japanese tenured Professor working at a well-respected private university in western Japan. He has been at his current job for 20 years and he has a total of 25 years of teaching experience. He teaches in the Information Science and Technology department to mid-level students. He occasionally teaches first and second year students their required English courses, but mostly upper level elective courses to third and fourth year students.*

*Masato is a 65 year-old Japanese lecturer working at a well known high-level private university in eastern Japan. He is in year three of a 5-year limited-term contract and has a total of 27 years of teaching experience. Before becoming a teacher, Masato worked as an engineer in Tokyo. He is stationed in the department of Science and Engineering and teaches students with various levels of English and motivation. He mainly teaches first and second year students their required English courses.*

*Akira is a 38 year-old Japanese tenured Associate Professor working at a very well respected private university in western Japan. He has been at his current job for 3 years and has a total of 12 years*

*of teaching experience. He teaches in the Global Communications department to mid and high level students. He teaches both required English courses as well as elective courses.*

*Kohei is a 45 year-old Japanese tenured Professor working at a mid-level private university in eastern Japan. He has been at his current job for 5 years and he has a total of 17 years of teaching experience. He teaches in the Economics department to mid-level students. He teaches both first and second year students their required English courses as well as upper level elective courses to third and fourth year students.*

*Yoshi is a 33 year-old Japanese tenured Associate Professor working at a low level private university in eastern Japan. He has been at his current job for 6 years and has a total of 6 years of teaching experience. He teaches in the Global Media Studies department to low proficiency students. He teaches both required English courses as well as elective courses.*

*Kate is a 48 year-old American tenured Professor working at a small mid-level private university in western Japan. She has been at her current job for 18 years and has a total of 23 years of teaching experience. She teaches in the International English department to low, mid, and high level students. She teaches first and second year students their required English courses as well as seminars to third and fourth year students.*

*Michelle is a 40 year-old American lecturer working at a mid-level private university in western Japan. She is in year two of a 4-year limited-term contract and has a total of 10 years of teaching experience. She is stationed at the Language Center and teaches students from several different departments with*

*various levels of English and motivation. She mainly teaches first and second year students their required English courses.*

*Yuka is a 43 year-old Japanese tenured Associate Professor working at a prestigious National University in eastern Japan. She has been at her current job for 11 years and has a total of 16 years of teaching experience. She teaches in the Humanities department to low, mid, and high-level students. She teaches first and second year students their required English courses as well as seminars to third and fourth year students.*

*Rie is a 32 year-old Japanese lecturer working at a mid-level private university in western Japan. She is in year two of a 4-year limited-term contract and has a total of 5 years of teaching experience. She is stationed at the Language Center and teaches students from several different departments with various levels of English and motivation. She mainly teaches first and second year students their required English courses.*

## Procedures

The interviews were conducted in English, digitally recorded with an Olympus Voice Trek DS-800, and lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. They were semi-structured interviews conducted like an informal conversation about issues pertaining to the English teaching situation at Japanese universities. The respondents were also assured that their names and institutions would remain anonymous. Most interviews were held in the teachers' offices although several interviews were conducted in quiet cafés. I took notes as the participants talked and transcribed the audio recordings soon after completing the interview. Each interview yielded approximately seven to nine pages of typed transcriptions. I wrote what the interviewer and interviewee said as

accurately as possible, but did not transcribe fillers, back channeling, false starts, or pauses, unless they were relevant or significant. I asked the teachers about their professional history and contextual factors at their institutions. Furthermore, several follow-up e-mail exchanges with the participants were added to the transcriptions later.

After all of the recorded interviews were transcribed, patterns and themes found in the data providing insight in to research questions 1 and 2, were identified and analyzed using coding methods outlined by Tesch (1990). Each interview was reviewed line by line, and I generated categories using his seven-step coding process (Tesch, 1990, pp.142-145).

1. Get a sense of the whole. Read all transcriptions carefully.
2. Choose the data from any one interview and as you go through ask yourself, "What is this about?" Try not to think about the substance of the information, but more on it's underlying meaning.
3. Complete the second task again with the data from several more interviews and make a list of all topics. Cluster similar topics together and make a list of major/minor topics, unique topics, leftovers, etc.
4. Take the list back to your data and abbreviate the topics you've created as codes. Write the codes next to the appropriate segments of the interview transcriptions. Be aware of any new categories that may emerge.
5. Find the most descriptive wording for your topics and turn them into categories. Look for ways to reduce your total list of categories by grouping topics that relate to each other.
6. Make a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and alphabetize these codes.
7. Assemble the material belonging to each category in one place.

Following this coding process, the identified themes and categories were investigated. Specifically, four main categories were found to address research question 1, regarding what potentially supports the formation of strong language teacher self-efficacy beliefs. There were three main categories found to help answer question 2, regarding what potentially challenges language teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. To confirm the existence of the aforementioned categories, ensure inter-rater agreement, and in order to avoid researcher bias, two colleagues reviewed the categories along with excerpts of the interview transcripts. Formal discussions with the fellow researchers concerning the category names and appropriateness yielded the results shown below. Finally, the results of the data analysis are presented by individually discussing each category for both research questions.

## Research Question 1: Results and Discussion

### Autonomy

Several teachers pointed out that one of the most positive aspects of their jobs was the autonomy afforded to them by their employers. They mentioned that being given freedom of choice, particularly concerning their teaching styles in the English classroom, curriculum design, as well as in general decision making processes, gave them a sense of empowerment. Moreover, being given autonomy and then being held responsible as well as accountable for their work was viewed as a positive motivator for most of the teachers, not a burden.

#### Teaching style.

In relation to teaching styles and autonomy in the classroom, Yuka, a tenured associate professor at a national university said:

I think the last couple of years my teaching

has really gotten better. I know my own teaching style and I know how to conduct my own classes. I'm pretty good at keeping the students' attention from the beginning to the end. And the best part is that the school lets me run the classes my way. I can bring my own personality to the classroom, and that's ok with them.

Similarly, Michelle, an American contract teacher working at a private university commented:

One of the best parts of my job is preparing the lessons because I enjoy it so much. I like the creative aspect of planning lessons from scratch and seeing if they succeed or totally flop. If they succeed, that's great. If they don't, it's back to the drawing board. But either way, they don't tell me how to teach. The university allows me to run my own classes in the manner that I choose. This lets me be imaginative, which is a good thing.

One of the commonalities in the quotations above is how both Yuka and Michelle place importance in running their classes in a style that they have chosen. They both are confident and seem to take pride in their teaching, and it appears that any meddling from the school with either the creative process or the actual teaching method in class would be viewed as a negative obstruction.

#### Curriculum and class design.

Similar to the relationship between autonomy and teaching style discussed above is the relationship between autonomy and curriculum design. Akira, a tenured professor at a private university stated:

Actually, the dean of my college is relatively young. I think in his forties or something. He's really open-minded and actually encourages the teachers to get together and re-evaluate the English curriculum on

our own. Make adjustments where we feel necessary, you know, keep it up to date with the research. It's often just the 4 or 5 of us English teachers getting together and putting the curriculum together. Nobody is looking over our shoulders. It's definitely a lot of work but exciting.

Likewise, Matt, an Australian contract teacher working at a private university made a similar comment regarding course design:

I teach this course 'Media English.' Actually, several of us teachers teach this same course. We get to design everything about that course from soup to nuts. Really it's our baby. Not easy, for sure, but it's great to have that kind freedom and responsibility, too. Nobody is shoving a pre-set curriculum down our throats.

Much like the universities where Matt and Akira are employed, Kate, a tenured professor at a private university, also remarked that one of the most positive aspects of her institution was actually being entrusted to develop a sound English curriculum with the other foreign English teachers. She remarked:

I feel lucky in a sense. In our department we have almost 30 full-time tenured faculty and 10 of them are native speakers of English. That's a huge dynamic, you see. There has always been a strong foreign presence and the school has always deferred to us for the English curriculum. Partly because of the school's support and their hands-off policy and partly because of the hard work of the native speakers, we have always been a curriculum innovator. Other nearby schools literally have copied our curriculum. When I oversaw the editing of the curriculum implemented a few years ago, we won the Good Practice award from the Ministry of

Education. We did that!

What is noticeable from the three previous quotations is not only the obvious dedication the teachers have towards course and curriculum design, but the positivity, passion, and pride that is woven in to and conveyed through their comments, almost as a reward for being given the opportunity to take on a task, see it through, and succeed. Furthermore, all three teachers seem to accept that the work will be difficult, but undeterred and even motivated perhaps, relish in being given an important responsibility.

### **Decision making.**

Lastly, similar remarks were made concerning autonomy and general decision-making at Japanese universities. Kohei, a tenured professor at a private university noted the following:

Our university has many many rules and many many committees. Too many, actually. But what is better here than my last university is that the decisions are made after the teachers have a discussion. It's a longer process but it's superior. It's like a democracy. At my previous university the board of directors made all of the important decisions and we were told about them later. Here is a bottom-up system. The decisions are made by the teachers not the board.

Likewise, Will, an American tenured associate professor at a private university spoke about how the other teachers at his school not only wanted to hear his opinion, but also needed him when making decisions concerning the entrance examination.

I'm on the entrance exam committee this year. It sucks. I know. But I'm on the inner most part of the proverbial 'onion' so to speak. I'm pretty sure they trust me and the other committee members honestly want to know what I think about types of questions, style, and design of the test. They also kind



of need me for the English, but it's still cool though. They're looking to me to make some of the final decisions. I've got to give the final ok before we submit the test.

In the cases of both Kohei and Will, it is clear that being included in the decision making process is viewed as a positive influence. Being on the inside and having a voice that is heard and acknowledged, certainly appears to have an encouraging effect on these teachers.

One central commonality from all of the above quotations concerning autonomy is the apparent hands-off "we trust you" approach taken by the institutions and the various teachers' superiors. Giving the educators opportunities to succeed, giving them the freedom to make their own choices and decisions, and creating a positive atmosphere seems to be a key element in their appraisal of their own job satisfaction. Furthermore, these comments are in line with Bandura's (1997) research on the fourth source of self-efficacy: Physiological States, where he explains that mood affects people's judgments of their personal efficacy. Bandura stated that a positive mood enhances perceived self-efficacy and a despondent mood diminishes it. He goes on to explain that the fourth way of modifying self-efficacy beliefs is to reduce people's stress reactions and alter their negative emotional tendencies and misinterpretations of their physical states. Essentially, the creation of a good mood or atmosphere in the above teachers' schools and enabling their autonomy by trusting them and providing them with choices has the potential to support their self-efficacy beliefs.

## Colleagues

Another positive theme that emerged frequently in the interviews was that of working with good supportive colleagues. The teachers reported that their colleagues helped motivate them

in various ways, for example, by sharing knowledge, classroom management and teaching strategies, and lessons plans. They also stated that their cooperative colleagues made going to work easier and more pleasant.

## Knowledge sharing.

In the case of Michelle, an American contract teacher, she professed about the readiness of her colleagues to share their knowledge of technology with her.

I'm terrible with technology because I'm afraid it will fail me. However, my colleagues are incredibly helpful because they are better with technology than me. They teach me all sorts of things. It's essentially working with these kinds of colleagues who are better than me that is making me a better more confident teacher.

Similarly, Yuka, a tenured professor, praised her colleagues for their willingness to share not only 'how-to' knowledge, but also lesson plans.

We learn by experience, right? But when you have very little experience, then what? My sempai, were good because they helped me when I first arrived. They showed me the communal cabinet in the office where the lessons they had developed themselves were kept. There was so much stuff I could use. A total lifesaver. They shared their ideas with me then and they still do now.

Matt, an Australian contract teacher, made a comparable statement about the abundant generosity of his colleagues when he first arrived at his university.

When I first arrived at the job, I got support. I knew I was fortunate because I had heard of other teachers at other schools being totally abandoned. But the teachers and I established strong relationships in the first

few months. I love going to work. It's not unpleasant at all. They are super good to me and I like the people I'm working with now.

The three quotations above are analogous in that they all emphasize receiving help from colleagues when there was a lack of experience or knowledge. All of them were assisted at critical points in their teaching careers, leaving them better off and as Michelle said a "more confident teacher."

In my experience, there are many teachers at Japanese universities that have positive attitudes towards helping colleagues and often their intentions tend to be good regarding sharing of knowledge, too. Obviously, there are exceptions and teachers who don't actively go out of their way to help others or share what they know. However, in the cases of the three teachers above, it certainly seems that they are in very positive work situations and because of the generosity of their colleagues, have improved and extended their relationships to those with whom they work.

### **Cooperation.**

Akira, a tenured professor made two separate, but likewise comments about the cooperative attitudes of his colleagues. The first comment was:

I don't really have any complaints. The number of teachers in this department is quite small. 29 full time faculty, I think. They're all really cooperative. I haven't had any problems with them and the dean is not really imposing either.

And in a separate comment later in the interview, he said:

It's really been great. It's a new department and the faculty members are so cooperative. If I have a question, I can share it with people here. That's the best. And we always get together and decide the details together.

It's very interesting.

There are two important points regarding the development and support of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs that can be interpreted from the encouraging comments above. The first point is similar to the earlier discussion about autonomy, where being given an appropriate amount of autonomy appeared to create a positive working environment that had the potential to support self-efficacy beliefs. Bandura (1997) explained that one way to raise self-efficacy beliefs is to improve physical and emotional well-being and reduce negative emotional states. Because individuals have the capability to alter their own thinking and feeling, enhanced self-efficacy beliefs can, in turn, powerfully influence the physiological states themselves. Therefore, it is perfectly logical that good cooperative colleagues could create such a positive working environment that it could in turn influence the physiological states of the teachers, which in turn could support the development of their self-efficacy.

The second point concerns the third source of self-efficacy, Social Persuasions. Bandura (1997) described that individuals create and develop self-efficacy beliefs as a result of the social persuasions they receive from others. He stated that persuaders, for example, play an important part in the development of an individual's self-beliefs and that effective persuaders must cultivate people's beliefs in their capabilities, while at the same time ensuring that the envisioned success is attainable. Relating this source of self-efficacy to the comments from the teachers above, it is fairly easy to imagine that the positivity they feel towards their colleagues because of the sharing of knowledge and lesson plans, generosity, and cooperativeness has created a warm working environment. The supportive words of encouragement and helpful actions the teachers received from their colleagues, undoubtedly have the potential to support the self-efficacy beliefs of

these teachers.

## Money

Among Japanese private universities, salaries can vary greatly from school to school depending on such factors as their popularity, size, prestige, and location. Within each school, the salaries naturally fluctuate between ranks (i.e., assistant professor, associate professor, and professor), usually based on the school's own pay scale. At national universities however, this is not the case. There is a pay scale set by the government that is constant for all national university employees regardless the prestige, the location, or the size of the university. Although exceptions do exist, in general, private universities in Japan tend to pay significantly higher salaries than national universities. To put it in to an international perspective, compared to university salary averages in the United States, Japan's national university pay scale is actually relatively similar. For instance, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, in 2010 at a \$1 to ¥100 ratio, average salaries for full-time professors was \$98,974 in the US compared to a lower \$84,660 in Japan, \$69,911 for associate professors in the US and \$70,009 in Japan, and \$58,662 for assistant professors in the US compared to a higher \$62,223 in Japan (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Finally, it should be noted that in addition to the Japanese base salaries, there are often quite a few supplementary and sizeable allowances added to their monthly salaries. These allowances often include money for research, dependents, housing, transportation, and managerial work, substantially increasing the overall income. These allowances, should they have been included to the numbers above, would undoubtedly push the average Japanese salaries much higher.

Positive extrinsic motivators such as salary, pension, insurance, and research benefits, have long been known to contribute to job satisfaction and

teacher motivation. It is therefore not surprising that many of the interview participants in this study also remarked on how the various types of monetary compensation that the universities awarded them, were viewed very favorably. Some teachers commented on the generous amounts of money allotted to support their research, while others commented directly on the high university salaries. In either case, it became quite clear that being paid adequately and appropriately definitely mattered to these teachers.

## Research.

Kenta, a tenured professor at a private institution in western Japan, commented on a few of the research-related positive financial opportunities at his university.

As you can see (simultaneously showing me his new iPad, iPod, MacBook air, and other such devices), I enjoy a comfortable research environment...the money we get for research is really good. I make several overseas trips a year to go to conferences with that money.

Kohei, also a tenured professor, made similar comments about his more than adequate research budget.

They are totally supportive for research grants. They will also pay for each professor to make two presentations at international conferences as well as at three or four domestic conferences. On top of that we get nearly 500,000 yen in kenkyuhi (research allowance). And if you need it, you can apply for extra kenkyuhi to double your amount. I don't know where they get the money, but they are generous.

Will, an American associate professor at a private university, also gave his frank opinions about the merit-based allotment of research funds at his school.

The research money you get here is ridiculously high but also quite competitive. It all depends on what you produce. The first year you arrive, you get a bunch of money. If you would like to receive that same amount of money the next year, you need to produce. You need to publish or present or be on a research team or in the middle of a research project or something. They are pretty reasonable though. The requirements are not too strict and the people in charge seem fair for the most part. It keeps people motivated and as far as I can tell, everyone seems content.

University teachers in Japan commonly receive a generous research budget at the beginning of every academic year. Many have come to take it for granted. The amount varies from school to school but is usually in the range of ¥200,000 to ¥400,000. Additional funding might also be available to the faculty on a competitive basis either through the school, local private companies, or government grants. This is in sharp contrast to the United States, where nearly all additional funding for research is received after a strict application process and is entirely competitive and merit-based. While the teachers spoke to me in very matter-of-fact terms about these funds, what is strikingly clear and common about the three quotations above is that the teachers seem more than pleased and satisfied with their large research allowances.

### **Salary.**

Similar to the research allowances, the teachers also spoke positively about their salaries, too. Kenta, a tenured professor at a private institution in western Japan, commented enthusiastically about his salary when he said:

My salary is not so bad either (smiling). In general we are really well paid. We get extra

allowances for everything, like teaching night classes or working on entrance exams, etc...

Robert, an American associate professor at a national university in fact expressed some feelings of guilt about the money he receives.

People complain too much. Financially speaking, I almost feel guilty. They compensate us very well. And really, for the amount of classes I actually teach and the amount of time off we have in between semesters, how can I complain?

Finally, Matt, a contract teacher at a private university, painted a very positive and clear overarching picture about the benefits of the money and lifestyle afforded to him by his university and living in Japan. This quotation was taken from a follow up e-mail after the interview.

The industry is generally well developed and stable in Japan, which offers an economy and lifestyle that affords opportunities to do more things and go more places and reach other people if a person so desires. Or to simply pad one's nest egg or mattress as this is as effective as putting the money earned, which can be substantial compared to two classes a week at a Community College, if they even get enough people, into the bank. As someone who works hard and plays hard, the financial opportunities at my university have satisfied me on many levels, personally, professionally, socially, mentally, and physically.

Appropriate financial rewards for teachers are an extremely sensitive, yet also very important issue when discussing job satisfaction and teacher self-efficacy. The importance of remuneration is summed up well in this quote from Poppleton and Riseborough (1990),

Pay does not have absolute importance

in relation to job satisfaction but if it is perceived to be good all other aspects appear to have relatively less significance. If, on the other hand, it is perceived to be poor, then it is seen as a symptom as much as a cause and associated with other symptoms such as lack of respect in the community. (p. 219)

If the teachers perceive adequate compensation from the university and they believe that they have the required resources and opportunities to excel, and that the obstacles they are likely to encounter are few and manageable, they should have more confidence in their ability to teach and thus exhibit a high degree of self-efficacy. Conversely, when they believe that they lack requisite resources or that they are likely to encounter serious financial obstacles, they are susceptible to judge their teaching to be relatively difficult and hold a low level of self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy research tells us that teachers with perceptions of greater self-efficacy are more likely to have higher performance standards and goals, have more favorable job attitudes, and show greater willingness to put forth effort on challenging tasks. Therefore, appropriate compensation is clearly an important factor that has the potential to support language teacher self-efficacy.

## Students

The final positive theme likely to support teacher self-efficacy that emerged frequently in the interviews was that of teaching good hardworking students. Not surprisingly, many of the interviewees commented that having good students made coming to work everyday enjoyable. They often elaborated stating that good students were the best part of their jobs and if it were not for such students, they might consider changing professions or at least consider changing universities.

Naturally, not all of the participants are able

to teach super hardworking motivated students. Additionally, there is always going to be a lot of variation depending on such factors as where the faculty are teaching, which populations they are teaching within their university, and how many of the courses they teach are electives vs. required. In the analysis below, I will try to simultaneously explain the various teaching situations of the participants in order to help contextualize their comments. The following quotations highlight the positive points the interviewees spoke about their students.

Michelle, a non-tenured American teacher working at a private university described her feelings about her students as follows:

The best part of my job is working with all of these motivated students. They can make miracles happen in the classroom. I love that. I am very happy with my students and wouldn't want to teach anywhere else.

Michelle works with above average well-rounded students. Many of them come from well-to-do upper middle class families and as she describes them, "they are just good kids who obviously come from good families who raised them right." She explained that behavioral problems with these students were extremely rare and although she mainly teaches compulsory four-skills courses, the classes always have fewer than 20 students making classroom management almost a non-issue.

Robert, an American associate professor at a national university expressed similar sentiments when he said:

The easiest and perhaps best part of my job is the students. Period. Maybe it's because that's where I focus my effort or maybe it's because they are just really good students. It's a chicken and the egg situation. Either way makes going to work quite gratifying.

Robert works at a large and prestigious university in

eastern Japan. The student body as a whole is quite capable and certainly above the national average. As he puts it “at the very least, they studied hard enough in high school and learned to pass a rather difficult entrance exam. They may not have the English skills yet, but they have the work-ethic.” He also explained that his classes are generally small and manageable with the odd class perhaps having a few more than 20 students.

Kohei, a tenured professor at a private university also expressed the importance of having good students.

The most important thing to me is having good students or at least students who will try their best. Here, it’s so easy to have a friendly chat with motivated students before, during, or after class. The kind of students that you can talk about anything with and that are eager to learn... It’s what makes this job worthwhile for me.

Similar to Michelle and Robert’s teaching situation, Kohei also teaches mid to upper level students. He works at a well-known wealthy private school with many students entering from strong Tokyo-based high schools. Teaching not only compulsory classes, but also upper-level elective seminars, Kohei has the advantage of working with students who not only are motivated and have chosen to take his class, but also small numbers of students in those classes.

Finally, Kate, an American tenured professor at a private university, summed up her feeling about good students as such:

The best part of my job is the students. For the most part they are capable and very pleasant. If it weren’t for them I’m not sure I would have been here this long. Even the low level learners, they are just good kids who try. Even if they don’t have the ability to do it all in English, they’ve got brains and at least take a shot at using them,

which is more than I can say for some of my colleagues. I think this is our students’ biggest strength. We provide the possibility and they put forth the effort. They really do and I love it.

Kate’s working situation is almost identical to that of Michelle’s in terms of the type of students (i.e., upper class families, raised right, few behavioral issues, etc...). Furthermore, she also has a lot in common with Kohei’s teaching situation in that being a veteran tenured teacher means she gets to teach seminars to small groups of students who have selected her classes.

Two of the most noticeable commonalities in the teaching situations described above were the small class sizes and the well-rounded hardworking students. All of the teachers work in good schools and despite inevitable variations in the students’ English levels, they all seem to have an understanding of how to study hard. Additionally, the small class sizes, which mean more individualized attention, can only help lead already good students to excel even more.

The relationship between good students and potentially increased teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction is an easy one to understand. As Lortie (1975) remarked, teacher-student interaction was a major source of overall satisfaction and claimed that:

Other sources of satisfaction pale in comparison with teachers’ exchanges with students, and the feeling that students have learned. We would therefore expect that much of a teacher’s work of motivation would rotate around the conduct of daily tasks - the actual instruction of students. (p.104)

Furthermore, Skinner and Belmont (1993) found that teachers’ perceptions of student emotional and behavioral engagement, in fact predicted teachers’

interactions with their students. They found strong support for positive student engagement eliciting positive teacher behaviors. Moreover, Skinner and Belmont's research demonstrated that teachers respond to students who have high behavioral engagement "with more involvement, more autonomy support, and even to a degree, more contingency and consistency" (p. 578). Additionally, Bandura (1997) stated that people's beliefs about their efficacy are developed by four main sources of influence. The most effective and influential source is through hands-on mastery experiences. For a teacher, these experiences will undoubtedly occur in the classroom. Successes in the classroom will build a robust belief in one's personal efficacy. Teachers will engage in tasks and activities, interpret the results of their actions, use the interpretations to develop beliefs about their capability to engage in subsequent tasks or activities, and act in accordance with the beliefs created. Typically, outcomes interpreted as successful raise self-efficacy. Therefore, it is entirely logical that having good students that are well behaved, eager to learn, and easy to engage, at the very least, will create an atmosphere where self-efficacy beliefs can flourish.

## Research Question 2: Results and Discussion

### Administration

Many Japanese and foreign teachers pointed out, often with great disdain and contempt, that some of the most negative aspects of their jobs were the various difficulties that arose with their direct superiors, the general administration, or both. They particularly mentioned that problems such as lack of communication and poor management by the administration, had made their professional lives extremely trying and problematic, and at times entirely unbearable. A few choice quotations

that give an overarching picture of the struggles experienced by the interviewees are presented below.

### Lack of communication.

First, Kenta, a tenured professor at a private university vented his frustrations regarding lack of communication and university politics when he said:

Politics! I'm tired of the so-called sectionalism. The administration is overly conservative and they have all these trivial distinctions at the expense of the general well being of the teachers. Nobody communicates either. There's not enough talk between teachers and the administration, and therefore nobody knows what's going on. You always have to fight to get something changed. It's really exhausting!

Similarly, Kate, an American tenured professor at a private university expressed her grievances concerning the lack of communication between the administration and the teachers when she said:

Communication with the administration has been very poor for many years. I know it sounds like I'm just complaining, but foreigners and Japanese alike are so frustrated with them. There are too many people here who work in an education system that don't know how to work with an education system. They do not communicate and cannot understand being in a classroom and the higher-ups especially, don't understand that you can't tell a teacher to do things in the same way that you can order a salary man to do things in a company. Sometimes I honestly think they haven't a clue how to run a university effectively.

The two quotations above share the palpable frustration felt by the teachers created by the lack

of dialogue between those who hold administrative roles and those who teach. There seems to be a great chasm between the two groups over what each group believes is best. Nonexistent communication only widens the gap and in Kate's situation in particular, she eludes to the fact that perhaps many people working in the administration do not understand what it means to work with an education system and instead simply treat it as any other regular company, an idea with which she strongly believes does not work.

### **Poor management.**

In a follow-up e-mail, Robert, an American contract associate professor at a national university expressed sharp dissatisfaction about the poor management of the language program and his superiors not being invested in the program when he said:

When it comes to the language program here, there seems to be a general lack of accountability and responsibility among my superiors. It's become an administratively-focused approach to curriculum and program operation, with the academics who should have a stake in the results of the program being too hands off, on a rotating committee, and generally being out of touch and not vested in the program or the process and its outcomes. Fat cats riding on a fat cow!

Likewise, Matt, an Australian contract teacher at a private university, paints a clear overarching picture about the difficulties he faces with the administration at his university.

Addressing the range of individual needs and personalities at the human level outside the classroom with various stakeholders and their petty privileges and fiefdoms has been and will always be my scourge. The useless make work projects and tacit lip service paid

to certain aspects of the 'big picture' end up taking more of my time and focus away from what we are supposed to be doing, namely teaching and researching. Those other things are 'someone else's job' and if we lacked in our job to the same degree as the administration it would be very visible and awful and the hypocrisy that exists is laughable.

The gripes that the interviewees had with their respective institutions' administration were conveyed vividly. Additionally, the lack of institutional supports and lack of communication that persists between the teachers and the administration, obviously play a vital role when looking at the importance of self-efficacy. For example, Mowday and Nam (1997) stated "people are more likely to engage in behaviors when they see a high probability that effort will lead to high performance" (p. 117). Clearly connected to the idea of teacher self-efficacy, the more support teachers receive from their institutions and the better the relationships are with all involved parties, the more likely teachers will feel their efforts will be successful, and are thereby more willing to put time and energy into their jobs. If better support is established and if teachers believe that their efforts will lead to success and not be hindered by perceived incompetence of the administration, they will likely be more motivated and work harder, and as Matt's quotation eludes to, spending more time for example, on preparing for classes, being more available to students, and researching.

Furthermore, Olsen (1993) demonstrated through her survey of first and third year university faculty that many teachers felt that better relationships with the administration and institutional support would positively influence their teaching. Likewise, Freeman and Philips (1985) also indicated that many teachers blame too



little institutional support and too many restrictions for their lack of successful classroom outcomes, and thereby lose intrinsic and extrinsic motivation due to a lack of self-efficacy beliefs. In short, if teachers do not believe they are getting adequate institutional support, they will less likely believe in the possibility of success, hence severely lowering their perceived self-efficacy.

## Students

Research shows us that students are one of the main sources of motivation and demotivation of teachers. Vandenberghe and Huberman (1999) wrote, "The quality of the relationship between teacher and pupils can be one of the most rewarding aspects of the teaching profession, but it can also be the source of emotionally draining and discouraging experiences" (pp. 194-195). It is therefore not surprising that many of the interview participants in this study remarked on not only how wonderful the students were, but also how grueling they could make their life at work.

As in the previous section about the positivity of students, there is always going to be a lot of variation depending on such factors as where the faculty are teaching, which populations they are teaching within their university, and how many of the courses they teach are electives vs. required. In the analysis below, I will again try to explain the various teaching situations of the participants in order to help contextualize their comments. The following quotations from the interviewees touch upon the obstacles and barriers they face with their students.

Akira, a tenured professor at a private university commented on how he actually left his previous position at a nearby institution due to the overwhelmingly unmotivated student body.

I was teaching English at an engineering college. It was really tough. They were not

motivated at all. I tried so hard to emphasize that English was important for their futures, especially because they were engineering students, but they never listened. They could not see the connection and although I was tenured, I was there for just three years before I quit. I couldn't teach such poor students.

Akira is referring to a low level private engineering school in central Japan where he used to teach. His class sizes were large (usually 40 to 50 students) and the classes he taught were mainly compulsory English courses. Many of the students in the school went to local low-level technical high schools and according to Akira had "little to no motivation."

Masato, an experienced contract teacher at a private university shared his views on the downward trending level of Japanese university students and the difficulties it is causing.

I've spent time in the private sector and therefore tend to put great demands on my students and expect a lot. My goal is simple: to raise their English ability enough so they can be competent in the industry. But historically in Japan, university is paradise and the students don't work hard. There are many complaints recently (from the companies) that Japanese students are no longer competitive and don't have guts. The university regulations have become so loose and it's just too difficult to get through to these students.

Although Masato now teaches at a well-known "elite" private university in Tokyo, he has over 25 years of teaching experience at various Japanese universities as well as over 10 years working in the private sector, and is in a prime position to comment on general trends at Japanese universities. It's interesting that he feels the decline in ability has not only affected the lower ranked schools but the

higher tiered schools as well.

Also in a good position to comment on general academic trends, Kentaro, a professor with over 20 years of experience at an upper-tier private university, made discouraging comments indicating his frustrations about how the previous generations of students were much better compared to those of today.

My biggest frustration is the students. I don't think it is isolated to just this school either. The student population all over Japan has changed for the worse compared to just 20 years ago. I mean that the proficiency levels and motivational levels were so much higher back then. Many students now are not willing or don't actually know how to study. They just come to university because they don't want to work or their parents told them to go. They're not paying anyway and are here for the wrong reasons! How am I supposed to deal with that?

Similar to Masato, Kentaro's quotation again shows us that the general decline in the students' ability is not limited to the lower level universities.

Finally, Rie, a contract instructor at a private university, summarized her vexations with her university English students.

Babysitting and scolding my students is what I like least of my job. They don't think they will need English for their futures and motivating them is the hardest part. They have an apathetic attitude toward learning and they use Japanese excessively in class. I regularly fail miserably at keeping their attention and it absolutely is shattering my confidence. At the worst times, I don't even want to come in and teach.

Unfortunately for Rie, she teaches exclusively compulsory English classes at a mid-level university to first and second year students. Because she is

stationed at the language center, she teaches students from a wide variety of departments with greatly varying motivation levels. While occasionally she gets to teach students from one of the "good" departments, more often than not she explains that her classes are with students who would prefer not studying English at all.

According to a national survey in the United States of 1,920 faculty members by Gmelch, Wilke, and Lovrich (1986), students were one of the faculty's top five sources of stress. Similarly, Sax, (1996) reported 61% of faculty felt that students were a major source of tension and anxiety. Furthermore, he concluded that dispirited or unprepared students or students who attended the university for the wrong reasons were among the major sources of faculty angst. Likewise, Guskey and Passaro (1994) reported that if teachers encounter obstacles they cannot deal with, they would become demotivated. Walker and Symons (1997), in discussing social motivation theory, report that if teachers perceive negative feelings on the part of the students, and if they feel unappreciated in spite of their best efforts, then they will respond with anger and anxiety. Finally, Sergiovanni (1967) concluded that a poor relationship with students could be a source of considerable teacher dissatisfaction.

In addition to the research described above, one of the many reasons for the declining academic level of student in Japan, is the demographic trend of declining birthrates that has created a situation where the number of college-aged young people has decreased by so much that the country has reached a period of full college and university admissions. This means that any Japanese person who wants to go to college will have a 'seat' somewhere at a university in the country. One of the most obvious repercussions is the predicament of how to meet admission quotas and face the increasing lack of

competition for admissions to many institutions. By eliminating competition and offering a place to all applicants, a general decline in the overall academic abilities of incoming college students is inevitable. Institutions quite simply have had to lower their standards and admit students that would not have been accepted even a decade ago (Hani, 2001).

The already delicate reciprocal relationship that exists between students and teachers as described in the previous research above, combined with the declining birthrate and downward trending academic levels in Japan, has created a perfect for teachers at Japanese universities. It is these very teachers who are expected to respond to the demands of the parents, the universities, and government to raise the level of English of the now less-able and less motivated students. Clearly, dealing with these kinds of learners in the current climate of Japan could easily challenge a teacher's self-efficacy.

## Contract Teachers

The final category likely to challenge teacher self-efficacy that emerged frequently in the interviews was that of limited-term contracts and the adverse affect they had on the faculty, the curriculum, the students, and the institution as a whole. Not surprisingly, many of the interviewees could find no merit whatsoever in such limited-term contracts and commented that they created unwanted stress, less than ideal working conditions, and by their very nature were inherently demotivating. The following quotations highlight the troubled feelings the interviewees had about limited-term contracts for English teachers at Japanese universities.

Rie, a contract English teacher at a private university, expressed her feelings about the chaos that is created from teachers always coming and going.

In the current 'fukeiki' (declining economic

environment), teachers will continue to leave their contracts early because of the competitive job situation. The Foreign Language Center provides no light at the end of the tunnel and certainly no opportunity for tenure and therefore will continue to be a revolving door of English teachers. This university will use the teachers and the teachers will use the university's name to get their next position. Teachers will continue to leave at inopportune times causing confusion, a lack of continuity, and a lot of extra work and headaches for the administrators and other teachers, too.

Similarly, Robert, a contract associate professor at a national university, pointed out the bleakness that is felt from the first day of a contract position is entirely uninspiring. He said:

Knowing from day one that we are limited to a set number of years, new English teachers will never be invested enough in the future of this university's English program. They have essentially guaranteed us unemployment. The teachers know that they are disposable and that there is absolutely no chance to see the fruits of their labor...Talk about demotivating!

There is a strong commonality in the two previous quotations in that both Rie and Robert address the issue of "no opportunity" and "no chance" whatsoever to obtain a tenured status and therefore making them feel completely "disposable". Undoubtedly for these two teachers, the lack "light at the end of the tunnel" is at best uninspiring and at worst, downright depressing.

Masato, an experienced contract teacher at a private university as well as having spent many years working in the private sector, expressed levelheadedly his candid feelings about the shortcomings of limited-term contracts.

These contracts reflect general industry, downsizing, outsourcing, etc... Honestly, it makes sense from an economic standpoint but doesn't mean it's good for education. It's actually creating a great deal of instability. This is unfortunate but very difficult to change. Term-limited contracts will have more of a negative impact and affect the quality of teaching because these teachers will always be looking for their next job and can't be devoted as much as they should be to the courses at their own university.

When I spoke with Masato, I sensed a feeling of helplessness from his inability to change anything about the limited-term contracts situation. At 65 years old and nearing retirement, although he is not personally affected by such limited-term contracts, having spent a huge portion of his life in academia, he is noticeably frustrated with the current direction Japanese universities are heading.

Finally, Will, an American tenured associate professor at a private university spoke about the limited-term contracts versus the tenured positions from a frustrated foreigners point of view.

I cannot think of any benefit of being a contract foreign teacher. Sure, you get to skip out on boring meetings but c'mon, work is work. This short-term contract system for foreigners was established a long time ago and is no longer relevant. It's 2012 and many of the foreigners in Japan are no longer visitors. Many of us have families and people who depend on us. This job is not a joke, not a gig, and we are not just hanging out in Japan. We have the same qualities as the Japanese staff, we are professionals, we pursue higher degrees, we research, we teach, we maintain administration duties, and many of us have very high levels of Japanese proficiency. So why the distinction?

In recent years, various critics within Japan have extensively examined the conditions surrounding limited-term contracts for university language teachers. Furthermore, the connection between "guaranteed unemployment" as one of the interviewees suggested, and the negative influence it could potentially have on one's self-efficacy is unmistakably clear. For example, some of the greatest apprehensions for many teachers have to do with employment instability and the anxiety generated from the continual cycles of changing employment, as well as the psychological, physical, and monetary hardships of periodically moving the family unit. Even for those without family connections, Rivers (2013), claims that the nomadic lifestyle that limited-term contract employees tend to live, often inhibits the formation of sustainable collegial relationships, restricts workplace involvement in long-term initiatives, denies emotional attachment to a specific place (i.e., developing a sense of home or belonging), and undermines sincere dedication to one's contracting institution. Every point that Rivers mentions above, as well as the almost obsessive like quest to continually search for improved working conditions that many contract teachers undergo, simply does nothing to promote self-efficacy.

Additionally, limited-term contract teachers' work in Japanese universities is characterized by heavier teaching loads, insecurity caused by contract status, little input into or control over teaching assignments and curriculum, lack of time for research, and their consequent devaluation as "teaching-only" faculty. In dealing with what appears to be a mountain of impediments, it can safely be said that limited term contracts for English teachers at Japanese universities, certainly pose a threat to the teacher's self-efficacy.

## Conclusion

In the present study, interviews were conducted to inquire about the supports and challenges to teacher self-efficacy at Japanese universities. I have presented the results and a discussion of the interview data analysis according to each of the seven emergent themes. Four themes found in the data (Autonomy, Colleagues, Money, and Students) helped answer the first research question and spoke to qualities that could potentially support teachers' self-efficacy. Three themes found in the data (Administration, Students, and Limited-term Contracts) helped answer Research Question 2 and spoke to qualities that could potentially weaken teachers' self-efficacy. From this study, it is clear that the individual teacher's beliefs and assessments of their own working situations and institutions are not only multifaceted and unique, but also have many overlapping qualities, namely the aforementioned seven themes. Without knowing the intricacies of such university contexts and the complexities of the individual teachers' feelings, discussions on how to improve their self-efficacy beliefs will likely remain unsuccessful.

Every institution of higher education in Japan today employs numerous English teachers and offers a variety of English course options. Therefore, understanding the self-efficacy beliefs of English instructors is one way to potentially provide the administrators and policy makers the means to identify where improvement and support at their institution needed. If the proper infrastructure is established, professional development programs, faculty mentoring, instructional workshops, and more ideal working conditions could be developed to improve English teaching at Japanese universities. In addition, the administrators could gain a greater understanding as to what components need to be included in graduate education and training programs. This understanding would provide a

means through which postsecondary institutions and graduate programs could better prepare future faculty for university English teaching roles.

Furthermore, the findings of this study, which tended to be rather general in nature, appear to potentially share a commonality with other more general disciplines at universities across Japan. However, because self-efficacy is domain and context specific and only English language teachers were interviewed, the results should be generalized with caution to other disciplines. Nonetheless, due to the obvious potential overlap in the themes discovered, it appears there would be merit in considering the results from this study before investigating the teaching self-efficacy for other university subjects.

Finally, according to Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997), one's belief about their own ability to perform a certain task is critical because how people perform can often be better predicted by the beliefs they hold about their capabilities than by what they are actually capable of accomplishing. Therefore, given the importance of teacher's sense of efficacy, it seems critical to not only prepare teachers with strong positive beliefs about their capabilities early on, but also create an environment in the university where self-efficacy can prosper. Teacher development programs and better communication between colleagues, superiors, and the administration should be augmented in order to seek ways to promote teachers' efficacy levels.

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(受付日 : 2013 年 9 月 11 日)