Exploring EAP Self-Efficacy Ratings of an Academic Faculty at a Major Japanese Research University

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Abstract: This paper presents the results of a pilot survey conducted in a Faculty of Education at a major research university in Western Japan. The purpose of the survey was twofold: Assessing faculty members' perceived self-efficacy in key academic English (EAP) skills, and gauging faculty interest in further developing certain EAP skills. Faculty (n = 67) responded to twelve EAP self-efficacy items and nine EAP developmental interest items. Faculty responses indicate high self-efficacy with generally simple tasks like self-introductions and emails, and lower efficacy for tasks like writing publishable manuscripts. Efficacy with skills in between these two ends of the spectrum revealed little pattern, indicating faculty feel they possess a diverse range of EAP skills. There was a clear pattern of preference for developing EAP skills directly related to engaging in international conferences or writing manuscripts in English. Limitations of and future directions for this line of research are discussed.

Key words: English for academic purposes, self-efficacy

INTRODUCTION

Globalization of the University

Globalization of the university is composed of the "economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement" (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p.290). The Emerging Global Model (EGM) of the university, which it appears is what the Japanese Super Global Initiative is pushing designated universities to embrace, are "characterized by an intensity of research that far exceeds past experience. They are engaged in worldwide competition for students, faculty, staff, and funding... Their peers span the globe" (Mohrman, Ma, & Baker, 2008, p.6). EGM universities possess some combination of eight key characteristics. First, the university must emphasize a global, not national, mission. Second, they are extremely research intensive. Third, faculty members work across disciplines and national borders to produce new knowledge with real-world application. Fourth, EGM universities have a diversified financial support structure. Fifth, the university partners with other universities, governments, or private businesses as they research and produce new knowledge. Sixth, the university recruits students, faculty, and administrators from around the world. Seventh, university research centers are increasingly complex, sophisticated, and dynamic – not static or beholden to any traditional model which may impede knowledge production. Finally, universities engage internationally with NGOs and other organizations capable of supporting research and human resource mobility (Mohrman, Ma, & Baker, 2008, p.7).

English and the Super Global University Initiative

In September 2014 MEXT issued a press release announcing which universities had been selected

to be either Type A or Type B "Top Global University" designates. MEXT briefly summarized the project as follows:

> "The Top Global University Project is a funding project that aims to enhance the international compatibility and competitiveness of higher education in Japan. It provides prioritized support for the world-class and innovative universities that lead the internationalization of Japanese universities. Selected universities are expected to press forward with comprehensive internationalization and university reform." (MEXT, 2014, p.1)

It should be noted that "Top Global" and "Super Global" are interchangeable. Most universities selected as Type A (Top Type), or "world-class universities that have the potential to be ranked in the top 100 in world university rankings," were national universities. Each university named their individual plan. Hiroshima University, for example, named theirs the *Hiroshima University Global Campus Expansion and Innovation Initiative*.

At the heart of each university's plan were benchmarks to be reached by 2024. While these benchmarks generally make no overt mention of English, the importance of English is often implicit. See Figure 1 below, for an example. No mention of any specific language is apparent, yet it could be argued that English will be integral to meeting several of those benchmarks. Tripling the number of papers indexed by SCI within ten years, as an example, clearly means English will necessarily become the preferred language of research at the university.

University efforts to globalize are often intrinsically linked with international ranking systems that quantify the academic impact of institutes of higher education. The potential pitfalls of reliance on such systems are clear, but according to some experts are inevitable (Altbach, 2012). The Super Global Initiative, while certainly not explicitly a language policy initiative, essentially established a mandate for selected universities to push English as the language of academe. It can be argued, therefore, that Super Global represents a de facto language policy shift expected of the universities that attained the significant funding that came with Type A or Type B designation.

Self-Efficacy

Perceived self-efficacy is commonly defined as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1994). With the aforementioned characteristics of the EGM as backdrop, it becomes clear that self-efficacy, particularly in terms of EAP skills, may be of critical importance to Japanese institutions of higher education.

> By the middle years, people settle into established routines that stabilize their sense of personal efficacy in the major areas of functioning. However, the stability is a shaky one because life does not remain static. Rapid technological and social changes constantly require adaptations calling for self-reappraisals of capabilities. In their occupations, the middle-aged find themselves pressured by younger challengers. Situations in which people must compete for promotions, status, and even work itself, force constant self-appraisals of capabilities by means of social comparison with younger competitors. (Bandura, 1994, p.13)

The powers that be Japanese higher education have decided to globalize. This was represented first through last decade's Global 30 and currently vis-a-vis the Super Global University Initiative discussed in the previous section. The process of globalizing higher education in Japan, of embracing the EGM university model, mandates faculty compete and produce on par with their global peers. By and large this amounts to a mandate to use English. Since Bandura's (1977) seminal work, research on self-efficacy has proliferated greatly. Self-efficacy has been shown to affect human agency in almost all aspects of life, but especially so in education (Schunk, 1991). Much of this research is on younger learners (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara), or academics (Pajares, 1996), or on aspects of second language learning (Eslami

& Fatahi, 2008; Graham, 2011). Little to no research, however appears to have investigated the self-efficacy of non-native English speaking academics who are compelled to use English in order to disseminate their research. The research presented here represents a small step forward in addressing this gap.

METHODS

Item Creation

The survey was entirely voluntary and anonymous. Demographic items inquiring about respondent department, gender, and age were collected in order to determine if the final sample was representative of the faculty overall. Considering the practical aim of this survey was to assess faculty self-efficacy and identify areas of academic English faculty members wished to further develop, knowing if there were differences among faculties, genders, or age groups that could inform the implementation of future faculty development opportunities was appropriate.

Following the evidence-centered design protocol advised by Mislevy, Almond, & Lukas (2003), the item development relied upon critical domain knowledge derived not only from previous EAP research, but the explicit goals set by this university. The items were thus developed with an *a priori* construct in mind. Figure 1 (below) is reproduced from a press release concerning Hiroshima University's Global Issues Initiative, and shows where the university hopes to be by 2024 (Asahara & Sakakoshi, 2014).

Figure 1. Sample Super Global Initiative Benchmarks (from Hiroshima University)

All self-efficacy items were written in the form of "*I can* [insert academic English task] *in English*." This is in keeping with the best practices advised by Bandura (2006). The items were written in English, then translated into Japanese. There was no back translation, however a committee made up of Japanese faculty with high English proficiency checked the items. The 12 items are shown in Figure 2, below, along with their Japanese translations.

1. I can introduce myself to someone in English.
　　　　私は英語で自己紹介をできる。
2. I can write basic emails in English.
　　　　私は英文Eメールを 作成できる。
3. I can provide academic guidance to international students in English.
　　　　私は留学生に英語で学術的な指導をできる。
4. I can write a syllabus for my course(s) in English.
　　　　英語のシラバスを簡単に作成できる。
5. I can teach my current course(s) in English.
　　　　現在自分が開講している科目を英語でも講義できる。
6. I can write an abstract in English.
　　　　英語の論文要旨を容易に書くことができる。
7. I can write a presentation proposal for an international conference in English.
　　　　国際学会のための英文によるプロポーサルを容易に作成できる。
8. I can write a publishable academic paper in English.
　　　　私は独力でそのまま出版可能な英語論文を書くことができる。
9. I can speak about my specific research interests in English.
　　　　私は関心のある研究分野に関して、英語で会話できる。
10. I can speak English in diverse academic contexts.
　　　　私は研究分野と異なる学術的内容に関して英語で会話できる。
11. I can give a poster presentation at a conference in English.
　　　　国際学会における英語でのポスター発表ができる。
12. I can give an academic presentation at a conference in English.
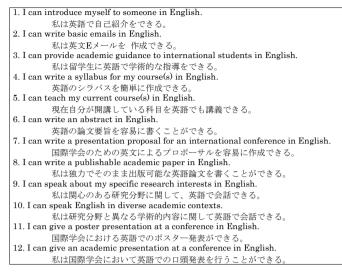　　　　私は国際学会において英語での口頭発表を行うことができる。

Figure 2. EAP self-efficacy items (English & Japanese)

Respondents were also requested to rate their level of interest in developing EAP skills in nine specific areas. See Figure 3 for these options and their respective Japanese translations. The self-efficacy items and EAP developmental interest items overlapped but did not match one-to-one. This survey data was collected in order to identify areas of greater and lesser self-efficaciousness, and also to identify EAP skills the faculty wished to grow. Developmental interest items were therefore limited to broad skills that could be delivered via a workshop to a diverse set of faculty. While a faculty member may not feel efficacious in delivering their specific courses in English, for example, the notion of developing that skill via a group workshop or seminar seemed challenging due to the likelihood of that skill being content-area specific. The developmental interest items did include two write-in slots in which respondents could identify other skills they were interested in fostering.
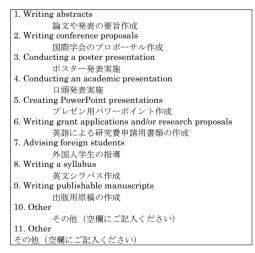
1. Writing abstracts
　　　　論文や発表の要旨作成
2. Writing conference proposals
　　　　国際学会のプロポーサル作成
3. Conducting a poster presentation
　　　　ポスター発表実施
4. Conducting an academic presentation
　　　　口頭発表実施
5. Creating PowerPoint presentations
　　　　プレゼン用パワーポイント作成
6. Writing grant applications and/or research proposals
　　　　英語による研究費申請用書類の作成
7. Advising foreign students
　　　　外国人学生の指導
8. Writing a syllabus
　　　　英文シラバス作成
9. Writing publishable manuscripts
　　　　出版用原稿の作成
10. Other
　　　　その他（空欄にご記入ください）
11. Other
その他（空欄にご記入ください）

Figure 3. EAP developmental interest items (English & Japanese)

Response Scale

A six-point scale with no neutral option was used for the self-efficacy items. Response options *were strongly disagree*（全くそう思わない）, *disagree*（そう思わない）, *somewhat disagree*（あまりそう思わない）, *somewhat agree*（ややそう思う）, *agree*（そう思う）, and *strongly agree*（強くそう思う）. Regarding the items inquiring about level of interest in developing specific EAP skills, a four point scale was used. No neutral option was given, and response options were *highly interested*（大変興味がある）, *somewhat interested*（やや興味がある）, *not very interested*（あまり興味がない）, and *not at all interested*（全く興味がない）. The decision to use scales without a neutral response option is in keeping with best practices in survey research the field (Bond and Fox, 2013; Fulcher & Davidson, 2007; Nemoto & Beglar, 2014).

Survey Distribution

The survey was distributed in both hard copy and electronic format. A hard copy of the survey was delivered to each faculty member via their mailbox in the faculty support office. Attached to the front of the survey was a letter, in both Japanese and English, informing them of the purpose of the voluntary and anonymous survey and thanking them for taking the time to share their opinions. A collection box was placed in the faculty support office to collect completed surveys. The electronic version of the survey was also distributed via an email that linked faculty to an online version of the survey hosted at www.qualtrics.com, a major online survey provider. A full calendar month was allowed to solicit as many responses as possible.

RESULTS

Demographics

A total of 67 responses to the survey were gathered. A department-by-department breakdown of the number of responses can be found in Table 1, below. 70.1% (n = 47) of the responses came from male faculty, 25.4% (n = 17) from female faculty, and the remaining 4.5% (n = 3) declined to provide a response. The age of the respondents was varied but were generally consistent with the age distribution among the Faculty of Education. 13.4% (n = 9) of respondents were under 35 years of age, 28.3% (n = 19) were between 36 and 45, 29.8% (n = 20) were between 46 and 55, 23.9% (n = 16) were 56 or older, and 4.5% (n = 3) declined to provide response.

Table 1. Respondents by department

	n	%
Elementary School Teacher Education	9	13.4
Special Needs School Teacher Education	6	9.0
Science Education	6	9.0
Mathematics Education	3	4.5
Technology and Information Education	1	1.5
Social Studies Education	4	6.0
Japanese Language and Culture Education	1	1.5
English Language and Culture Education	2	3.0
Teaching Japanese as a Second Language	3	4.5
Health and Sports Science Education	3	4.5
Human Life Science Education	6	9.0
Music Culture Education	2	3.0
Art Education	4	6.0
Educational Studies	8	11.9
Psychology	9	13.4
Total	67	100.0

EAP self-efficacy items

The results of the EAP self-efficacy items, shown in Table 2, indicate respondents feel generally efficacious when it comes to introducing themselves or writing basic emails in English. These two items scored a mean response of 4.49 and 4.45, respectively. Giving a poster presentation, speaking about an area of interest, giving an academic presentation, and writing abstracts were the next most highly rated self-efficacy items. Following were two curricular EAP tasks, writing a syllabus and guiding international students. Writing a presentation proposal in English scored relatively low, particularly considering respondents indicated a greater sense of self-efficacy in giving presentations (poster or academic). Teaching courses, speaking English in diverse contexts, and writing publishable manuscripts were the tasks that revealed the lowest sense of self-efficacy among the faculty. It is worth noting the rather large standard deviations as well.

Table 2. Results for EAP self-efficacy (from high to low)

I can [insert item] *in English.*	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Introduce myself	67	4.49	1.235
Write a basic email	66	4.45	1.166
Give a poster presentation	67	3.64	1.505
Speak about my area of interest	67	3.43	1.362
Give an academic presentation	67	3.34	1.441
Write an abstract	67	3.31	1.351
Write syllabus for my course(s)	67	3.28	1.346
Guide international students	67	3.06	1.424
Write a presentation proposal	67	3.04	1.375
Teach my course(s)	67	2.82	1.359
Speak English in diverse contexts	67	2.39	1.325
Write a publishable paper	67	2.30	1.467

EAP developmental interest items

The EAP developmental interest items showed some pattern of preference (see Table 3). Hypothetical workshops emphasizing skills that would help participants produce publishable papers or make presentations in English were more desired than those that would not.

Table 3. Results for EAP developmental interest (from high to low)

	n	*M*	*SD*
Writing Abstracts	66	1.73	.921
Academic Presentations	66	1.79	.953
PowerPoint	66	1.92	.950
Writing Publishable Papers	62	2.00	.849
Writing Conference Proposals	62	2.03	1.024
Poster Presentations	64	2.05	.933
Guiding International Students	62	2.16	.891
Writing Grants & Research Proposals	60	2.57	.998
Writing Syllabi	60	2.65	.799

Writing grants or proposals seems to be the lone exception to this conclusion. Though purely speculative, this could be due to the dominance of the Japanese national *kaken* grant system. Pursuing foreign grants seems to be rather rare for most Japanese faculty. When it comes to writing syllabi

in English, around the time of the survey release the faculty submitted Japanese syllabi for all courses for professional translation by an outside provider. The interest in developing this skill was correspondingly low.

Given the sparse response rate from some departments (see Table 1) it was difficult to approach analysis on a department-by-department basis. Such an approach would be ideal and allow for the tailoring of faculty development workshops that meet the specific needs of a given faculty. It would seem likely that certain sub-faculties may exhibit a different sense of self-efficacy or range of EAP development interests than others. The Department of English Language and Culture Education is likely to have different EAP needs and wants than the Departments of Psychology or Elementary School Teacher Education, for example. Subsequent iterations of this study, should they be conducted, would be well-advised to take measures to encourage a greater response rate from each sub-faculty.

Only two respondents elected to make use of the field marked "other" to write in any an additional area of potential development. Both suggestions were made in Japanese. The first response was "English lessons for Japanese-speaking students. Japanese lessons for English-speaking students" (英語による日本人学生向け授業，日本語による英語圏学生向け授業). The other comment was to have "conversations about various topics" (様々な話題について会話・議論すること). As this survey focuses on faculty development needs, these comments were disregarded for the analysis here but may be considered further should future iterations of this instrument be developed.

Other comments

Two respondents provided additional comments (see Figure 4).

上記のように自己のグローバル化（英語力＜第二言語＞の運用能力など）が進めていない状況で、
色々な仕事をするのは困難である。教員研修のサポートシステムを組織化してほしい。でないと、
いちいち、外部の英会話教室などに通わないといけなくなる。
As described above, it is difficult to work on many things in the situation of your own globalization (English ability<the second language> is not developed). I'd like to organize the support system to train faculties. Otherwise, we have to find private schools by ourselves.

興味はありますが、研究の時間が全くなく、空きコマもほぼなく、授業後は教育相談で遅くまで
働いているため、何か行事があっても参加できません。土日等なら空いている土日があれば参加できる
かもしれませんが。
I'm interested in the workshops, but it's impossible as I have so many things to prepare and I have many classes. I don't even have time to research. Maybe I can join if they are held on the weekends.
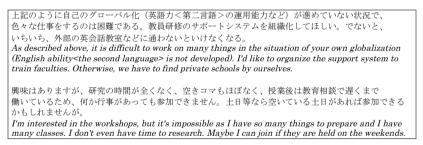
Figure 4. Additional comments from respondents

These comments are insightful inasmuch as they reflect practical needs of the faculty. What we see from these comments is that there is support for the implementation of faculty development workshops focused on EAP skills. There is also the practical matter of being able to attend these workshops. Future versions of this instrument should be augmented to include a section asking about the times during the academic year when faculty would most appreciate these professional development opportunities being offered.

DISCUSSION

Responses to the self-efficacy items were both intuitive and yet contradictory. Self-introductions and basic emails seem to be the simplest tasks among the twelve for which responses were solicited. Speaking English in diverse contexts and writing publishable papers, which were rated the 11th and 12th least self-efficacious tasks overall, are quite arguably the most difficult tasks for native English speakers, too. The contradictions come when, for example, writing a presentation proposal exhibited a relatively low self-reported self-efficacy rating from these respondents compared to the actual delivery

of poster/academic presentations. This is counter-intuitive.

Considering all EAP self-efficacy items emphasized productive English skills (speaking and writing), there is perhaps a temptation to view them as reflective of a single construct. There exists the possibility, however, that speaking and writing are two separate constructs and that they should be analyzed separately. There is also the possibility that some respondents were providing responses based upon actual experiences whereas others may not have experienced a given task first hand and were, therefore, responding to the survey with a projected sense of self-efficacy. Future versions of this instrument should thus ask respondents to indicate whether or not they have actually experienced the tasks on which they are being prompted to rate their self-efficacy. Delineating between the imagined and known difficulty of EAP tasks would greatly inform our understanding of the areas in which faculty development opportunities would be most valued and impactful.

There may be a more appropriate way of analyzing this data. It seems particularly well-suited to a Rasch-based analysis, though the number of items and the potential for multi-dimensionality may hamper analysis with the data presented here. Rasch would allow this data to be turned from a mere ranking of self-efficacy on the 6-point Likert response scale into true interval data. The advantage of such an approach would be seeing just how much more or less self-efficacious faculty feel on one item in comparison with the others.

This study has limitations and can be improved in several ways. First, it is imperative to keep in mind that only 67 responses were gathered from a faculty composed of nearly 200 people. As the survey was entirely voluntary and anonymous, there is the potential that those who went unmeasured may have actively avoided the survey for some reason(s). The results cannot be taken to represent the entire faculty of education, let alone the university faculty at-large. The responses here give an indication of what those who willingly completed the survey feel about their EAP self-efficacy and the EAP skills they would like to further develop. The two response scales did not match in number of response options (six for self-efficacy items, four for developmental interest items) or in the order of the responses (negative to positive for self-efficacy, opposite for developmental interest). Future versions of the instrument must address this issue.

CONCLUSIONS

The research presented here has made an initial foray into measuring the EAP self-efficacy of a single, but large, faculty at a Japanese university. The two goals of assessing faculty members' EAP self-efficacy and EAP developmental interest areas have been reached, but not without some qualifications. While there appears to be some degree of logical, intuitive, predictable pattern in self-efficacy items, there were items that did not perform in an expected way. This line of research, should it be continued, would do well to supplement this instrument with a greater number of items, take measures to increase response rate, and incorporate additional qualitative measures such as interviews asking faculty to interpret why some items may be performing unpredictably. A more technical analytic approach such as that offered by Rasch analysis may also prove wise.

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