Self-efficacy beliefs among non-specialist teachers in primary English education

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Although the teaching of English to primary school children has been rapidly growing in many English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) countries around the world, a shortage of specialist teachers remains a persistent challenge. Consequently, non-specialists, such as homeroom teachers initially trained as generalists, are more often required to teach English. The present study, focusing on 304 non-specialist teachers serving in Japan's public primary schools, was designed to explore their perceived self-efficacy for teaching English, and to examine the impact of teacher characteristics (i.e., their perceived English proficiency, English-teaching experience, and appraisals of collaboration with native English-speaking teachers) on their level of self-efficacy. A multiple regression analysis revealed that the collaboration variable was more influential than the proficiency variable and that there was no significant relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and teaching experience. Moreover, integration of these results and teachers' comments in the open-ended question suggested that they functioned most effectively in student engagement by playing roles unique to non-specialist teachers and that they perceived team teaching to be more beneficial in classroom management than solo teaching. Implications for in-service training are discussed to support non-specialist teachers in primary English education.

Keywords: non-specialist teachers, self-efficacy, English proficiency, collaborative teaching, teaching experience, primary English education

1. Introduction

As English ability has become recognized as a "basic educational skill to be developed from the primary level alongside literacy and numeracy" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 72), reform efforts to make English a compulsory part of the curriculum and lower its starting age in primary schooling have become a global

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trend (European Commission, 2017, Spolsky & Moon, 2012). One consequence of these reforms is a shortage of English teaching specialists to cover the needs of all primary schools in a given country (Copland & Garton, 2014; Enever, 2014). In some areas, or even across a given country where English is taught as a foreign language, it is not uncommon for homeroom teachers initially trained as generalists to be required to teach English (Kourieos & Diakou, 2019; Rixon, 2013). Of major concern is that many of these teachers lack the specific knowledge and skills needed for teaching English (Zein, 2016), which begs the question: Is it reasonable to expect such non-specialist teachers to teach English confidently and effectively?

Bandura (1997) contends that whether teachers create learning environments conducive to meaningful student learning or not rests heavily on their talents and self-efficacy. Teachers' sense of self-efficacy refers to the beliefs they hold about their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), which is located within the framework of Bandura's social cognitive theory. Researchers in various fields of study have demonstrated that teachers' sense of self-efficacy influences their teaching behaviors and dispositions (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Previous studies have suggested, for example, positive relationships between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and outcome variables indicative of teachers' performance, such as commitment toward planning, organizing, and teaching (see Chestnut & Burley, 2015 for a review). Although teachers' self-efficacy beliefs have been investigated actively in various subject areas and educational sectors (see Klassen & Tze, 2014; Morris, Usher, & Chen, 2017 for a comprehensive review), language teachers' sense of self-efficacy has only recently come into focus (Thompson, 2020; Wyatt, 2018), and only a few studies have focused specifically on non-specialist English teachers in the context of recent educational reforms at the primary school level (Crook, 2016). The present study is an attempt to fill this gap in the literature.

Since teachers' sense of self-efficacy can be influenced and shaped by teacher characteristics (Bandura, 1997), the study aimed to explore non-specialist primary school teachers' perceived English proficiency, years of English-teaching experience, and appraisals of collaborative teaching with native English-speaking teachers, examining the impact of these characteristics on their level of self-efficacy for teaching English. Findings will contribute to our understanding of the challenges non-specialist English teachers face and how to improve the support they need to better serve their students. The study concludes with some implications for non-specialist teacher education in the context of teaching English to primary school children.

2. Background

2.1 EFL teachers' self-efficacy and proficiency

In the field of language education, a growing, yet limited, number of studies have examined EFL teachers' self-efficacy (e.g., Chacón, 2005; Moradkhani, Raygan, & Moein, 2017). As summarized in Faez, Karas, and Uchihara (2019), EFL teachers' self-efficacy has been investigated in relation to their English proficiency. The rationale is that teachers' limited English proficiency is one of the biggest obstacles to effective teaching practices (Butler, 2004) and a potential factor that may lower their level of self-efficacy. Previous studies have shown mixed results concerning the relationship between self-efficacy and proficiency. Shim (2001), for example, examined the relationship between Korean secondary school English teachers' perceived efficacy and the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), finding that there was no significant relationship between self-efficacy and proficiency and that none of the four skills functioned as a predictor of self-efficacy. In contrast, Chacón (2005), Eslami and Fatahi (2008), and Yilmaz (2011) revealed that Venezuelan, Iranian, and Turkish EFL teachers' perceived self-efficacy correlated positively with their self-reported English proficiency, suggesting that English proficiency functioned as a key element of effective teaching. Moreover, intervention studies of Iranian EFL teachers' self-efficacy (Zonoubi, Rasekh, & Tavakoli, 2017) showed that improvement in English proficiency through professional learning communities led participants to consider themselves more capable of teaching advanced-level students. More recently, in a study of pre-service teachers in Vietnam, Hoang and Wyatt (2021), utilizing a context-specific instrument of self-efficacy, revealed a much stronger relationship between their English proficiency and self-efficacy beliefs than had previously been reported.

Other examples suggesting a positive relationship between EFL teachers' self-efficacy and English proficiency abound (e.g., Choi & Lee, 2016; Sabokrouh, 2014), but the strength of that relationship seems to vary. In a recent meta-analysis, Faez et al. (2019) demonstrated that the overall relationship between perceived efficacy and proficiency was moderate ($r = .37$) and that only 13% of the total variance in self-efficacy was explained by the language proficiency variable. They concluded that although target language proficiency is an important variable, "there is more to self-efficacy than just language proficiency" (p. 1). As far as non-specialist teachers in primary English education are concerned, it is not known to what degree their level of proficiency affects their sense of self-efficacy for teaching English.

2.2 Teaching experience and self-efficacy

Research has investigated teaching experience, measured by the amount of time teachers have spent teaching in schools, as one of the teacher attributes likely to influence self-efficacy (Reeves, Pun, & Chung, 2017). Karas and Faez (2021), for example, investigated the impact of teaching experience on ESL teachers' self-efficacy in Canada, finding that it showed the largest effect size among other predictors in the regression model. When the self-efficacy beliefs of novice teachers were compared to those of experienced teachers, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) found somewhat lower self-efficacy beliefs among the novices than among the experienced teachers. Moreover, in their large-scale study of self-efficacy in literacy instruction, Tschannen-Moran and Johnson (2011) found that years of experience correlated neither to overall self-efficacy nor to three subscales of self-efficacy (efficacy for student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies). Klassen and Chiu (2010) found that teachers' years of experience showed nonlinear relationships with all three subscales of self-efficacy, increasing from early- to mid-career and then falling afterwards. This finding is consistent with Bandura's (1997) assertion that self-efficacy beliefs tend to be established early in learning, and once set, are stable and resistant to change thereafter. To date, few studies have examined how the experience of teaching English is associated with perceived self-efficacy with a special focus on non-specialist EFL teachers. The dearth of research into this line of inquiry as well as the mixed results in previous studies warrants further empirical investigation.

2.3 Appraisals of collaborative teaching and self-efficacy

In many EFL contexts (e.g., Brazil, China, Japan, Slovenia, South Korea), collaborative teaching by a team consisting of a native or near-native English-speaking teacher and a local non-native English-speaking teacher has become common practice (Hiratsuka, 2015). The collaborators are expected to carry out mutually complementary roles in the teaching of English (Carless, 2006). Carless and Walker (2006), for example, documented several cases of effective team teaching in Hong Kong secondary schools. They found that local English (specialist) teachers were satisfied with team teaching because it brought about increased opportunities to communicate in English and exposure to some useful teaching strategies such as integrating grammar into communicative activities, thus resulting in local teachers' willingness to collaborate. Bandura (1997) contends that when individuals feel contented and satisfied, they are more likely to believe that they are efficacious and increase their engagement in their activity.

In the case of non-specialist teachers, however, research has shown that they consider the collaboration with native English-speaking teachers an unnecessary burden rather than a rewarding challenge. For example, in his qualitative study of homeroom teachers serving in Japanese elementary schools, Nagamine (2018) revealed that they expressed anxiety and frustration over the collaboration with native English-speaking Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) due to their own limited English proficiency. One of the interviewed teachers described her frustration, lamenting that "I have attempted in the past to discuss teaching procedures and whatnot, and I always ended up finding myself conversing in an extremely clumsy, uncomfortable fashion with my ALT" (p. 191), and confessed her lack of confidence in teaching English, stating that it was the job that should be done by high-proficiency teachers only. These comments suggest that teachers who have a negative affective state about team-teaching experiences are less likely to believe that they can be effective in English language teaching.

Bandura (1997) identified one's affective appraisal of a given performance as an antecedent of self-efficacy. That is, both the positive feelings (e.g., satisfaction, enthusiasm, and comfort) and negative feelings (e.g., anxiety, frustration, and fatigue) non-specialist teachers experienced while teaching and preparing to teach collaboratively have the potential to either boost or undermine their sense of self-efficacy, which in turn affects the quality of instructional performance at subsequent points in time.[1] The present study focused on this specific phase of the collaborative teaching cycle, comparing the impact upon self-efficacy of teachers' affective appraisals of collaboration with that of their English proficiency and teaching experience.

2.4 Context of the study

The study reported here, focusing on Japan as an example of implementing a new curriculum in the context of education reforms, addresses non-specialist elementary school teachers' perceived self-efficacy for teaching English. The implementation process has required them to take on completely new roles and

1. Conversely, it may also be the case that teachers' actual teaching performances lower their self-efficacy, which in turn leads to anxiety and stress. With this reciprocal relationship between affective states and self-efficacy beliefs acknowledged, the present study focused on the affective appraisal of collaboration as a predictor rather than as a consequence of self-efficacy. The rationale is that team teaching was introduced to support non-specialist teachers who had only limited experience and had yet to develop a stable sense of competence and confidence (the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT], 2020), and that it was deemed important to examine how they perceived such a support system and whether it contributed to the development of their self-efficacy for the new task of teaching English.

responsibilities. Specifically, due to recent policy changes making "foreign language activities" (English) a compulsory subject for fifth and sixth grades in public elementary schools in 2011 and lowering the starting age to the 3rd grade beginning in 2020 (MEXT, 2017), homeroom teachers have been entrusted with teaching English, although they are not necessarily specialized enough or certified to do so. In addition, they have been required to team-teach with a native or near-native English-speaking assistant language teacher (ALT), regardless of their own English proficiency. The major objectives of these reforms are to improve students' English language skills, particularly listening and speaking, while additionally generating interest in foreign cultures and a positive attitude towards communicating in English (MEXT, 2017).

Given the benefits that accompany a teachers' high sense of self-efficacy (Klassen & Tze, 2014; Morris, et al., 2017), it is important to identify the potential factors that influence those non-specialist English teachers' sense of self-efficacy and to provide them with professional development opportunities to bolster their self-efficacy in the areas where they feel less capable when teaching English. To this end, the present study examined the unique impact of three teacher attributes (i.e., perceived English proficiency, years of English-teaching experience, and affective appraisals of team-teaching experiences) on teachers' perceived self-efficacy for teaching English. The following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the level of Japanese elementary school (non-specialist) teachers' self-efficacy for teaching English?
2. Do the three teacher attributes function as predictors of the different levels of their self-efficacy for teaching English?

3. Method

3.1 Setting and participants

The setting for this investigation was a group of public elementary schools located in western Japan. The researcher approached six local boards of education in three prefectures and obtained permission to conduct a survey in 84 schools. To lessen the response burden on participants, the questionnaire was designed in such a way that all items but one required respondents to select an appropriate answer from the options provided and took only 10–15 minutes to complete. It was administered online with the understanding that participation was totally voluntary and that there was no way for respondents to be identified. The questionnaire website was kept open for one month and respondents could access it at any time.

Individuals who had never taught English or who held a certificate for teaching English in secondary schools were excluded, resulting in data being available from a total of 304 in-service teachers (about 30% male, 68% female, and 2% unanswered). They were currently or had formerly been entrusted with teaching English, although their specializations were something other than English language teaching. None held a bachelor's or master's degree in the field of English education or applied linguistics. Thus, they were deemed non-specialist English teachers. They ranged in age from 23 to 62 years old and the average age was 39.74 ($SD = 12.25$). The majority (61.2%) had never taken any standardized English proficiency tests. All the remaining participants had taken the Eiken test, one of the most popular standardized tests in Japan. According to the score conversion table (MEXT, 2019), only 1.7% of the teachers who had taken the Eiken reached B2 or higher level on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001), whereas all the remaining teachers were placed somewhere between A1 and B1 levels. The average age, the ratio of teachers who had or had not taken an English proficiency test, and the proportion of those who reached B2 or higher level on the CEFR were a rough reflection of the characteristics observed among the elementary school teacher population in Japan (MEXT, 2020; the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2019).

3.2 Instruments

The data were collected through a self-report online questionnaire comprised of four sections: (1) demographic information, (2) perceived self-efficacy for teaching English, (3) perceived English proficiency, and (4) affective appraisals of team-teaching experiences. Following these sections, one multiple-choice question was asked at the end of the questionnaire, "Who do you think should teach English to elementary school children?", followed by an open-ended "why" question.

3.2.1 *Teachers' perceived self-efficacy scale for teaching English*

The Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale has gained increasing acceptance by researchers as a psychometrically and conceptually sound scale and has been one of the most commonly used scales to measure EFL teachers' perceived self-efficacy (Swanson, 2012). However, Morris et al. (2017) caution that it is a domain-general scale and not specific to any academic content area, and that those who teach multiple subjects (e.g., elementary school teachers) might assess their self-efficacy without having a particular subject in mind. To compensate for the lack of such specificity, the English Teachers' Sense

of Efficacy Scale (Chacón, 2005), developed based on the short version of the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's scale, was modified and used in the current study. It contains 12 items involving three subscales of self-efficacy (four items each): efficacy for student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies (see Appendix A). To avoid misunderstanding of the items caused by varying levels of English reading comprehension, all items were translated into Japanese. The quality of the translation was checked by two bilinguals in terms of the "felicity, intelligibility, and faithfulness of the translated items" (Eslami & Fatahi, 2008, p. 8).

The Japanese version was piloted with a cohort of 12 in-service teachers working within the participating school districts, with the aim of exploring its face validity. In a debriefing session, it was revealed that three items should be replaced to make the questionnaire a more suitable scale in the context of teaching English at Japanese elementary schools. The newly added items were designed to measure teachers' capabilities needed to achieve the educational objectives stipulated in the *Course of Study* (the national school curriculum): namely, the capabilities of making the English class enjoyable, making clear what attitudes teachers expect from students, and incorporating aspects of intercultural understanding and cultural comparison. Moreover, many of the respondents found the rating on the original 9-point Likert scale difficult as it involved too sensitive a differentiation between points. Therefore, it was modified to a 6-point semantic differential scale anchored by the terms "not at all" and "a great deal" (the higher the score, the more efficacious), and piloted again with another cohort of 14 in-service teachers.[2] No major concerns were found in the second pilot administration.

3.2.2 *Teachers' perceived English proficiency scale*

English proficiency was self-assessed for several reasons. First, the majority of the participants had never taken any standardized tests. Second, research has shown that the difference between studies using self-report proficiency scales and objective proficiency measures was not significantly different (Faez et al., 2019). Third, teachers' perceived language proficiency, not necessarily their actual language proficiency, would more likely influence their perceived self-efficacy (Eslami & Fatahi, 2008).

The "Can-Do" descriptors for A2.1 and A2.2 levels on the CEFR-J (Tono, 2013) were used in the current study. The CEFR-J was developed in response to the need

2. Given the tendency of respondents with low motivation to choose a middle position in an odd-number scale and the importance of meeting the normality and homogeneity assumptions in the general linear model, a 6-point response scale was deemed appropriate and selected for use (see Johnson & Morgan, 2016 for a detailed discussion).

for the branching of basic levels on the original CEFR (Negishi, 2012), thus making it possible to depict the distribution of non-specialist teachers' limited English proficiency more precisely than the original CEFR. Participants were familiar with such can-do descriptors as they were requested to use them in their English classes when explaining learning goals to students and assessing their attainments (MEXT, 2017). A total of 10 items, two items each for listening, reading, writing, spoken production, and spoken interaction, were selected for inclusion in the instrument (see Appendix B). Examples of the listening and spoken production items were, respectively, "I can understand short, simple announcements on public transportation or at stations or airports, provided they are delivered slowly and clearly" and "I can introduce myself including my hobbies and abilities, using a series of simple phrases and sentences." A response to each item was made along a 6-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" rather than in a yes-no format because it was thought to be difficult for non-specialist teachers to make binary decisions about English-related activities. The higher the score, the more proficient they saw themselves in the activities described. Both Japanese and English versions of the items were available from the publisher, so the Japanese version was used in the current study.

3.2.3 *Teachers' collaborative teaching appraisal scale*

Affective appraisals of team-teaching experiences were measured using a modified version of the collaborative attitude instrument developed by Vangrieken, Grosemans, Dochy, and Kyndt (2017). The instrument originally contained measurements of both teachers' perceived autonomy and collaboration. For the purpose of the present study, only the collaboration part was adopted, and the wordings were changed to capture the degree to which teachers were satisfied with collaboration and consultation with ALTs. Instructions were given in such a way that they could respond to items based on their own team-teaching experiences. The scale was comprised of 10 items, each of which concerned a different domain of collaboration in team teaching (see Appendix C). For example, the item concerning preparation was stated as "With respect to design and preparation of lessons, I find myself satisfied with discussing and collaborating with my ALT." A 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) was used to answer the questions. The higher the score, the more positive affective appraisal they gave to that aspect of the ALT collaboration. As with the self-efficacy scale mentioned earlier, all items were translated into Japanese and piloted repeatedly with a cohort of in-service teachers until causes for concern were diminished.

3.3 Data analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. First, scores were summed across items in each scale and subscale, and the total scores were used for analyses. Results of the descriptive statistics were examined to answer research question 1 and to ensure further analyses based on the assumption of normality. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was also performed to examine the construct validity of the measures used in the study. Moreover, the reliability of scores was estimated using Cronbach's internal consistency coefficient. To address research question 2, how three teacher attributes can explain overall self-efficacy for teaching English jointly and individually, both zero-order and semi-partial correlations were examined in the multiple regression analysis.

Responses to the open-ended question were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in the following steps: the researcher read all answers to get a holistic sense of the data, extracted descriptive phrases that explained their choices in the question, generated codes for the data by identifying commonalities among the extracted phrases, developed categories for the codes by aggregating similar codes together, and identified the themes by grouping the categories. Another researcher in the project analyzed the data on her own and reviewed the generated themes together. The themes were used to gain insights into the reasoning behind not only participants' choices in the open-ended question but also their evaluation of self-efficacy.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics, PCA, and reliability analysis

Table 1 shows the results of the descriptive statistics. Inspection of the mean scores for teachers' overall self-efficacy and three subscales reveals that, on the whole, the elementary teachers rated their self-efficacy for teaching English positively rather than negatively and that their ratings of the subscales were placed from high to low in the sequence of efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. Inspection of the skewness and kurtosis values reveals that the observed data on teachers' overall self-efficacy and its subscales seem to generally approximate a normal distribution, which is characterized by skewness and kurtosis values approximating zero (Curran, West, & Finch, 1996). As for the PCA, different criteria were assessed to determine factor structures of the self-efficacy scale, including the eigenvalues (i.e., larger than one), the scree plot, and conceptual argument. This resulted in a conceptually valid three-

factor solution as in the original study (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The overall Cronbach's α coefficient was .89, with the α coefficients in three subscales being .84 for student engagement, .71 for classroom management, and .74 for instructional strategies, indicating a reasonable degree of reliability.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for dependent and independent variables

Variables	*Mean*	*SD*	Min.	Max.	*Skewness*	*Kurtosis*
1. Overall self-efficacy	49.19	7.91	24	71	−0.099	−0.041
a. Student engagement	17.13	3.17	7	24	−0.104	−0.149
b. Class management	15.62	2.76	6	23	−0.154	−0.057
c. Instructional strategies	16.44	2.87	8	24	0.017	−0.115
2. English proficiency	31.61	10.70	10	60	0.261	−0.217
3. Appraisals of collaboration	39.14	7.13	21	57	−0.083	−0.557
4. English-teaching experience	3.00	2.96	0.5	13	1.107	0.715

Note. $N = 304$. Possible score ranges for respective variables are 12–72 for 1, 4–24 for a, b, and c, and 10–60 for 2 and 3.

With respect to their perceived levels of English proficiency, inspection of the mean and standard deviation scores indicates a negative rather than positive appraisal of their own English proficiency and a considerable variance in self-assessment. The skewness and kurtosis values for overall proficiency were well within the acceptable range of normality. The results of the PCA that was run with the 10-item data set indicated a one-factor solution, meaning that among the present participants, items in the scale altogether represented general English proficiency rather than five domains (listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, and writing) of English proficiency as in the original study (Tono, 2013). Cronbach's α coefficient was .97, suggesting good reliability.

Turning to the collaboration variable, inspection of the mean score reveals that, on the whole, they made positive rather than negative affective appraisals of their past collaborations. The skewness and kurtosis values suggest that the distribution can be categorized as normal. In the PCA, the first factor contained all 10 items of the scale, indicating that teachers' appraisals of collaboration were one-dimensional as in the original study (Vangrieken et al., 2017). Cronbach's α coefficient was .78, suggesting an adequate degree of reliability.

Their English-teaching experience varied from 6 months to 13 years with an average of 3.00 years, and those who had taught English for five years or less accounted for 82.6%. Although this variable had a positively skewed and leptokur-

tic distribution, both the skewness and kurtosis values indicated an acceptable level of deviations from normality.

4.2 Multiple regression analysis

A multiple regression analysis was performed with the three teacher attributes as independent variables entered simultaneously, and the results are shown in Table 2. From the R^2 and its F values, the null hypothesis that no variance in scores of perceived self-efficacy was accounted for by the three predictor variables was rejected at the .001 level. Inspection of the R^2 and adjusted R^2 values revealed that 46.3% and 45.7% of the variance of the dependent variable in the sample and population, respectively, were associated with the three predictor variables, although other sources of variance were present. Moreover, the difference between the values of R^2 and adjusted R^2 (i.e., 0.6% shrinkage) was small, indicating that the cross-validity of this regression model was very good.

Table 2. Zero-order and semi-partial correlation coefficients and regression coefficients

Variables	*B*	*β*	L-CI	U-CI	*r*	*sr*	*t* (*df* = 300)
English proficiency	.176	.239	.113	.240	.370	.232	5.492*
Appraisals of collaboration	.643	.580	.549	.738	.636	.565	13.353*
English-teaching experience	.161	.060	−.061	.384	.089	.066	1.425
$R^2 = .463$, $F(3, 300) = 86.085^*$, Adjusted $R^2 = .457$							

Note. $N = 304$. L-CI and U-CI denote lower and upper confidence intervals, respectively.
* $p < .001$.

Turning to the parameters of the model, inspection of the regression coefficients (B), the standardized coefficients (β) and the results of the t-statistic revealed that there was a significant and positive relationship between self-efficacy and two predictor variables: English proficiency and appraisals of collaboration. The magnitude of the values of semi-partial correlations (sr) and its square (sr^2) indicated that appraisals of collaboration had a larger impact on self-efficacy than English proficiency. Specifically, the sr value of .565 in the collaboration variable indicated a large effect in correlation terms, whereas the sr value of .232 in the proficiency variable indicated a small effect (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). The sr^2 values also indicated that 31.92% and 5.38% of the variance in self-efficacy were accounted for respectively and uniquely by collaboration and proficiency. Thus, these two predictor variables made a significant contribution to the model, but

appraisals of collaboration made a greater contribution to self-efficacy than English proficiency.

The other predictor variable representing years of English-teaching experience had no significant relationship with self-efficacy. In fact, the values of the 95% confidence interval of this predictor variable crossed zero, indicating that in some participants this predictor (English-teaching experience) had a positive relationship with the outcome (overall self-efficacy) whereas in other participants it had a negative relationship. Clearly, English-teaching experience did not make a substantial contribution to the regression model.

4.3 Analysis of responses to the open-ended question

For the question, "Who do you think should teach English to elementary school children?", the distribution of responses was as follows: A team of a students' homeroom teacher and a native English-speaking ALT (48.4%), a team of the homeroom teacher and a trained Japanese elementary teacher of English (38.2%), the trained Japanese elementary teacher of English alone (9.5%), the homeroom teacher alone (2.3%), the ALT alone (1.3%), a secondary school English teacher alone (0.3%), and a team of the homeroom teacher and the secondary school English teacher (0%). Interestingly, 86.6% of them opted for team teaching over solo teaching, but none chose a team teaching with a secondary school English teacher.

In the open-ended "why" question, comments were obtained from 73% of the respondents. Analysis of the comments revealed two themes. First, those teachers who chose the item containing "homeroom teacher" explicitly focused on teacher roles such as "co-learners", "supporters", and "attitude formers." These categories were illustrated, respectively, in their responses including, for example, "I am also someone learning English in the classroom, so my students can compete with me", "Since I'm not good at English either, I can understand what kind of support they need", and "I can be a model for my students by showing them my best efforts to be understood by an ALT." The second theme concerned ALT's pedagogical knowledge relating to "classroom management" and "student assessment." Those who opted for collaborating with a native English-speaking ALT and those who chose a trained Japanese teacher of English applied different evaluation criteria to these two categories when choosing a form of team teaching. Comments about classroom management from the former group included, for example, "ALTs can give precise instructions in English, which I can't" and "ALTs are good at establishing a more student-centered learning environment, which I think is difficult for me to do alone." Comments from the latter group included, for example, "From what I have seen, ALTs go easy on noisy and misbehaving students. A trained

Japanese teacher can discipline them better." Examples of comments about student assessment from the former and latter groups were, respectively, "I am not really confident evaluating students' progress in oral communication skills without the ALT's help" and "I chose a team with a trained Japanese teacher because ALTs don't really know how students should be evaluated according to the curriculum guideline."

5. Discussion

5.1 Level of non-specialist teachers' self-efficacy for teaching English

Results confirmed that on average, Japanese elementary school teachers in this study judged their capabilities of teaching English positively rather than negatively, although those in previous studies (e.g., Nagamine, 2018) expressed anxiety and frustration arising from the English teaching requirement imposed by curriculum changes. Unique to the participant teachers was the finding that efficacy for student engagement was rated the highest among the three subscales. This was in marked contrast with findings of previous studies on EFL teachers at the secondary school level, which showed that they were most efficacious for instructional strategies and least efficacious for student engagement (e.g., Chacón, 2005; Eslami & Fatahi, 2008). This finding seems indicative of the difference between specialist and non-specialist teachers' self-efficacy. Specifically, given that those elementary teachers had received no formal training to become English teachers and rated their own English proficiency as limited, they perhaps lacked confidence in using a variety of instructional strategies. Conversely, as shown in the analysis of their responses to the open-ended question, being non-specialists with limited knowledge and skills in English may have functioned positively in terms of motivating their students for English language learning because they could be sensitive to and better empathize with their students' feelings. Dörnyei (2001) asserted that a teacher who responds to students' concerns in an empathetic manner is more likely to inspire them in academic matters than one who has no personal ties with them. Future research utilizing a qualitative approach would be beneficial in exploring such efficacy-building personal experiences in more depth.

Another interesting finding was that among the three subscales the Japanese teachers judged their self-efficacy for classroom management most negatively. Previous studies suggest several possible reasons for this. For example, in her own team-teaching experience, Yanase (2016) found classroom management challenging without good collaboration between homeroom teachers and ALTs, since energetic children tend to become hard to control during pair and group work.

She also noted that an English-only policy enacted in many schools in Japan interfered with her ability to manage the class effectively, particularly when giving instructions and discipline to misbehaving children. Moreover, Katsuyama, Nishigaki, and Wang (2008) revealed the disparity in English proficiency between students who could and could not afford to take private after-school learning opportunities. Indeed, it would be difficult even for specialists to manage students with mixed levels of proficiency, and even more so for non-specialists.

In sum, results suggest that the participant teachers' self-efficacy for teaching English has developed in a way unique to non-specialist teachers. However, this uniqueness could not be ascertained without comparing the self-efficacy of specialist teachers engaging in primary English education. Given the scarcity of research on non-specialist EFL teachers' self-efficacy, one contribution of the study lies in having provided a basis on which an investigation into peculiarities can be extended in future studies.

5.2 The impact of teacher characteristics on overall self-efficacy

The major finding of the present study was that significant proportions of the variance in Japanese elementary school teachers' overall self-efficacy were explained by perceived English proficiency and affective appraisals of collaborative teaching experiences. It was also found that appraisals of collaboration were a much stronger predictor of teachers' self-efficacy than perceived English proficiency. These findings are congruent with previous studies indicating that collaboration with other teachers facilitates teachers' self-efficacy (e.g., Liaw, 2009), and with Faez et al.'s (2019) meta-analysis demonstrating that the strength of the relationship between English proficiency and self-efficacy is weak to moderate at best.

More specifically, it had been predicted that due to the nature of English language teaching, there was a strong and positive relationship between English proficiency and self-efficacy for teaching English (Choi & Lee, 2016; Crook, 2016; Sabokrouh, 2014), but the prediction was only partially supported. Rather, findings suggest that to enhance Japanese non-specialist teachers' overall self-efficacy, it is more important for them to develop a good partnership with ALTs and have a positive affective state about ALT collaboration than to just improve English proficiency to the level at which they gain confidence. Perhaps, those teachers may not have seen their own level of proficiency as a major factor in effective teaching, provided that the partnership was good enough for them to rely on ALTs for English knowledge and skills. A more extensive study including interviews with teachers is needed to give greater insights into these findings.

Results of the multiple regression analysis also indicate a non-significant effect of teaching experience on self-efficacy, which is inconsistent with previous

studies suggesting that Japanese teachers tend to show a higher level of self-efficacy as they have more teaching experience (e.g., Reeves et al, 2017). One possible explanation for this discrepancy might be that the participants did not vary widely in terms of years of English-teaching experience as evidenced by its mean ($M = 3.00$) and standard deviation ($SD = 2.96$). Thus, if more teachers with longer English-teaching experience had been included in the study, a significant result may have been revealed. Moreover, as discussed in Karas and Faez (2021), the numerical value of teaching experience may not necessarily indicate the nuances of teachers' careers such as the amount and intensity of teaching in any given year. Clearly, more research is needed to ascertain the relationship between non-specialist teachers' perceived self-efficacy and English-teaching experience.

5.3 Implications for non-specialist EFL teacher education

The present study has identified Japanese non-specialist EFL teachers' characteristics that were likely to influence their level of self-efficacy. Several implications for in-service training seem appropriate. First, given the statistically significant and positive effect of proficiency on self-efficacy, it seems important to provide non-specialist teachers with the opportunity to improve their level of English proficiency during training; otherwise, teachers with low proficiency will likely be over-reliant on native English-speaking teachers in team teaching. Given that the frequency of team teaching varies depending on school districts in Japan, elementary teachers need to develop their English knowledge and skills to the level at which they can facilitate student learning in solo teaching. As far as the participant teachers are concerned, their limited proficiency notwithstanding, they seemed to function effectively in the classroom by playing the roles of "co-learners", "empathetic supporters", and "attitude formers" for their students. Although the level of general English proficiency does not necessarily indicate the qualification to teach English (e.g., Freeman, 2017), those who are making efforts to improve their own English proficiency could only play such roles successfully.

Second, collaboration skills should be emphasized more in training. When reviewing responses to the question, "Who do you think should teach English to elementary school children", it became clear that the majority (86.6%) thought team teaching would be better than solo teaching. Also, the study confirmed the great impact of teachers' affective appraisals of team-teaching experiences on their overall self-efficacy: that is, enhancing their level of satisfaction in collaboration is an effective way of enhancing their level of self-efficacy for teaching English. Given their limited subject-matter knowledge and skills, it seems that whether or not those non-specialist elementary teachers can create an environment in which meaningful student learning occurs depends largely on how effectively collabo-

ration works. It is thus important to determine the areas of teaching practices in which they had efficacy doubt and what form of collaboration would be most helpful, which can be explored in detail through interviews and class observations. In the case of the participant teachers, classroom management was identified as the area in which they needed the most assistance, yet some preferred collaboration with native English-speaking ALTs over trained Japanese teachers of English, while others preferred the opposite for different reasons. Given findings of previous studies (e.g., Nagamine, 2018), it had been thought that teachers with low proficiency would prefer to be paired with a trained Japanese teacher of English since they might feel anxiety and frustration over the English interactions with ALTs, whereas those with high English proficiency would opt for team teaching with a native English-speaking ALT. However, there was no significant difference in level of English proficiency between the participant teachers opting for a native English-speaking ALT and those preferring a trained Japanese teacher of English ($t = .10$, $p = .753$). The level of general English proficiency does not seem to function as a key factor in choosing the form of team teaching. Given these findings, co-training aligned with self-selection of one's partner based on their specific needs might be necessary to both assure the quality of collaborative teaching and the building of good partnerships, although such efforts rarely occur due to administrative constraints and heavy workloads imposed on in-service teachers.

5.4 Limitations

Apart from the usual caution regarding generalizability, several methodological limitations of this study should be noted. First, teachers' responses in the measure of their appraisals of collaboration should be interpreted with caution. Although participants were asked to answer the questions based on their actual experience of team teaching with ALTs, some had worked with only one, whereas others had worked with more than one. Therefore, their responses might represent a score based solely on a single ALT for the former case, and a mean score based on experiences with multiple ALTs for the latter, which might have been a confounding factor in the analysis. Second, the self-report questionnaires with Likert-type scales used in the study might be prone to social desirability problems. On the other hand, some studies have suggested that Japanese teachers tend to be humble in responding to questionnaires (OECD, 2019). Examination of this cultural issue in measurement is important, but beyond the scope of this research. Third, since this is a quantitative study, there is a limit to the depth of information that can be gathered from each participant. Future studies employing a qualitative or mixed-methods approach with interviews and class observations would help not only probe the findings of the study but also explore other factors (e.g., teachers'

personality, gender, study-abroad experience, etc.) that might influence teachers' self-efficacy.

6. Conclusion

Teachers' sense of self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in how classrooms function (Bandura, 1997). The present study, focusing on primary English education in Japan, has demonstrated non-specialist teachers' characteristics that are likely to influence their sense of self-efficacy for teaching English. Although often considered "under-qualified" due to their limited English teaching knowledge and skills, they may function effectively and confidently in terms of student engagement. The study has also illustrated the potentially positive effect of collaborative teaching on the teaching practices in which they had efficacy doubt. To respond better to the non-specialist teachers' needs, particular care needs to be taken in assignment of and co-training with assistant language teachers. Further research into non-specialist teachers' sense of self-efficacy will help in making an informed decision about who should teach English to primary school children.

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Appendix A. Elementary school teachers' perceived self-efficacy scale for teaching English

Items	
Q1	How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in learning English?
Q2	How much can you do to make students believe that they can do well in English?
Q3	How much can you do to help students see the value of learning English?
Q4	How much can you do to make the English class enjoyable for all students?
Q5	How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in your English classroom?
Q6	How much can you do to get students to follow your English classroom rules?
Q7	To what extent can you make clear what attitudes you expect from students in your English class?
Q8	How well can you establish a class management system with each group of students in your English class?
Q9	To what extent can you use a variety of assessment strategies in your English class?
Q10	To what extent can you provide alternative explanations or examples when students are confused in your English class?
Q11	To what extent can you craft good questions for your students in your English class?
Q12	How well can you incorporate aspects of intercultural understanding and cultural comparison in your English class?

Note. Questions 1–4, 5–8, and 9–12 represent items concerning efficacy for student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies, respectively.

Appendix B. Elementary school teachers' perceived English proficiency scale

Items	
Q1	I can understand short, simple announcements on public transportation or at stations or airports, provided they are delivered slowly and clearly.
Q2	I can understand and follow a series of instructions for sports, cooking, etc., provided they are delivered slowly and clearly.
Q3	I can understand explanatory texts describing people, places, everyday life, and culture, etc., written in simple words.
Q4	I can find the information I need, from practical, concrete, predictable texts (e.g., travel guidebooks, recipes), provided they are written in simple English.
Q5	I can exchange opinions and feelings, express agreement and disagreement, and compare things and people using simple English.
Q6	I can give simple directions from place to place, using basic expressions such as "turn right" and "go straight" along with sequences such as first, then, and next.
Q7	I can make a short speech on topics directly related to my everyday life (e.g., myself, my school, my neighborhood) with the use of visual aids such as photos, pictures, and maps, using a series of simple words, phrases, and sentences.
Q8	I can introduce myself including my hobbies and abilities, using a series of simple phrases and sentences.
Q9	I can write invitations, personal letters, memos, and messages, in simple English, provided they are about routine, personal matters.
Q10	I can write a simple description about events of my immediate environment, hobby, places, and work, provided they are in the field of my personal experience and of my immediate need.

Note. Items 1 & 2 = listening, 3 & 4 = reading, 5 & 6 = spoken interaction, 7 & 8 = spoken production, and 9 & 10 = writing.

Appendix C. Elementary school teachers' collaborative teaching appraisal scale

Items	
Q1	With respect to the design and preparation of lessons, I find myself satisfied with discussing and collaborating with an ALT.
Q2	With respect to the selection of course content, I find myself satisfied with discussing and collaborating with an ALT.
Q3	With respect to the implementation of curricula, I find myself satisfied with discussing and collaborating with an ALT.
Q4	With respect to the selection and use of coursebooks, I find myself satisfied with discussing and collaborating with an ALT.
Q5	With respect to the selection and creation of assignments for my students, I find myself satisfied with discussing and collaborating with an ALT.
Q6	With respect to the selection of learning objectives, I find myself satisfied with discussing and collaborating with an ALT.
Q7	With respect to the assessment of my students and the selection of assessment tools and criteria, I find myself satisfied with discussing and collaborating with an ALT.
Q8	With respect to the selection of teaching methods, I find myself satisfied with discussing and collaborating with an ALT.
Q9	With respect to the planning and timing of lessons, I find myself satisfied with discussing and collaborating with an ALT.
Q10	With respect to the review and reflection of lessons, I find myself satisfied with discussing and collaborating with an ALT.

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