

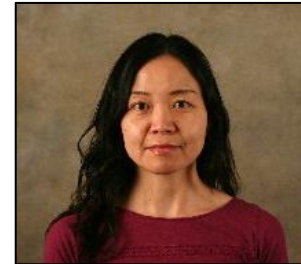


Title of Project:

Professional Development in Japanese Non-native English Speaking Teachers' Identity and Efficacy

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Project Summary

Motivation for the Study

Non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) represent more than 80% of English teachers worldwide (Braine, 2010), leading to a critical comparison with native English speaking teachers (NESTs) in the English as a Foreign Language classroom (Varghese et al., 2005). Some scholars found that NESTs believe they have strong linguistic skills and weaker pedagogical skills, whereas NNESTs believe they have a strong pedagogical skills and weaker linguistic linguistics (Ma, 2012). Furthermore, NNESTs can have low confidence in teaching practices and self-perceived language needs (Kamhi-Stein, 2000). Thus, understanding NNESTs' ideas of their capability has the potential to improve pedagogical quality and ultimately reduce the stereotypes and obstacles they regularly face. Additionally, few studies on NNESTs focus specifically on their professional identity, and studies connecting Japanese NNESTs' identity and efficacy are nonexistent.

According to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), teacher efficacy is a type of self-efficacy in which teachers think they are capable of doing in a certain activity, and it is also a cognitive process of beliefs. Thus, teacher efficacy is a combination of a teacher's perception of his/her teaching capabilities and the ability to successfully implement teaching tasks. Therefore, the level of teacher efficacy beliefs influences their performance in teaching (Bouffard-Bouchard et al., 1991), and these beliefs shape the levels of their effort, persistence, resilience, and endurance for stress (Bandura, 1997). Hence, Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) argue that teacher efficacy positively affects students' performance and teachers' persistence in difficult situations. Consequently, building appropriate teacher efficacy is a possible way for improving NNESTs' confidence, exploring how they perceive themselves and understanding how students view their teaching abilities in the light of a more confident style. Therefore, it is necessary for NNESTs to develop teacher efficacy so that they can become more competent teachers.



Teacher identity is another concept used to investigate the process of NNESTs' professional development in this study. As multiple researchers have addressed (Kerby, 1991; Coldron and Smith, 1999; Dillabough, 1999), teachers' professional identities are constantly changing processes of interpreting and reinterpreting experiences. According to Velez-Rendon (2010), numerous factors, such as teachers' educational and personal backgrounds, experiences in facing instructional challenges, cooperation with other teachers, and teacher preparation, are involved in constructing their teacher identities. Therefore, it is important to investigate NNESTs' background components and other factors.

Methodology and Research Questions

This mixed methods study relied on data that included a survey and interviews. Forty six (46) Japanese NNESTs and one hundred and two (102) NESTs who were teaching in the junior high, high school, and college levels in Japan participated in a survey. Five Japanese NNESTs and six NESTs from the three types of grade levels were interviewed. This study investigates the methods of motivating students, classroom management, and instruction during the class, perceptions of their English proficiency, experience of teacher preparation, and the influence of culture in teaching. Based on the previously stated purposes, these three research questions are proposed.

1. What are the attributes of Japanese NNESTs' efficacy and the effect of background characteristics on this efficacy?

Employing the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001), three subscales in the TSES will be investigated: efficacy for instructional strategies (Factor 1), classroom management (Factor 2), and student engagement (Factor 3). First, Factor 1 measures to what extent teachers can perform well in their classroom teaching activities. Second, Factor 2 assesses to what extent they are capable of guiding their students' behavior in the classroom. Finally, Factor 3 gauges how much teachers can enhance their students' motivation and learning development. The TSES includes a total of 24 Likert-scale questions.

2. What is the relationship between Japanese NNESTs' efficacy and professional identity, and how are they developed?

This research question asks whether Japanese NNESTs' efficacy and identity have positive or negative correlations, and moreover, this question is intended to focus on how these two psychological elements are related to other factors. Therefore, the analysis will examine each teacher's developmental processes and tendencies of their teacher identity and efficacy through the individual interview data and a larger group of survey data.

3. What are the differences between NNESTs and NESTs' efficacy and identity development?

This research question examines whether there are some distinct and similar attributes when synthesizing two different groups of teachers in qualitative and quantitative phases. Focusing on



the development of teacher efficacy and identity, I will compare findings between NNESTs and NESTs based on how each teacher's background influences these psychological elements. Eventually, the comparison will be utilized to understand how NNESTs situate themselves based on their past experiences.

Research Findings

Several major findings were discovered. First, there was a relationship between Japanese NNESTs' efficacy and self-perceived English proficiency. Secondly, although Japanese NNESTs' self-evaluated their capability of motivating students as low, they had various strategies for motivating them. In addition, NNESTs believe that they are language models for their students. Third, NESTs who were teaching at a college level self-perceived their capability of teaching activities to be higher than college NNESTs, junior high and high school NNESTs, and junior high and high school NESTs. Finally, the developmental processes associated with each type of teacher's personal and professional experiences are situated in their social, cultural, and educational settings. In other words, both Japanese NNESTs' and NESTs' efficacy and identity were formed by their previous teaching experiences, various roles as teachers, and perceptions of the Japanese educational system, culture, and students.

One of the major findings of Japanese NNESTs' teacher efficacy was the correlation between their efficacy and self-reported English proficiency, which revealed that the more efficacious they were in teaching, the higher their self-reported English proficiency. Thus, increasing targeted activities for increasing NNESTs' English proficiency should be incorporated into the teacher education curriculum. In Lee's (2004) study, all of the 18 pre-service NNEST participants were motivated English learners and considered their language improvement to be important. Hence, teacher educators should help pre-service NNESTs to engage in continuous language and instructional training. Particularly, Lee emphasized that NNEST educators not only improve NNEST pre-service teachers' instructional practices, but also serve as successful NNEST role models. Furthermore, although NNESTs agreed that their teacher efficacy for student engagement was low, findings suggest that they tried to cope with their weaknesses based on various strategies, such as being language and behavioral role models, providing positive outcomes of learning English, sharing language learning experiences with students, and implementing instructional strategies to motivate students.

Japanese NNEST participants attempted to be role models and build relationships with students, and their professional identities were fostered by relationships with other teachers—including class observations—and professional development. Sharing a mutual language and culture with students and using Japanese in class also affected the development of their identities as teachers. Japanese NNESTs' past educational experiences, language related activities, and comparisons with NESTs were the major elements that influenced their English proficiency and cultural knowledge. Importantly, interview participants agreed that study abroad experience enhanced their awareness of varieties in English.

Implications and Discussion

Teacher education plays an important role in helping novice teachers build their teacher efficacy and teacher identity. Moreover, previous experiences in teaching (Tickle, 2000) and mastery experiences (Bandura; 1986, 1997) influence teacher efficacy and identity development.



Thus, obtaining effective professional development is critical, particularly for novice teachers. While improving Japanese NNESTs' pedagogical knowledge and application, administrators should provide long-term teacher professional development. It is significant not only to provide teacher education at the university level but also to promote continuous professional development even after teachers start teaching in their classes, particularly for novice teachers. It is true that teaching experience in a real classroom is necessary for teachers to gain practical teaching approaches and classroom management strategies, but as some of the participants exhibited, strong teacher education backgrounds help teachers apply the knowledge to actual teaching situations throughout their careers.

In fact, pre-service teachers who are in EFL education in Japan have to take courses to improve their English proficiency, yet this might not be enough. As Pasternak and Bailey (2004) pointed out, acquiring high speaking proficiency is a challenge for NNESTs because of their complex concerns about their English fluency, communication skills, speaking, pronunciation, listening, and vocabulary. Therefore, it is critical to enhance Japanese NNESTs' oral and aural proficiency, and courses for these skills should be included in the curriculum. This will help in developing stronger teacher efficacy for instructional strategies and engagement. Furthermore, Brinton (2004) explained that NNEST student teachers' self-perceived weaknesses of their language skills lead to lack of confidence; therefore, it is important to improve their English proficiency to build their confidence in teaching as well.

In the real classroom setting, especially for junior high and high school Japanese NNESTs, collaboration with NESTs can lead to improvement in the level of teacher efficacy and development of teacher identity. It is true that some Japanese NNESTs feel pressure when working with NESTs. Of course, the feelings of pressure are dependent on how the students and Japanese NNESTs themselves perceive the collaboration and how well each teacher contributes to the relationship. However, the benefit of collaborative work can "build program coherence, expand individual resources, and reduce individual burdens for planning and preparation" (Little, 1987, p. 504). While observing the process of the Brazilian NNEST and NEST's collaborative partnership in ESL teaching, De Oliveira and Richardson (2004) argue that both types of teachers can share and enhance their class materials and save preparation time when they show each other mutual respect and admiration. It might not be easy for both NNESTs and NESTs to collaborate while they are engaged and satisfied in their individual roles so they do not feel like extending their capacity for teaching any more. However, it will lead to meaningful teaching practice for them, and most importantly for their students.



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