



SELF-EFFICACY OF ENGLISH LISTENING SKILLS IN JAPANESE COLLEGE EFL LEARNERS

Yuichi Todaka¹

¹Miyazaki Municipal University, Japan

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of the four sources of self-efficacy theory and the establishment of concrete English study objectives and guidance counseling sessions concerning the English listening skills of Japanese EFL learners.

Keywords: Four sources of self-efficacy, Establishment of concrete study objectives, Guidance counseling sessions.

Received: 22 March 2014/ Revised: 11 September 2015/ Accepted: 14 September 2015/ Published: 18 September 2015

Contribution/ Originality

This study documents that the establishment of concrete English study reasons is critical in helping Japanese college EFL learners have high self-efficacy beliefs about their English listening skills. However, a self-efficacy questionnaire should be carefully formulated.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of ESL/EFL teaching, to understand interlearner variability in L2 acquisition, previous studies have focused on the affective domains of self-esteem (Malinowski, 1923; Brown, 2007) anxiety (Oxford, 1999; Horwitz, 2001; Spielmann and Radnofsky, 2001) motivation (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Dornyei and Skehan, 2003; Dornyei, 2005) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Cotterall, 1999; Pajares, 2000; Chen and Hasson, 2007; Rahimi and Abedini, 2009). For instance, Kormos and Csizer (2008) examined the L2 motivational self-system model proposed by Dornyei (2005) and Csizer and Dornyei (2005). This model consists of (1) Ideal L2 Self, (2) Ought-to L2 Self, and (3) L2 Learning Experience. Kormos and Csizer (2008) determined that the key component of Dornyei (2005) model was not only valid and reliable but also an important dimension of L2 motivation. This, in turn, emphasizes the significance of L2 learners' environment for

learning, where their L2 self-image is shaped (Warden and Lin, 2000; Ushida, 2001; Yashima, 2002; Lamb, 2004; Kormos and Csizer, 2008). On the basis of their findings, Kormos and Csizer (2008) suggested that teachers, materials, and activities are instrumental in shaping attitudes to learning, which leads L2 learners to shape their Ideal L2 Self-images. These suggestions are based on the discrepancy of the positive motivational characteristics and the low proficiency level of students. Kormos and Csizer (2008) these suggestions are based on the discrepancy of the positive motivational characteristics and the low proficiency level of students. Following indicated that such a discrepancy does not only “highlight that changes in the overall quality of instruction are needed but also that positive attitudes and reportedly highly motivated behavior do not necessarily mean that students in fact invest a sufficient amount of energy in language learning (emphasis added, 350).” In other words, because long-term commitment to L2 learning is crucial, the limited amount of time that EFL learners engage in L2 learning in class is insufficient to help learners become successful L2 speakers. Therefore, EFL learners need additional training to become autonomous learners. Following Kormos and Csizer (2008) a questionnaire assessing the perception that Japanese EFL learners have of their Ideal L2 Self and what motivated their learning behavior was formulated and administered to 55 college EFL students in Todaka (2009) study. Results showed that the participants considered themselves able to become competent L2 learners because they enjoyed learning English, and because they understood the utilitarian benefits associated with being able to speak English. However, they indicated that *they had experienced varying degrees of anxiety in L2 communication, and that they did not have confidence in their linguistic abilities*. Furthermore, they also indicated that *they did not consider themselves to be diligent language learners*.

Kikuchi and Sakai (2009) investigated the causes for decrease in the motivation of Japanese high school students to study English and reported that (1) course books, (2) inadequate school facilities, (3) test scores, (4) non-communication methods, and (5) teachers' competence and teaching styles were found to be contributing factors. Among these, non-communicative methods, which focuses on grammar and preparation for college entrance examinations, was perceived to be demotivating by many participants. As indicated, *there exists a tremendous lack in Japanese EFL learners' motivation and in their self-efficacy beliefs to carry out a task*. This is where self-efficacy theory comes in. Self-efficacy theory is described as “people’s beliefs in their capabilities to produce desired effects by their own actions.” (Bandura, 1977) It is considered to be the most important factor in determining how people choose to engage and how much effort they make when faced with challenges (Maddux, 2002). Thus, self-efficacy is not perceived as a skill, a predicate to behavior, or intention to attain a particular goal, rather, it is more about “what I believe I can do with my skills under certain conditions” (Maddux, 2002). Since Bandura (1977) proposed self-efficacy theory, many articles have been published applying the theory in various fields such as psychology, sociology, kinesiology, and medicine. Bandura (1977) outlined the four

sources of self-efficacy: (1) performance outcomes, (2) vicarious experiences, (3) verbal persuasion, and (4) physiological feedback. Performance outcomes denote how our positive or negative experiences can influence our ability to perform a given task. Vicarious experiences are referred as the influence of someone else's success or failure on one's level of self-efficacy. Verbal persuasion refers to how our self-efficacy is affected by what others say about us and what they believe we can or cannot do. Finally, physiological feedback is described as positive physiological and emotional sensations that are likely to lead one to have high self-efficacy in a given situation. Raofi (2013) reviewed 32 articles, published between 2003 and 2012, concerning the effectiveness of self-efficacy theory in the ESL/EFL context. Next, we describe the findings of the studies reviewed.

Among the 32 articles reviewed, 12 articles examined the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and ESL/EFL performance on the basis of either course grades (Mahyuddin, 2006; Mills, 2007; Hsieh and Schallert, 2008) proficiency in reading (Mills, 2006; Mills, 2007) or listening (Mills, 2006; Magogwe and Oliver, 2007; Tilfarlioglu and Ciftci, 2011). They concluded that the findings of these studies indicated a positive relationship between self-efficacy and performance, which was in line with findings in other research domains such as math and education in general (Multon, 1991; Pajares, 1996; Dennissen, 2007). Furthermore, seven articles examined the relationship between self-efficacy and anxiety (Mills, 2006; Cubukcu, 2008; Anyadubalu, 2010; Erkan and Saban, 2011) and that between self-efficacy and attributes (Graham, 2006; Hsieh and Schallert, 2008; Hsieh and Kang, 2010). The findings of these studies indicate a significant negative relationship between self-efficacy level and ESL/EFL performance. In other words, high-level self-efficacy students attribute their failure to lack of effort, whereas low-level self-efficacy students attribute their failure to low ability. Raofi (2013) also reported findings of studies that focused on factors influencing the enhancement of self-efficacy beliefs. Cakir and Alici (2009) found successful experiences and social persuasions to be influential factors on learners' self-efficacy. Wang and Pape (2007) reported that factors such as past experience, interest, attitude toward English language, social persuasion, task difficulty, and social and cultural settings were important for determining the self-efficacy levels of learners. As shown above, many studies explored relationships among self-efficacy levels, performance, anxiety, attributes, and influential factors. However, Raofi (2013) indicated that all but one study examined short-term influences on self-efficacy, and suggested that long-term effects on self-study need to be investigated.

Todaka (2013) examined the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and English listening skills in 101 Japanese college freshmen (48 introductory level students and 53 advanced students) during the spring semester. As a follow-up investigation, Todaka (2013) examined the listening section (30 questions) of the EIKEN tests taken between April 2013 and January 2014. There was an improvement in our students' English listening skills during the experimental period (i.e., spring semester 2013), and our students had

high self-efficacy beliefs in their English listening skills at the end of the semester. Nonetheless, non-significant results were found in their listening skills assessed in January 2014 compared with those assessed in April 2013.

Bandura (1977) stated that "...lasting changes in self-efficacy and behavior can best be achieved by participant methods initially using powerful induction procedures to develop capabilities, then removing external aids, to verify personal efficacy, then finally using self-directed mastery to strengthen and generalize expectations of personal efficacy." (202)

To investigate the causes of non-significant improvements in their listening skills throughout the academic year, interview sessions were conducted in April 2013 with four students (two introductory and two advanced students), whose English listening scores either improved or worsened during the first academic year. Each student was asked about (1) English study background, (2) English experiences and self-efficacy, and (3) English learning environment. Each session lasted 20 minutes. First, the two advanced students demonstrated high self-efficacy with regard to their English listening skills, whereas the other two introductory level students did not like English and have low self-efficacy about their English listening skills when they were in high school. Thus, their listening test scores at the beginning of the spring semester reflected their levels of self-efficacy. In other words, the advanced students, who had high self-efficacy, scored much higher on the EIKEN and TOEIC listening tests taken in April 2013. However, the low self-efficacy introductory level students were able to increase their self-efficacy of their English listening skills during the semester, which in turn improved their listening scores taken in July 2013. Thus, our findings at the end of the semester were in line with the aforementioned studies. However, one introductory student, whose listening skills had improved, differed from the other introductory student. The other introductory student's listening scores worsened throughout the academic year because she could not find a specific reason to study English. That is, although both continued their English listening study during the fall semester in 2013, the student who improved her listening skills was able to maintain relatively high self-efficacy throughout the academic year because she had a specific reason for wanting to improve her English listening skills. On the other hand, the other student, who did not have a specific reason to study English, attributed her failure to uncontrollable factors such as learning environment.

Regarding the two advanced students, the student who improved her listening skills had a concrete reason for wanting to improve her skills, whereas the other student did not. However, the advanced student, whose listening test scores worsened, mentioned that he would make more effort to improve his listening skills during his sophomore year, as he attributed his failure to lack of effort, and that he still regarded himself as having high self-efficacy in his English listening skills. The above findings reconfirm the findings of the previous studies (e.g., (Hsieh and Schallert, 2008; Hsieh and Kang, 2010; Raofi, 2013)) in that high-level self-efficacy learners attribute their failure to lack of effort, whereas low-

level self-efficacy learners attribute their failure to uncontrollable factors. Note that the two students who improved their scores had a concrete and specific reason or objective for studying English. As reported in previous studies, self-efficacy beliefs are important because the advanced student whose listening score worsened still believed in his capability to improve his English skills. Nonetheless, it is hypothesized that the importance of concrete and specific study reasons needs to be recognized by Japanese college EFL freshmen for them to appreciate the positive effects of self-efficacy beliefs on their English listening skills (Bandura, 1988; Locke and Latham, 1990). In addition, most Japanese college freshmen require more than a semester to develop high self-efficacy beliefs about their listening skills because years of entrance examination-oriented teaching in secondary school create a dislike of English in them, which in turn triggers low self-efficacy beliefs about their English skills.

It is important to establish learning goals and Ideal L2 Self, as mentioned earlier, but it is difficult for college freshmen to even think about their future selves, and most of them have lost their primary reason for studying English, as their main objective to study English in high school was to pass college entrance examinations. Therefore, it is important to help Japanese college freshmen *rethink* their specific reasons for studying English along with developing high self-efficacy beliefs about their English listening skills. In other words, instructors should help Japanese college freshmen establish specific reasons for studying English and assist students in developing high self-efficacy beliefs about their English listening skills. This can be achieved by focusing on the four sources of self-efficacy beliefs, which help students shape positive learning behavior. By utilizing positive learning behavior, instructors equip their students with the necessary learning strategies so students can establish a clear vision of how they can improve their English listening skills until concrete ideal selves can be formed. Furthermore, Shirono (2004) investigated the effectiveness of educational guidance on improving the motivation of Japanese high school students. He found that providing feedback on his students' English study habits outside the classroom had helped them boost their motivation to study English. Asko (2013) examined English study motivation of two proficiency level college students. She reported that low to intermediate Japanese EFL students required constant praise in order to retain their motivation to study English. Pajares (2000; 2006) cited in Rahimi and Abedini (2009) and Wong (2005) cited in Sue and Duo (2012) also emphasized the importance of teachers' frequent and positive verbal support to back the efforts of EFL learners.

Thus, the objectives of our 2014 study were twofold: (1) to examine whether instruction that focuses on the sources of self-efficacy and re-establishing concrete reasons for students to study English can help Japanese EFL learners improve their English listening skills and enhance their self-efficacy, and (2) to investigate whether educational guidance sessions can help them maintain their self-efficacy beliefs about their English listening skills.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Participants

Participants were 197 Miyazaki Municipal University freshmen. They were categorized into four groups according to their English placement test scores. Forty-five students were grouped as introductory level students and 109 students were placed in two intermediate classes: (1) 52 students in intermediate I class and (2) 57 students in intermediate II class. Forty-two students were assigned to advanced class.

2.2. Instruction

We taught our classes for the 2013 project in the following way: (1) lectures on the significance of self-efficacy sources, meta-cognitive strategies, and ideal L2 self-image; (2) lectures on important suprasegmental features (e.g., (Vance, 1987; Todaka, 1995)) (3) various exercises specifically designed to teach phonetic features; (4) advice on various learning strategies for the needs of individual students; (5) shadowing training using DVD movies; and (6) evaluation of progress according to self-assessment checklist items.

Phonetic features taught and practiced: (1) stress, (2) rhythm, (3) linking, (4) assimilation, (5) elision, and (6) intonation. As features (3), (4), and (5) depend on features (1) and (2), the order of presentation and practice was as listed. The DVD movies that each participant used for shadowing practice were selected by each individual. Because it was important to help participants become autonomous learners and to consider individual preferences, we asked each participant to choose a DVD movie of his/her liking and submit a shadowing journal each week. Participants were asked to watch a portion of a DVD movie each week and take notes on their study processes.

In this study, we also focused on the following.

The four sources of self-efficacy proposed by Bandura (1977). We ensured that each student could gain confidence by having him/her experience an achievement in each class period. In particular, various strategies were employed to ascertain that all students would understand the listening materials they had studied in each class period so that they could get a confidence boost in their capability for English listening skills. Three teaching assistants, who were juniors at the same university, participated in all the classes to function as role models for the participants. The instructor provided positive verbal feedback to each student to support each in their belief in their capabilities and to actively engage in each listening activity. Furthermore, the instructor ensured to provide participants with positive physiological and emotional sensations to help them develop high self-efficacy in class.

- (1) The significance of establishing concrete, longer-term study objectives/reasons was emphasized throughout the spring semester, as the effectiveness of short-term objectives/goals on sustaining motivation has already been reported (Bandura, 1977).

Each student was asked to write down their own objectives/reasons for studying English for the spring semester, summer break, and fall semester. The study objectives/reasons for the spring semester were submitted during the second week of the term and those for the summer break and fall semester were submitted during the last week of the term.

- (2) Thirty-six volunteer students served as experimental subjects in this study. These students were interviewed individually in July 2014. We discussed their hobbies, interests, and future goals, and they were asked to decide on English study objectives for the summer break and on how they would enjoy improving their English listening skills (i.e., autonomy). During the summer break, weekly emails were sent to students, offering positive support (Bandura, 1977). In October, guidance counselling sessions were conducted, and we discussed how well they had enjoyed improving their listening skills and how they had felt about the weekly emails. Monthly sessions were conducted throughout the academic year.

2.3. Assessment Tools

Students' improvement in their English listening skills was evaluated using the results of TOEIC. The listening portions of three different TOEICs were administered during the onset and outset of the spring semester in 2014 and in January 2015. In addition, we utilized Rahimi and Abedini (2009) 20-item perceived self-efficacy questionnaire to assess our students' English listening skills because self-efficacy perceptions are context- and task-specific (Maddux, 2002). Rahimi and Abedini (2009) had specifically designed their self-efficacy questionnaire to examine the English listening skills of Iranian college freshmen.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First, we examined their TOEIC scores in April and July. The following table indicates the results. The maximum score for the listening test was 495. The numbers in parentheses indicate standard deviations.

Table-1. TOEIC scores in April and July

| Times/proficiency level | April | July | P value F value |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Introductory | 185.1 (47.8) | 236.8 (53.9) | P<.0001 F=23.2 |
| Intermediate I | 227.7 (46.0) | 284.7 (59.4) | P<.0001 F=9.9 |
| Intermediate II | 217.6 (54.5) | 297.4 (71.2) | P<.0001 F=45.1 |
| Advanced | 260.0 (40.4) | 296.0 (63.0) | P<.002 F=10.1 |

As Table 1 shows, the students in all proficiency groups made significant improvements in their listening scores. In our 2013 study, we examined the TOEIC scores taken at the start and end of the spring sessions. One hundred and one students (i.e., 48

introductory level students and 53 advanced students) took both the pre- and post-TOEICs. According to ANOVA, the difference in scores between pre and post-TOEICs was found to be significant at the 95% and 99% confidence levels for introductory level and advanced students ($p < .011$, $F = 6.9$) and ($p < .0001$, $F = 19.34$), respectively. Thus, we concluded that our present methods helped our students improve their listening skills, comparable with their listening skills in the previous year.

Next, we examined their self-efficacy beliefs according to the questionnaire for EFL learners regarding the self-efficacy of their listening skills developed by Rahimi and Abedini (2009) see Appendix A). Table 2 indicates the results of our students' self-efficacy scores regarding their listening skills. The questionnaire scale ranged from 0 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree), and there were 20 question items (total range: 0–100).

Table-2. Self-efficacy scores in April and July

| Times/Proficiency level | April | July | P value F value |
|-------------------------|--------|--------|---------------------|
| Introductory | 39 (6) | 42 (6) | $P < .05$ $F = 3.7$ |
| Intermediate 1 | 42 (7) | 45 (8) | $P < .12$ $F = 2.4$ |
| Intermediate 2 | 42 (7) | 45 (8) | $P < .12$ $F = 2.4$ |
| Advanced | 44 (7) | 45 (7) | $P < .81$ $F = .06$ |

As seen above, the self-efficacy scores of students in the intermediate and advanced groups did not vary, whereas those from the introductory group improved significantly at a 95% confidence level.

The correlation between the pre-TOEIC listening scores and the perceived self-efficacy scores was $r(45) = -.933$, and the coefficient of determination was 0.871. The correlation for the advanced students was $r(43) = -.966$ and the coefficient of determination was 0.934. Therefore, in both groups, the two variables were negatively correlated. This indicates that the lower their English listening skills, the higher their perceived self-efficacy.

We therefore examined the listening test scores taken during July and January to see if our present methods were able to help students improve their English listening scores.

Table 3 lists the results of TOEIC listening test scores in July and January by proficiency level¹.

Table-3. TOEIC test scores in April and January

| Times/Proficiency Level | July | January | P value F value |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Introductory | 197.3 (45.4) | 259.0 (45.6) | $P < .0001$ $F = 40.5$ |

¹ The number of students who took the January test decreased owing to the spread of flue. Thus, one student in the introductory, 5 students in intermediate 1, 4 students in the intermediate 2, and 3 students in advanced groups were absent during the test.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| Intermediate I | 239.9 (48.9) | 297.7 (62.7) | P<.0001 F=24.8 |
| Intermediate II | 246.3 (60.9) | 305.2 (68.3) | P<.0001 F=21.9 |
| Advanced | 241.9 (67.5) | 341.4 (68.4) | P<.0001 F=42.8 |

As seen above, students from all proficiency groups made significant improvements in their listening scores. Hence, we conclude that our present methods indeed helped them improve their listening scores throughout the academic year.

Table 4 shows the results of our students' self-efficacy scores in July and January. As indicated earlier, the scale ranges from 0 to 100.

Table-4. Self-efficacy scores in July and January

| Times/Proficiency | July | January | P value F value |
|-------------------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| Introductory | 42 (6) | 40 (6) | P<.076 F=3.2 |
| Intermediate I | 45 (8) | 40 (7) | P<.004 F=8.8 |
| Intermediate II | 42 (8) | 40 (7) | P<.353 F=.87 |
| Advanced | 42 (13) | 40 (10) | P<.55 F=.358 |

As seen above, the students' self-efficacy scores from every group, except those in the intermediate I did not change. In addition, the scores of students in the intermediate I significantly worsened.

The correlation between the January TOEIC listening scores and the perceived self-efficacy scores was $r(44) = -.937$, and the coefficient of determination was 0.871 for the introductory students, whereas for the advanced students, the correlation and coefficient of determination were $r(40) = -.951$ and 0.905, respectively. Thus, in both groups, the two variables were negatively correlated. This indicates that lower their level of English listening skills, higher their perceived self-efficacy. This finding was consistent with the previous correlation results of their pre-test listening scores and perceived self-efficacy scores. This seems counterintuitive, as students with high self-efficacy tend to perform better than those with lower self-efficacy, as found in previous studies. However, the negative correlation between their TOEIC listening test scores and self-efficacy scores might have been attributed to two factors: (1) the proficiency levels of our students and (2) inappropriate questionnaire items. Regarding the first factor, the mean score of our advanced students obtained in January was 341; this score is close to the mean score (315) of the same TOEIC listening test taken by 100,166 students in January. Furthermore, our advanced students' mean TOIEC score during the onset of the spring semester in 2014 was 260. Thus, the advanced students should be considered as low-intermediate level students in terms of their English listening skills. On the other hand, the mean score of our introductory students significantly improved from 181 to 259 during the academic year. Considering that many introductory students had difficulty understanding even simple utterances by native English speakers during the onset of the spring semester, we can speculate that their perceived self-efficacy, improved during this semester, as they were

able to demonstrate improved understanding during the semester. This sense of achievement helped them to maintain a high level of perceived self-efficacy throughout the academic year. In fact, (Pajares, 2006) cited in Renzhi 2012) reported that “there is no absolute connection between self-efficacy and achievement because self-efficacy reflects how capable individuals believe they are, rather than how capable they really are (19).” The advanced students might not have had the sense of achievement that the introductory students had, and as such, their self-efficacy remained the same throughout the academic year. However, it is difficult to speculate on the results of the students in intermediate I class. Since 16 out of 32 subjects were in the intermediate I class, let us examine the results of the 32 students as a whole, and then compare the results of the 16 subjects with the non-subjects in intermediate I class. As mentioned earlier, 16 subjects had received educational guidance during the summer break and fall semester. Table 7 shows their results.

Table-5. Comparison of TOEIC scores in July and January between control and experimental group students in intermediate I class

| Times/Experimental Control students in intermediate I | vs. in | July | January | P value F value |
|--|---------------|--------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Experimental group | | 235 (40.2) | 305 (71.2) | P<0007 F=13.9 |
| Control group | | 243.2 (54.4) | 292.7 (56.9) | P<.0016 F=11.04 |

As seen above, the subjects from both groups in intermediate 1 class made significant improvements in their listening scores.

Table 8 exhibits their self-efficacy scores in July and January.

Table-6. Comparison of self-efficacy scores in July and January between control group students and experimental group students in intermediate I class

| Times/Experimental Control students in intermediate 1 | vs. in | July | January | P value F value |
|--|---------------|-------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Experimental group | | 44 (8) | 41 (8) | P<.3169 F=1.03 |
| Control group | | 45 (8) | 40 (6) | P<.0036 F=9.26 |

One major difference between the two groups was that the self-efficacy scores of students in the control group significantly worsened, whereas those of students in the experimental group remained constant. Thus, guidance counseling sessions helped our subjects maintain their perceived self-efficacy throughout the academic year. On the other hand, non-subjects in the same class were the only ones whose perceived self-efficacy worsened. Although our subjects were volunteers, there might have been some emotional effects of perceived self-efficacy on the non-subjects. This is because both the subjects and non-subjects were classmates, so it is possible that the non-subjects might have had negative feelings toward subjects who had been given guidance counseling sessions.

Nonetheless, it is beyond the scope of this study to pinpoint the exact cause for the worsening of their self-efficacy beliefs regarding their English listening skills. In relation to the second factor, our questionnaire may not have been as accurate in measuring self-efficacy in Japanese EFL learners. Zimmerman and Cleary (2006) cited in Renzhi (2012) reported that “self-efficacy percepts are not only context-specific but also domain and task-specific.” Thus, our 20 questionnaire items were adopted from Rahimi and Abedini (2009) study, although they were specifically designed to assess Iranian EFL learners’ perceived self-efficacy of their English listening skills. However, Oettingen (1995) reported that “cross-cultural variations in efficacy beliefs are congruent with differences in efficacy-relevant influences operating in each culture’s school context.” Thus, the utilized questionnaire was specifically designed for Iranian EFL students’ perceived self-efficacy of English listening skills. Therefore, the negative correlation between perceived self-efficacy and English listening proficiency that we found in this study could be attributed to inappropriate question items.

Pajares (2006) also stated that “a test of self-efficacy theory requires the type of assessment specified by the theory. When such tests are appropriately conducted, results from self-efficacy investigations have shown that as Bandura (1986); Bandura (1977) theorized, particularized judgments of capability are better predictors of related performances than are more generalized judgments. Consequently, if the aim of a study is to increase prediction of academic performances, or to help distinguish self-efficacy from other expectancies or self-beliefs, research questions should be formulated with an eye to measuring self-efficacy as specifically as is relevant and useful, whilst enhancing the correspondence between self-efficacy and criterial varieties.”

Considering the two plausible factors, it seems likely that both factors might have contributed to the negative correlation between listening performance and self-efficacy beliefs found in the present study. As mentioned earlier, cross-cultural variations in self-efficacy beliefs should have been taken into account in addition to context- and domain-specific characteristics of self-efficacy percepts. In addition, our advanced students should have been considered as low-intermediate students.

4. CONCLUSION

The objectives of our 2014 study were twofold: (1) to examine whether instruction that focuses on the source of self-efficacy and the re-establishment of students’ concrete reasons for English study can help Japanese EFL learners improve their English listening skills and enhance their self-efficacy about those skills, and (2) to investigate whether educational guidance sessions can help students maintain their self-efficacy beliefs about their English listening skills. First, our present methods were able to help them improve their listening scores throughout the academic year.

Second, only the students in the introductory class were able to boost their self-efficacy beliefs about their English listening skills during the spring semester, and they were able to maintain these high beliefs during the academic year. The self-efficacy beliefs about English listening skills found in other students in the other groups did not change throughout the academic year, except for the students from intermediate 1 class. In other words, the students' self-efficacy beliefs about English listening skills in intermediate 1 class worsened during the academic year.

Third, the correlation between the January TOEIC listening scores and the perceived self-efficacy scores was $r(44) = -.937$, and the coefficient of determination was 0.871 for introductory students. For the advanced students, the corresponding values were $r(40) = -.951$ and 0.905. Thus, in both groups, the two variables were negatively correlated. This result indicates that the lower their English listening skills, the higher their perceived self-efficacy. This finding was consistent with the correlation results of their pre-test listening scores and their perceived self-efficacy scores. This, however, seems counterintuitive, as students with high self-efficacy tended to perform better than those with low self-efficacy, as found in previous studies.

We therefore infer two plausible factors for the discrepancy between the findings of this study and the aforementioned studies: (1) proficiency levels of our students and (2) inappropriate questionnaire items. Considering the two plausible factors, it seems likely that some questionnaire items might have been inappropriate. As mentioned earlier, cross-cultural variations in self-efficacy beliefs should have been taken into consideration in addition to context- and domain-specific characteristics of self-efficacy percepts. We focused on the re-establishment of students' concrete study reasons and incorporated educational guidance sessions in this study on the basis of the findings from our 2013 study. From the findings of the present study, we can conclude that the English listening skills of Japanese college EFL learners can be significantly improved with the methods we utilized. However, careful consideration for cross-cultural variations in self-efficacy beliefs should be taken into account when formulating a self-efficacy questionnaire.

A follow-up study based on relevant question items is now under way, and we hope to shed some light on the relationship between self-efficacy perceptions and English listening skills of Japanese college students. We plan to utilize current pedagogical techniques to help Japanese college EFL learners improve their English listening skills, and we'd like to find a way to help them have high self-efficacy beliefs on their English listening skills. If we can find a way to help our freshmen boost and sustain their self-efficacy beliefs on their English listening skills (or English skills in general), our freshmen would continue to improve their English skills in college, which in turn results in better mastery of English skills, and which can help them engage in English language-related jobs in the future.

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Competing Interests: The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests regarding the

publication of this paper.

REFERENCES

- Anyadubalu, C.C., 2010. Self-efficacy, anxiety, and performance in the english language among middle-school students in english language program in Satri Suriyothai school, Bangkok. *International Journal of Human and Social Sciences*, 5(3): 193–198.
- Asko, T., 2013. A study of learning motivation in english claseses. *Kokusaikaieki Bunkakenkyu*, 17(2): 45–62.
- Bandura, A., 1977. Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral changes. *Psychological Review*, 84(2): 191–215.
- Bandura, A., 1986. *Social foundation of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A., 1988. Self-regulation of motivation and action through goal systems. In: Hamilton, V. G. et al. (Eds). *Cognitive perspectives on emotion and motivation*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers. pp: 37–61.
- Brown, H.D., 2007. *Principles of language learning and teaching*. N.Y: Pearson Education.
- Cakir, O. and D. Alici, 2009. Seeing self as others see you: Variability in self-efficacy ratings in student teaching. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 15(5): 541–561.
- Chen, H.Y. and D.J. Hasson, 2007. The relationship between EFL learners self-efficacy beliefs and english performance. Available from [http://www.coe.fsu.edu/core/absytracts/mse/Huei-Yu Chen Abstract.doc](http://www.coe.fsu.edu/core/absytracts/mse/Huei-Yu%20Chen%20Abstract.doc).
- Cotterall, S., 1999. Key variables in language learning: What do learners believe about them. *System*, 27(4): 498–513.
- Csizer, K. and Z. Dornyei, 2005. The internal structure of language learning motivation and its relationship with language choice and learning effort. *Modern Language Journal*, 89(1): 19–36.
- Cubukcu, F., 2008. A study on the correlation between self-efficacy and foreign language learning anxiety. *Journal of Theory and Practice in Education*, 4(1): 148–158.
- Dennissen, J.J.A., 2007. I like to do it, I'm able, and I know I'm: Longitudinal couplings between domain specific achievement, self-concept, and interest. *Child Development*, 78(2): 430–447.
- Dornyei, Z., 2005. *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Dornyei, Z. and P. Skehan, 2003. Individual differences in L2 learning. In: Doughty, C. and M. Long (Eds). *The handbook of second language acquisition*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. pp: 589–630.
- Erkan, Y.D. and A.I. Saban, 2011. Writing performance relative to writing apprehension, self-efficacy in, writing and attitudes towards writing: A correlational study in Turkish tertiary-level EFL. *Asian EFL Journal Quarterly*, 13(1): 163–191.

- Gardner, R. and W. Lambert, 1972. Attitudes and motivation in second language learning. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Graham, S., 2006. A study of students metacognitive beliefs about foreign language study and their impact on learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, 39(2): 296–309.
- Horwitz, E., 2001. Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21: 125–132. DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0267190501000071>.
- Hsieh, P.H.P. and D.L. Schallert, 2008. Implications from self-efficacy and attribution theories for an understanding of undergraduates motivation in a foreign language course. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 33(4): 513–532.
- Hsieh, P.P. and H.S. Kang, 2010. Attribution and self-efficacy and their interrelationship in the Korean EFL context. *Language Learning*, 60(3): 606–627.
- Kikuchi, K. and H. Sakai, 2009. Japanese learners demotivation to study english: A survey study. *JALT Journal*, 31(2): 183–204.
- Kormos, J. and K. Csizer, 2008. Age-related differences in the motivation of learning english as a foreign language: Attitudes, selves, and motivational learning behavior. *Language Learning*, 58(2): 327–355.
- Lamb, M., 2004. Integrating motivation in a globalizing world. *System*, 32(1): 3–19.
- Locke, E.A. and G.P. Latham, 1990. A theory of goal setting and task performance. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall.
- Maddux, J.E., 2002. Self-efficacy: The power of believing you can. In: Snyder, C. R. and S. J. Lopez (Eds). *Handbook of positive psychology*. N.Y: Oxford University Press.
- Magogwe, J.M. and R. Oliver, 2007. The relationship between language learning strategies, proficiency, age and self-efficacy beliefs: A study of language learners in Botswana. *System*, 35(3): 338–352.
- Mahyuddin, R., 2006. The relationship between students self-efficacy and their achievement. *Journal Pendidikan Pendidikan Jil*, 21: 61–71.
- Malinowski, B., 1923. The problem of meaning in primitive languages. In: Ogden, C. and I. Richards (Eds). *The meaning of language*. London: Kegan Paul.
- Mills, N., 2006. A reevaluation of the role of anxiety: Self-efficacy, anxiety, and their relation to reading and listening proficiency. *Foreign Language Annals*, 39(2): 276–294.
- Mills, N., 2007. Self-efficacy of college intermediate French students: Relation to achievement and motivation. *Language Learning*, 57(3): 417–442.
- Multon, K.D., 1991. Relation of self-efficacy beliefs to academic outcomes: A meta-analytic investigation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 38(1): 30–38.
- Oettingen, G., 1995. Cross-cultural perspectives on self-efficacy. In A. Bandura (Ed.), *Self-efficacy in changing societies*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press. pp: 149-176.
- Oxford, R., 1999. Anxiety and the language learner: New insights. In J. Arnold (Ed.), *Affect in language learning*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press. pp: 58-67.

- Pajares, F., 1996. Self-efficacy beliefs in academic settings. *Reviews of Educational Research*, 66(4): 543-578.
- Pajares, F., 2000. Self-efficacy beliefs and current directions in self-efficacy research. Available from <http://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/effpage.html>.
- Pajares, F., 2006. Self-efficacy during childhood and adolescence: Implications for teachers and parents. In: Pajares, F. and T. Urdan (Eds). *Self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age. pp: 339-367.
- Rahimi, A. and A. Abedini, 2009. The interface between EFL learners self-efficacy concerning listening comprehension and listening proficiency. *Novitas-ROYAL*, 3(1): 14-28.
- Raofi, S., 2013. Self-efficacy in second language learning contexts. *English Language Learning*, 5(11): 60-73.
- Shirono, H., 2004. Gaihatutekidoukidukewominaosu=doukikouzounokijututekiapuro-chi. Mie Prefectural Kawagoe High School Jissen Houkoku (Mie Prefectural Kawagoe High School Super English High School Practical Report).
- Spielmann, G. and M. Radnofsky, 2001. Learning language under tension: New directions from a qualitative study. *Modern Language Journal*, 85(2): 259-278.
- Sue, M. and P. Duo, 2012. EFL learners language learning strategy use and perceived self-efficacy. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 27(3): 335-345.
- Tilfarlioglu, F.T. and F.S. Ciftci, 2011. Supporting self-efficacy and learner autonomy in relation to academic success in EFL classrooms. (A Case Study). *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(10): 1284-1294.
- Todaka, Y., 1995. A preliminary study of voice quality differences between Japanese and American english: Some pedagogical suggestions. *JALT Journal*, 17(2): 261-268.
- Todaka, Y., 2009. Self-assessment checklist and shadowing to motivate Japanese college EFL learners. *Journal of English Phonetic Society of Japan*, 13(1): 135-148.
- Todaka, Y., 2013. Self-efficacy theory and beyond. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 3(7): 359-365.
- Ushida, E., 2001. Language learning at university: Exploring the role of motivational thinking. In: Dornyei Z. and R. Schmidt (Eds). *Motivation and second language acquisition*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. pp: 91-124.
- Vance, T., 1987. *An introduction to Japanese phonology*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Wang, C. and S.J. Pape, 2007. A probe into three Chinese boys self-efficacy beliefs learning english as a second language. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 21(4): 364-377.
- Warden, C. and H.J. Lin, 2000. Existence of integrative motivation in an Asian EFL setting. *Foreign Language Annals*, 33(5): 535-547.
- Wong, S.L., 2005. Language learning strategies and language self-efficacy: Investigating the relationship in Malaysia. *RELC Journal*, 36(3): 245-269.

- Yashima, T., 2002. Willingness to communicate in a second language: The Japanese EFL context. *The Modern Language Journal*, 86(1): 54–66.
- Zimmerman, B.J. and T.J. Cleary, 2006. Adolescents development of personal agency: The role of self-efficacy beliefs and self-regulatory skill. In: Pajares F. and T. Urdan (Eds). *Self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age. pp: 45–69.

Appendix A

A Questionnaire on EFL Learners' Self-efficacy in Listening Skills

(Taken from [Rahimi and Abedini \(2009\)](#))

- (1) I have the ability to improve my listening skills.
- (2) In listening practice, although I understand almost every word, the problem is that I do not have the ability to recall them all.
- (3) I have the ability to concentrate on the content to which I listen.
- (4) I believe that my proficiency in listening will improve soon.
- (5) I am sure that if I practice listening more often, I will get better grades in the course.
- (6) I can understand the recordings in listening classes better than other students.
- (7) I cannot understand a film in English without English subtitles.
- (8) No one cares if I do well in the listening course.
- (9) My listening teacher thinks I am smart.
- (10) My classmates usually get better grades than I do.
- (11) Even if the listening practice in the class is difficult and I cannot understand it completely, I can usually find a strategy to answer the questions.
- (12) I feel stressed during listening class.
- (13) I enjoy doing listening practice, even when the speaker speaks fast.
- (14) I enjoy doing listening practice even without a proficient partner.
- (15) I am one of the best students in the listening course.
- (16) When I am doing a listening practice with a recording at home, it does not matter how difficult it is because I repeat it so many times that I can understand it.
- (17) I enjoy meeting tourists because I can understand them well.
- (18) The more difficult the listening practice is, the more challenging and enjoyable it is.
- (19) In the listening class, when the teacher asks a question, I raise my hand to answer it even if I am not sure about it.
- (20) With respect to listening skills, women are more proficient than men.

Views and opinions expressed in this article are the views and opinions of the author(s), International Journal of Education and Practice shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability etc. caused in relation to/arising out of the use of the content.