



## SELF-EFFICACY OF ENGLISH LISTENING SKILLS IN JAPANESE COLLEGE EFL LEARNERS: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSES

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### **Abstract:**

The present study employed both quantitative and qualitative analyses to better understand the causes of unmotivated and distracted behaviors among students. Furthermore, the essential development of a cycle of self-regulated learning (Ambrose et al., 2010) was focused upon to promote better learning strategies and to maintain motivation to study English. Our participants were 200 Miyazaki Municipal University freshmen in Japan. Based upon the quantitative and qualitative analyses, we found that (1) all the students except for advanced students made significant improvements on TOEIC during the first term.; (2) all the students except for intermediate II students made significant improvements on self-efficacy; (3) a positive correlation between English listening skills and self-efficacy was found; (4) the establishment of (new) concrete English study reasons have to be prioritized before English activities targeted to enhance self-efficacy can help Japanese college EFL freshmen sustain their motivation to study English; (5) much more consideration needs to be given to help Japanese college EFL learners understand the importance of study plans to carry out necessary tasks to improve their English listening skills; (6) time management skills to prioritize English study need to be taught to help distracted freshmen set a time to improve their English listening skills; and (7) individualized educational guidance sessions need to be re-implemented in our English curricular activities to help Japanese college EFL freshmen understand the significance of time management skills, and of self-regulated skills.

**Keywords:** self-efficacy, English listening skills, college EFL learners, motivation

## 1. Introduction

This study is the third in a series of studies on self-efficacy of English listening skills in Japanese college EFL freshmen. In our 2013 study, we were able to help our students improve their English listening skills and have high self-efficacy of English listening skills during the first term of the academic year; however, non-significant improvements in English listening skills and self-efficacy in the remaining part of the academic year were also found. We attributed the cause of the non-significant improvements to the lack of specific reasons for continued English study. This is because most high school students in Japan study English to pass college entrance examinations and once students have entered college they perceive very little reason to continue studying English (see Hasegawa, 2004; and Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009 for demotivation in Japanese EFL learners' past English studies). Interview sessions with four students revealed the significance of Japanese college EFL learners' reestablishment of new and concrete reasons to study English in college. Thus, we speculated that our freshmen needed to rethink their new and concrete reasons for English study to appreciate the benefits of self-efficacy of their English listening skills.

In our 2014 study, we focused our attention on the importance of reasons for English study as well as the four sources of self-efficacy (i.e. performance outcome, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological feedback). In addition, we included educational guidance sessions in our pedagogical approach. This is because Shirono (2004) found that providing high school students with feedback on their English study habits outside the classroom helped them boost their motivation to study English. Asko (2013) examined English study motivation at two proficiency levels in 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) emphasized the importance of teachers' frequent and positive verbal support to back the efforts of EFL learners.

In our 2014 study, significant improvements in students' English listening skills were found *throughout* the 2014 academic year. Thus, emphasis on concrete reasons for English study and on the four sources of self-efficacy helped our students improve their English listening skills throughout the entire 2014 academic year.

However, much care is needed when creating the self-efficacy questionnaire items. Zimmerman and Cleary (2006 cited in Renzhi, 2012, p. 41) reported that "*self-efficacy percepts are not only context-specific but also domain and task-specific.*" Furthermore, Oettingen (1995, p.1) reported that "*cross-cultural variations in efficacy beliefs are congruent*

*with differences in efficacy-relevant influences operating in each culture's school context."* For the 2014 study, our 20 questionnaire items were adopted from Rahimi and Abedini's (2009) study, which were specifically designed to assess Iranian EFL learners' perceived self-efficacy of their English listening skills. Because the utilized questionnaire was specifically designed for Iranian EFL students' perceived self-efficacy of English listening skills, the negative correlation between perceived self-efficacy and English listening proficiency that we found in our 2014 study could be attributed to inappropriate question items.

In the present study, suggestions made by Moriarty (2014) for designing research into self-efficacy were carefully considered. Moriarty (ibid) reported that there are four sets of caution that need to be taken into careful consideration when we investigate self-efficacy in performance on tasks and when formulating a self-efficacy questionnaire. As mentioned earlier, the significance of context-specific, domain-specific, task-specific, and culture-specific natures needs to be understood. Second, the alignment between measures of self-efficacy and measures of performance on the critical task needs to be carefully considered. Thirdly, it's importance to avoid delays between the administration of self-efficacy scales and related tests of performance. Finally, measures of self-efficacy should be administered before tests on the critical task. Thus, these sets of caution were taken into consideration in our 2015 study.

The effectiveness of guidance counseling sessions was found in our 2014 project; however, no guidance counseling sessions were able to be conducted in this 2015 study because of time constraints and schedule conflicts. This project focused instead on teaching the process of learning by using the learning cycle proposed by Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman (2010). This is because instruction on goal-orientedness (Greenstein, 2012 cited in Noguchi, 2014), action plans for improvement, and analytical skills (Noguchi, 2014) has been found important in autonomous learning.

Our present study also employed *qualitative* analyses of: (1) the effectiveness of the establishment of new concrete reasons for English study; (2) the four sources of self-efficacy; and (3) an understanding of the cycle of self-regulated learning on students' English listening skills. Usher and Pajares (2008) noted that research into self-efficacy has predominantly relied upon quantitative measures.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Participants

Our participants were 200 Miyazaki Municipal University freshmen. They were categorized into four groups according to their English placement test scores: (1) 47

students were grouped as introductory level students; (2) 104 students were placed in two intermediate classes, (52 students in intermediate I class and 52 students in intermediate II class), and; 47 students were assigned to the advanced class. However, the mean TOEIC listening test scores in 2015 ranged from 315.9 to 326.5 among nine TOEIC tests that had been officially conducted in Japan. Thus, all of our students, regardless of this study's groupings, should be considered as low introductory to low intermediate level students.

## **2.2 Instruction**

Classes were taught for the 2014 and 2015 projects in the following way: (1) lectures on important suprasegmental features (e.g., Vance, 1987; Todaka, 1995); (2) various exercises specifically designed to teach phonetic features; (3) advice on various learning strategies for the needs of individual students; (4) shadowing training using DVD movies; and (5) evaluation of progress according to self-assessment checklist items.

In both this study and the 2014 study, we also focused on the following:

- (1) The four sources of self-efficacy proposed by Bandura (1977). We ensured that each student gained 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.
- (2) Positive role models. Six teaching assistants, juniors at the same university, participated in all the classes and functioned 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 that participants were provided with positive physiological and emotional sensations to help them develop high self-efficacy in class.
- (3) The importance of establishing concrete, longer-term study objectives/reasons, 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.

(4) The importance of understanding the learning process. During the first half of the term, students were taught and reminded what an effective learning cycle is in order to help them engage in actual tasks to improve their English listening skills.

### 2.3 Assessment Tools

Students' improvements in English listening skills were evaluated using the results of TOEIC. The listening portions of two different TOEICs were administered at the beginning and end of the spring semester in 2015. In addition, we formulated a ten-item self-efficacy questionnaire to assess our students' English listening skills. As mentioned earlier, because self-efficacy perceptions are both context- and task-specific (Maddux, 2002) and cultural context-specific (Oettingen, 1995), we specifically designed our self-efficacy questionnaire to examine the English listening skills of Japanese college EFL freshmen (see Appendix 1).

In addition, a qualitative assessment of our students' motivational level was conducted (see Appendix 2). We formulated a questionnaire consisting of five questions which investigated if students were able to sustain motivation to improve their English listening skills throughout the 2015 academic year. Finally, we examined how well students understood the importance of a learning cycle consisting of (1) study plans, (2) assessment, and (3) reflections on their progress.

### 3. Results and Discussion

First, we examined their TOEIC scores from both April and July in 2015. 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 2015**

Times/Proficiency level	April	July	P value / F value
Introductory	219.3 (43.3)	242.1 (51.5)	P<.0226 F=5.4
Intermediate I	223.0 (43.1)	257.5 (36.5)	P<.0007 F=12.3
Intermediate II	247.8 (44.8)	276.7 (46.0)	P<.0016 F=10.6
Advanced	291.6 (54.4)	303.9 (60.5)	P<.2946 F=1.1

As Table 1 shows, students in all proficiency groups except for advanced level made significant improvements in their TOEIC listening scores. Next, we investigated students' self-efficacy beliefs by examining the responses to the reformulated Questionnaire on EFL Learners' Self-efficacy in Listening Skills (see Appendix 1).

Table 2 indicates the results of our students' self-efficacy scores regarding their listening skills in 2015. The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions, each scaled from 20 (totally disagree) to 100 (totally agree). The entire questionnaire produces results that range from 200–1000.

**Table 2:** Self-efficacy scores in April and July 2015

Times/Proficiency level	April	July	P value \ F value
<b>Introductory</b>	690.8 (130.9)	806.5 (86.4)	P<.0001 F=28.35
<b>Intermediate I</b>	761.8 (89.0)	801.3 (87.1)	P<.0359 F=4.6
<b>Intermediate II</b>	729.4 (144.7)	790.0 (113.2)	P<.12 F=2.4
<b>Advanced</b>	719.1 (115.5)	795.5 (123.0)	P<.0193 F=5.7

As seen above, self-efficacy scores at all proficiency level students except for students in intermediate II class improved significantly at the 95% confidence level.

The correlation between both the pre-TOEIC listening scores and pre-perceived self-efficacy scores and the post-TOEIC listening scores and post-perceived self-efficacy scores are shown in the following table. The numbers in parentheses indicate coefficients of determination.

**Table 3:** Correlation between 2015 TOEIC listening scores and perceived self-efficacy scores

Correlation/Proficiency level	Correlation (April)	Correlation (July)
<b>Introductory</b>	.919 (.836)	.972 (.945)
<b>Intermediate I</b>	.966 (.933)	.971 (.943)
<b>Intermediate II</b>	.932 (.868)	.949 (.9)
<b>Advanced</b>	.914 (.836)	.944 (.891)

As seen above, in all of the groups, the two variables were very positively correlated, which confirms the findings of previous studies that self-efficacy questionnaire items must be both context- and task-specific (Maddux, 2002) and cultural context-specific (Oettingen, 1995).

In our 2014 study, we adopted Rahimi and Abedini's (2009) self-efficacy questionnaire which was intended to examine only the English listening skills of Iranian college freshmen. Since no consideration for our school's cultural context was given in the 2014 study, a negative correlation was found between TOEIC listening scores and self-efficacy scores. Thus, with this 2015 study, the significance and necessity of not only context-and task-specific factors, but also cultural context was reconfirmed for the formulation of a self-efficacy questionnaire.

Next, the motivation questionnaire items (see Appendix 2) were formulated based on the idea that learners need to take responsibility for setting goals, postulating learning plans, and reflecting on and assessing their learning strategies (Collins, 2009).

Improvements during the first term on TOEIC and self-efficacy were found to be non-significant among advanced students and intermediate II students respectively. For this reason, we analyzed our questionnaire items with the focus on those two proficiency students.

First, we examined the advanced class students' survey results. Out of 41 advanced class students, 17 students were able to sustain motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year; however, 24 students (11 students whose TOEIC scores improved during the first term and 13 students whose TOEIC scores worsened during the first term) could not sustain motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year.

**Table 4:** Information about 11 advanced class students whose TOEIC scores improved during the first term, but who could not sustain motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year

Students	TOEIC Pre	TOEIC Post	TOEIC Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Self-efficacy Pre	Self-efficacy Post	Self-efficacy Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Comments
A1	305	320	+15	680	740	+60	Lost interest in English
A9	285	315	+30	820	800	-20	
A2	205	245	+35	700	800	+100	No concrete English study reasons
A3	225	240	+15	600	800	+200	No concrete future goals
A5	305	335	+30	560	860	+300	
A4	420	420	0	620	900	+280	Found more interest in Korean
A11	300	325	+25	540	780	+240	
A6	205	360	+155	800	820	+20	Started working part-time during the second term
A7	335	375	+40	720	860	+140	
A10	260	265	+5	800	860	+60	
A8	320	375	+55	640	800	+160	Cannot carry out necessary tasks
	Mean 288	Mean 325		Mean 680	Mean 820		

As indicated above, 11 subjects were able to improve their TOEIC listening scores during the first term, but they could not sustain their motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year. As self-efficacy scores in 10 subjects improved

during the first term, it can be speculated that they had difficulty sustaining their motivation during the summer and the second term of the academic year.

The reasons for their inability to sustain their motivation to study English can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Lost interest in English (subjects A1 and A9).
- (2) No concrete English study reasons or future goals (subjects A2, A3, and A5).
- (3) Found more interest in other languages (subjects A4 and A11)
- (4) Started working part-time during the second term (subjects A6, A7, and A10)
- (5) Cannot carry out necessary tasks (subject A8).

Out of 13 students whose TOEIC scores worsened, 8 students' self-efficacy scores improved or did not change, and 5 students' self-efficacy scores worsened.

**Table 5:** Information about 8 advanced class students who could not sustain motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year  
 (TOEIC scores worsened, but self-efficacy scores improved or did not change)

Students	TOEIC Pre	TOEIC Post	TOEIC Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Self-efficacy Pre	Self-efficacy Post	Self-efficacy Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Comments
A12	270	230	-40	740	920	+180	No concrete future goals
A13	235	230	-5	760	800	+40	Lost interest in English
A15	260	252	-5	680	760	+80	No concrete English study reasons
A17	245	210	-35	620	620	0	
A19	470	385	-95	800	820	+20	Cannot carry out necessary tasks
A23	335	310	-25	720	800	+80	
A22	360	270	-90	860	900	+40	Found interest in other activities
A24	405	350	-55	350	860	+410	Started working part-time during the second term
	Mean 323	Mean 204		Mean 503	Mean 589		

The following indicates the reasons for the inability to sustain motivation to study English among the 8 subjects whose self-efficacy either improved or did not change during the first term.

- (1) No concrete study reasons or future goals (subjects A12, A15, and A24).
- (2) Lost interest in English (subject A13).
- (3) Cannot carry out necessary tasks to improve English skills (subjects A19 and A23)
- (4) Found interest in other activities (subject A22)
- (5) Started working part time (subject A24)



**Table 6:** Information about 5 advanced class students who could not sustain motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year (TOEIC and self-efficacy scores worsened)

Students	TOEIC Pre	TOEIC Post	TOEIC Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Self-efficacy Pre	Self-efficacy Post	SEB Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Comments
A14	315	285	-30	860	800	-60	Started working part-time during the second term
A18	270	260	-10	860	800	-60	
A16	280	250	-30	700	680	-20	No concrete English study reasons
A20	360	320	-40	860	780	-80	Found more interest in Chinese
A21	265	245	-20	620	600	-20	Cannot carry our necessary tasks
	Mean 298	Mean 272		Mean 780	Mean 732		

The reasons for their inability to sustain their motivation to study English among the 5 subjects whose TOEIC scores and self-efficacy beliefs worsened during the first term can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Started working part-time during the second term (subjects A16 and A18)
- (2) No concrete study reasons or future goals (subject A15)
- (3) Cannot carry out necessary tasks to improve English skills (subject A21)
- (4) Found more interest in other languages (subject A20)

As seen above, the subjects in both groups expressed similar reasons for their inability to sustain motivation to study English. In other words, their inability to sustain motivation to study English during the 2015 academic year cannot be attributed to self-efficacy scores. Rather their inability to sustain English study motivation is attributed to their inability to establish concrete study reasons/future goals or to not having adequate time management skills. In addition, one student stated that he had found more interest in Chinese or Korean. This is understandable since the educational curriculum at our college was revised two years ago to require current freshmen and sophomores to take at least two years of either Chinese or Korean in addition to English as part of graduation requirements.

**Table 7:** Information about 17 advanced class subjects who could sustain motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year

Subjects	TOEIC Pre	TOEIC Post	TOEIC Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Self-efficacy Pre	Self-efficacy Post	Self-efficacy Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Comments
A25	285	300	+15	740	800	+60	Have concrete Study reasons
A26	420	435	+15	540	760	+160	
A29	330	375	+45	680	900	+220	
A31	445	445	0	760	800	+40	
A33	265	296	+30	920	940	+20	
A34	350	340	-10	700	820	+120	
A37	300	385	+85	780	800	+20	
A38	230	310	+80	900	900	0	
A41	290	295	+5	840	880	+40	
A27	265	300	+35	720	960	+240	Have high self-efficacy belief
A35	270	290	+20	940	1000	+60	
A36	360	430	+70	780	900	+120	
A28	230	290	+60	620	720	+100	Have concrete future goals
A30	245	210	-35	620	620	0	
A32	275	260	-15	780	800	+20	
A39	250	295	+45	480	460	-20	
A40	305	260	-45	700	80	+100	
	Mean 301	Mean 324		Mean 735	Mean 767		

As seen above, all the subjects who were able to sustain motivation to study English either had concrete English study reasons, future goals or high self-efficacy beliefs of their English skills. Additionally, only 3 of these subjects' TOEIC scores and two of these subjects' self-efficacy scores decreased during the first term.

When we compare the above results with those of the subjects who could not sustain motivation to study English, the most prominent difference between the two groups can be attributed to whether they had or didn't have either concrete English study reasons or future goals. This is because there were no prominent differences in comments between students whose self-efficacy of English listening skills improved or worsened during the first term. Thus, as Todaka (2013) reported, it is very important to help Japanese college EFL freshmen understand the importance of concrete English study reasons and objectives so that they can appreciate the benefits of various English activities targeted to foster increased self-efficacy of English listening skills. In addition, many unmotivated students had difficulty managing and prioritizing their English

study. For example, some students expressed that they had started working part-time, so they were too tired to study English.

Next, we will examine the survey results of students in intermediate II class because they were the only group with non-significant self-efficacy score improvements during the first term. Out of 43 intermediate II class students, 19 students were able to sustain their motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year; however, 24 students (7 students whose TOEIC scores worsened and 17 students whose TOEIC scores improved during the first term) could not sustain motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year.

Out of 7 students whose TOEIC scores worsened, self-efficacy of English listening skills in 4 intermediate II class students improved or did not change, and 3 students' self-efficacy scores worsened.

**Table 8:** Information for the 4 Intermediate II group students who could not sustain motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year  
 (TOEIC scores worsened, but self-efficacy scores improved or did not change)

Students	TOEIC Pre	TOEIC Post	TOEIC Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Self-efficacy Pre	Self-efficacy Post	Self-efficacy Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Comments
I1(II)	280	270	-10	640	700	+60	Lost self-efficacy beliefs
I2(II)	260	250	-10	660	780	+120	Too troublesome to study English
I4(II)	290	270	-20	820	840	+20	Found more interest in Chinese
I5(II)	215	125	-90	880	880	0	More fun taking part in other activities
	Mean 261	Mean 229		Mean 750	Mean 800		

The reasons for the inability to sustain motivation to study English among 4 subjects whose self-efficacy beliefs improved or did not change during the term are as follows:

- (1) Lost self-efficacy of English skills during the second term (subject I1(II))
- (2) Too troublesome to study English (subject I1(II))
- (3) Found more interest in Chinese (subject I4(II))
- (4) More fun taking part in club activities, and playing with friends (subject I5(II))

**Table 9:** Information for the 3 intermediate II group subjects who could not sustain motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year (TOEIC and self-efficacy scores worsened)

Subjects	TOEIC Pre	TOEIC Post	TOEIC Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Self-efficacy Pre	Self-efficacy Post	Self-efficacy Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Comments
I3(II)	255	220	-35	900	880	-20	Spent more time playing with friends
I6(II)	340	295	-45	900	740	-160	Lost concrete study reasons
I7(II)	215	205	-10	880	720	-160	Found more interest in Chinese
	Mean 270	Mean 240		Mean 893	Mean 780		

The reasons for their inability to sustain motivation to study English among 3 subjects whose self-efficacy beliefs worsened during the first term can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Spent more time playing with friends (subject I3(II))
- (2) Lost concrete English study reasons (subject I6(II))
- (3) Found more interest in Chinese (subject I7(II))

As seen above, the reasons stated are similar in both groups. In addition, the above results seem to indicate that as a whole, the intermediate II group subjects whose TOEIC scores worsened during the first term actually had higher self-efficacy of English listening skills when they entered college. This could lead to the conclusion that our method actually negatively impacted the self-efficacy of English listening skills in those students. However, a careful observation of the above data actually shows only three of the seven students' self-efficacy scores decreasing during the first term. And in two of those three cases, the self-efficacy scores decreased so drastically (-160 points in both cases) that they weighted down the entire mean.

Out of 17 students whose TOEIC scores improved, 11 students' self-efficacy scores improved or did not change, and 6 students' self-efficacy scores worsened.

**Table 10:** Information about 11 intermediate II students who could not sustain motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year  
 (TOEIC and self-efficacy scores improved or did not change)

Students	TOEIC Pre	TOEIC Post	TOEIC Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Self-efficacy Pre	Self-efficacy Post	Self-efficacy Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Comments
I9(II)	210	245	+35	800	940	+140	No concrete English study reasons
I14(II)	225	275	+50	620	700	+80	
I18(II)	210	220	+10	680	720	+40	
I10(II)	205	260	+55	560	620	+60	No (lost) interest in English
I12(II)	325	375	+50	760	780	+20	
I23(II)	225	245	+20	360	500	+140	
I24(II)	225	270	+55	620	700	+80	
I11(II)	235	280	+50	760	900	+140	Feel as if I were forced to study English
I13(II)	195	235	+40	720	960	+240	Started part-time job during the second term
I21(II)	250	265	+15	820	820	0	
I20(II)	120	230	+110	480	700	+220	Lost self-efficacy belief during the second term
	Mean 220	Mean 264		Mean 653	Mean 758		

The reasons for their inability to sustain motivation to study English were as follows:

- (1) No concrete English study reasons (subjects I9(II), I14(II), and I18(II))
- (2) No (or lost) interest in English (subjects I10(II), I12(II), I23(II) and I24(II))
- (3) Being forced to study English (subject I11(II))
- (4) Started part-time job during the second term (subjects I13(II), and I21(II))
- (5) Lost self-efficacy of English skills (subject I20(II))

**Table 11:** Information about 6 intermediate II subjects who could not sustain motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year  
 (TOEIC scores improved, but self-efficacy scores worsened)

Subjects	TOEIC Pre	TOEIC Post	TOEIC Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Self-efficacy Pre	Self-efficacy Post	Self-efficacy Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Comments
I8(II)	235	295	+45	800	780	-20	No (lost) concrete study reasons
I16(II)	300	305	+5	880	860	-20	
I17(II)	285	355	+70	640	620	-20	
I22(II)	240	280	+40	800	440	-360	
I15(II)	300	325	+25	680	620	-60	Spent more time playing

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							with my friends
I19(II)	235	270	+25	940	820	-120	Started working part-time during the second term
	Mean 266	Mean 305		Mean 790	Mean 690		

On the other hand, self-efficacy of English listening skills in 6 subjects decreased during the term. Their inability to sustain motivation to study English can be summarized as follows:

- (1) No concrete English study reasons (subjects I8(II), I16(II), I17(II), and I22(II))
- (2) Spent more time playing with friends (subject I15(II))
- (3) Started working part-time during the second term (subject I19(II))

The above reasons are not only similar in both intermediate II class groups, but they are also similar to those among the advanced class students who were unable to sustain motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year.

**Table 12:** Information for the 19 intermediate II class students who were able to sustain motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year

Students	TOEIC Pre	TOEIC Post	TOEIC Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Self-efficacy Pre	Self-efficacy Post	Self-efficacy Pre-Post Gain/Loss	Comments
I23(II)	300	310	+10	640	720	+80	Have concrete future goals
I28(II)	325	360	+35	780	920	+140	
I30(II)	245	240	-5	740	660	-80	
I31(II)	265	340	+75	840	880	+40	
I34(II)	275	315	+40	700	840	+140	
I36(II)	265	250	-15	840	740	-100	
I39(II)	200	210	+10	900	880	-20	
I40(II)	165	280	+115	780	840	+60	
I24(II)	260	305	+45	720	760	+40	
I25(II)	165	210	+45	720	720	0	
I27(II)	225	285	+60	860	900	+40	
I29(II)	265	310	+45	820	880	+60	
I32(II)	255	270	+15	820	920	+100	
I33(II)	200	270	+70	720	940	+220	
I35(II)	265	285	+20	840	820	-20	
I37(II)	265	265	0	860	840	-20	
I38(II)	260	255	-5	800	940	+140	
I41(II)	225	230	+5	680	840	+160	
I26(II)	225	290	+65	620	640	+20	Have high self-efficacy beliefs

	Mean 245	Mean 278		Mean 773	Mean 825		
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As shown above, all the students have either concrete reasons for English study or future goals. Out of 19 students, 3 students' TOEIC scores and five students' self-efficacy of English listening skills scores decreased during the first term.

Taking the advanced and intermediate II class students' survey results into account, it can be deduced that students who have concrete English study reasons or future goals are able to sustain their motivation to study English.

Indeed, only 3 out of seventeen students' self-efficacy of English listening skills scores in the advanced class and 5 out of 19 students' self-efficacy of English listening skills scores in the intermediate II decreased.

Taking all the other survey results into consideration, English activities that are designed to foster high self-efficacy of English listening skills in Japanese college EFL freshman have a positive impact on students who have either concrete English study reasons or future goals. This is because students who don't have such reasons or goals, no matter how much self-efficacy of English listening skills improved during the first term, could not sustain motivation to study English throughout the academic year.

The concrete study reasons stated by our students were as follows:

- (1) Want to be the best English student
- (2) Want to study abroad
- (3) Want to be able to watch English movies without Japanese subtitles
- (4) Want to understand the lyrics of their favorite English songs without reading.
- (5) Want to be able to communicate with people from different parts of the world in English
- (6) Understand the importance of English in the future, so I want to be good at English.

Although the English study reasons expressed by our students vary from individual to individual, all of the vocations stated above involve a high command of English skills (Yashima, 2002; Ryan, 2009a). Thus, those students who do have concrete English study reasons are including English skills in their future goals (Miura, 2010). In other words, they do have concrete reasons for English study.

Dornyei (2001), Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) and others term English study 'reasons' as 'orientations', which can be either academic/career related or socially/culturally oriented. However, they differentiate orientations from motivation (Brown, 2007, p. 168).

We feel that it is important to use the term 'reasons' in our study because Japanese college EFL freshmen have lost their primary reason for studying English. As

mentioned earlier, their main objective to study English in high school was to pass college entrance examinations. Therefore, as they enter university, it is just as important to help Japanese college freshmen *rethink* their specific reasons for studying English as is developing high self-efficacy of their English listening skills. In other words, instructors should not only assist Japanese college EFL freshmen students in developing high self-efficacy of their English listening skills but they should also help establish specific reasons for studying English (Todaka, 2013).

As goal setting theory states “*much human action is purposeful, in that it is directed by conscious goal* (O’Neli & Drillings, 1994, p.14)”. Furthermore, the two primary factors that help to enhance goal commitment are importance and self-efficacy (Locke & Latham, 2002). Importance refers to the factors that make a goal important, including the expected outcomes (Locke & Latham, 2002). Self-efficacy is the belief that one can attain their goal (Locke & Latham, 2002). Since this study focuses on goal setting, learning cycle, and self-efficacy of English listening skills in Japanese college EFL freshmen, we decided to use the term ‘reasons’ instead of ‘orientations’ in the present study.

In addition, whatever students’ concrete study reasons were, they were able to have high motivational intensity to carry out necessary tasks to improve their English listening skills. Although many studies of motivation classify orientation/motivation into different types (i.e. instrumental, extrinsic, or intrinsic; see Brown (2007) for a review of motivation types), we speculate that intensity rather than type of orientations/motivation is more important, at least for Japanese EFL college freshmen. Lukmani (1972 cited in Celce-Murcia et al., 1996, p.19) too reports that the intensity of motivation can be just as important as the type of motivation. Our students had different reasons to study English, but all of those who had concrete English study reasons or future goals were able to sustain motivation to study English throughout the 2015 academic year.

Next, we examined our survey results with respect to study plans. Contrary to our expectations, only two out of seventeen students in the advanced class and three out of nineteen students in the intermediate II class made study plans to carry out the necessary tasks to improve their English listening skills throughout the 2015 academic year. The main reasons why most students did not make study plans were because they had engaged in different activities such as club activities and part-time jobs from Monday to Sunday. They stated that they did not have time to improve their English listening skills. They simply tried to improve their English listening skills whenever they could find time to do so. However, those students constantly took official English tests such as TOEIC to assess their progress and modified their learning strategies to



accomplish their study goals. Since our students are college freshmen, and most Japanese students begin to work part-time while in college, time management skills need to be taught in order to help them understand how to prioritize their study. This assumption is supported by the fact that many of our freshmen who could not sustain motivation to study English had trouble managing their time for study. They indicated that they had so much free time in college to engage in various activities such as part-time jobs, club activities, and playing with friends that they found it extremely difficult to resist temptation and prioritize activities. For instance, many of them stated that their part-time jobs made them feel so tired that they could not make time for English study.

Next, we examined the reasons for some students' loss of interest in English after they entered college. As mention earlier, three students in the advanced class and two students in the intermediate II class indicated that they had lost interest in English after they entered college. In addition, the survey results for students in intermediate I class and introductory class were examined to see how many students lost interest in English after they entered college. We found that four students in the intermediate I class and none in the introductory class lost interest in English after they entered college.

**Table 13:** The minute reasons for those students' loss of interest in English after they entered college

Advanced class	Reasons for the loss of interest in English in college
A1	There is a huge gap between actual college English classes and the college classes that I imagined. So, I lost interest in English.
A9	Before I entered college, I was looking forward to improving English communicative skills, but the number of English classes was much smaller than I had expected. And, I can't find many opportunities to improve my English communicative skills. So, I lost interest in English.
A13	Even though I didn't like English, I studied English in high school to pass college entrance examinations. So, I don't want to study English anymore.

Intermediate II class	Reasons for the loss of interest in English in college
I12(II)	I studied English in high school to enter college. So, I've burned out and cannot think of any reasons to study English now.
I23(II)	I studied English in high school to enter college. So, I don't feel like studying English anymore.
I24(II)	I studied English in high school to enter college. I'm now too busy with club activities and playing with friends.

Intermediate I class	Reasons for the loss of interest in English in college
<b>I1(I)</b>	Too many assignments. So, I have forgotten how enjoyable it was to study English. I also found more interest in Korean.
<b>I2(I)</b>	I studied English in high school to enter college. So, I can't think of any reasons to study English anymore.
<b>I3(I)</b>	I studied English in high school to enter college. So, I'm not interested in studying English now.
<b>I4(I)</b>	Before I entered college, I thought I could attend many English language related classes, but I have to attend many other classes such as Economics and History. So, I lost interest in English.

As seen above, many of the students indicated that they studied English in high school to enter college. Thus, it was not college English language classes that led to their loss of interest in English. Those students could not find concrete English study reasons after they entered college, which in turn signifies the importance of concrete English study reasons.

Nonetheless, much care needs to be taken to design our English Language Program in order to better meet the needs of individual learners, since some students indicated that their expectations of college English classes were different from what they thought they would be while in high school.

Based upon the quantitative and qualitative analyses, our findings can be summarized as follows:

- (1) All of the students in all four proficiency groups except for advanced students made significant improvements on TOEIC during the first term.
- (2) All of the students in all four proficiency groups except for intermediate II students made significant improvements on self-efficacy.
- (3) A positive correlation between English listening skills and self-efficacy was found, which reconfirms the findings of previous self-efficacy studies.
- (4) Establishment of (new) concrete English study reasons and of concrete future goals must be a priority before English activities targeted to enhance self-efficacy can help Japanese college EFL freshmen sustain their motivation to study English.

Since many of the freshmen are unable to think of concrete future goals during the first year of college, teachers need to remind them that it is important to constantly reflect on their English study reasons. Indeed, one student indicated that she/he lost her/his English study reasons during the second term. We might have been able to help them had we set short-term and/or long-term English study goals. Dornyei and Kubanyiova (2014) indicate the importance of students' future visions as an effective way to assist them in a long-term, ongoing endeavor.

Brown (2004) conducted research on Japanese university students' motivation for English learning, and reported that the amounts of actual time students spent studying English depends on their reasons for taking action (i.e. English study). He also indicated that *"the key is not the specific nature of the reasons or attitude, but the intentions and actions that result"* (p. 8). Thus, reasons for necessary English study to improve Japanese college EFL freshmen's English skills have to be clearly recognized and decided on by the freshmen themselves.

- (5) Much more consideration needs to be given to helping Japanese college EFL learners understand the importance of study plans to better improve their English listening skills. As mentioned earlier, only a few of our students who were able to sustain motivation to improve their English listening skills during the 2015 academic year actually made study plans. Noguchi (2014) contends that the desirable prerequisites to self-directed learning are goal-orientedness, *action plans for improvement* and analytical skills (Italics used for emphasis). Although this study does not focus on self-directed learning, it is nonetheless important for EFL learners to understand how to study English effectively.
- (6) Time management skills for prioritization of English study need to be taught to help unmotivated Japanese college EFL freshmen find the time to improve their English listening skills. Ammar (2007, p.6) reports that *"poor time management has been correlated with school-related tensions and feelings that one is less in control of time than is desired"* (Macan, 1996). Indeed some of our freshmen couldn't sustain their motivation to improve their English listening skills because they were overwhelmed with college assignments. Ammar (2007) investigated the effectiveness of improving prospective EFL teachers' time management strategies on their teaching performance and instructional self-efficacy beliefs and found that prospective teachers who were trained in time management strategies were more able to manage their classes so that student learning could be maximized (p.1). Roblyer (1999 cited in Lynch and Dembo, 2004) argues that students who are poor at managing time are likely to achieve less in distance courses. Furthermore, Lynch and Dembo (2004, p. 3) point out *"self-regulated learners are proactive in managing not only their study time but also their study environment"* (Zimmerman and Martines-Pons, 1986). Time management skills have been found important to be one of the self-regulatory learning attributes that can help learners in classroom-based learning become effective autonomous learners (Lynch and Dembo, 2004, p. 4). Although their studies focus on EFL teachers' and distance learners' time management skills we can state that training in time management strategies can help EFL learners engage more efficiently in their English study. Garcia-Ros et al. (2004 cited in Ammar, 2007, p. 5)

investigated how well time management skills could predict the academic achievements of Spanish high school students. They reported that effective time management skills did lead to higher academic achievement of high school students. In addition, students with effective time management behaviors can indeed organize, prioritize, and budget their time in accordance with the requirements of the learning situations (Bidjerano, 2005; and Zimmerman, 200, cited in Ammar, 2007, p. 6).

- (7) Educational guidance sessions must be *re*-implemented in our English curricular activities in order to help Japanese college EFL freshmen sustain motivation to study English. This is supported by our findings that, unlike students in the present study, all of the students in all four proficiency groups in our 2014 study were able to improve their English listening skills during the academic year. As mentioned earlier, 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.

#### 4. Conclusion

Many previous studies (e.g. Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; Pajares, 1996, 2003 cited in Sina, 2015, p. 354) reported that students with high self-efficacy tend to set higher goals and exert themselves to achieve those goals.

The findings of this study based on both quantitative and qualitative analyses, however, show that the establishment of new concrete study reasons or future goals can also be an important prerequisite for self-efficacy activities to positively affect the improvement of our college EFL freshmen's English listening skills. As mentioned earlier, it's not easy for college EFL freshmen to set future goals during the first year in college. Thus, it's important for Japanese EFL instructors to have Japanese college freshmen carefully re-think their concrete reasons to study English (Agawa et al., 2011; Yashima, 2000). As the findings of the present study indicate, it is important for EFL instructors to remind their students of the significance of concrete reasons throughout the academic year.

Furthermore, qualitative analysis was found to be effective in shedding more light on why some students have difficulty maintaining motivation to study English. However, caution must be exercised in the formulation of self-efficacy questionnaires. Among the reasons uncovered in the present study, time management skills were found to be essential for Japanese college EFL freshmen to acquire. This is because a drastic change in their learning environment (from high school to college) has created huge problems for them in how to deal with their daily activities.

Brown (2007) summarizes various individual psychological and personality traits including learning styles/strategies, which affect how individual EFL learner tackles with EFL learning.

Also, the manner in which EFL learners were exposed to English in the past and what their instructional preferences are do indeed affect whether those learners study or do not study English (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). Those factors are also influenced by learning environment, EFL instructors' pedagogical preferences, textbook materials and so forth.

Thus, how individual differences in academic achievements can be predicted is one of the vital questions in educational psychology. Nonetheless, many studies of self-efficacy of various EFL skills in EFL learners have proved their effectiveness in EFL learner' improvements on those English skills (e.g. see Raofi et al., 2013 for an extensive review). It seems however that very few articles (e.g. Ammar, 2007; Lynch and Dembo, 2004) associate self-efficacy with time management skills. In the present study, many of our unmotivated students were found to be overwhelmed with their new learning environment and thus had trouble managing their time effectively to pursue their study. Rashidi & Moghadam (2014 cited in Sina, 2015, p. 354) reported that student satisfaction with their learning can positively assist students to focus on their learning process.

Lynch and Dembo (2004, p. 9) state that two important components of motivation in successful distant learner autonomy are one's self-efficacy beliefs in mastering a specific task and the personal goal orientation they bring to a course of study. The findings in previous studies of self-efficacy within ESL/EFL contexts are valuable in their own right; however, they might still lack a pedagogically relevant underpinning and have yet to generate advances in teaching/learning pedagogy that can become the foundation on which unmotivated individual learners can be assisted in L2 learning.

Zimmerman (1989 cited in Lynch and Dembo, 2004, p. 9) defined academic self-regulation as *"the extent to which learners are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorly active in achieving their learning goals."*

Zimmerman's (ibid) definition of self-regulated learning can be applied to our college EFL freshmen's lack of time management skills. In other words, if our college EFL freshmen had been equipped with time management strategies, they might have been able to focus on their learning in the face of distractions. Nonetheless, Many Japanese college EFL freshmen do not develop time management strategies intuitively so these strategies need to be taught explicitly to help students make use of their time to improve their English listening skills (or English skills in general). With this in mind, we contend that an emphasis on both, the establishment of new concrete English study reasons or future goals and the four sources of self-efficacy can indeed help unmotivated and distracted Japanese college freshmen focus on their English study so that they can have more choices in their future goals.

Since it takes quite some time for individual EFL freshmen to be able to manage time effectively, individualized study guidance sessions must be implemented in our next study. We could not implement such sessions in the present study due to time constraints and schedule conflicts but we did find the effectiveness of study guidance sessions in our 2014 study. Furthermore, we found that time management strategies can be a key in assisting our college freshmen make use of a cycle of self-regulated learning to better improve their English listening skills (or English skills in general). If so, during any new term, EFL instructors should give motivation questionnaires and conduct weekly guidance sessions with those students who have yet to establish any new concrete English study reasons or imagine an English-using self (Sampson, 2016).

Instructors should focus on helping these students and other unmotivated and distracted students understand and develop a statement of new and concrete English study reasons. At the same time, instructors can help them acquire the time management strategies they need to carry out the necessary tasks to improve their English listening skills based on a cycle of self-regulated learning. As found in previous studies (Sampson, 2016, p. 159), "*students' perceptions of language learning experiences, and motivation are highly personal, individualised, and contextualised*"; nonetheless, it is essential that we explore every avenue available for helping unmotivated college EFL freshmen in achieving their future goals so that they can eventually become productive members in an internationalized society.

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**Appendix 1: A Questionnaire on EFL Learners' Self-efficacy in Listening Skills**

- (1) I have the ability to improve my listening skills if I try hard.
- (2) I have the ability to concentrate on the content to which I listen.
- (3) I believe that my proficiency in listening will improve by practicing it.
- (4) I am sure that if I practice listening more often, I will be able to understand English movies without subtitles.
- (5) Sometimes the listening practice in the class is difficult and I cannot understand it completely. But I believe that I can understand it if I listen to it many times.
- (6) I can sustain my motivation to improve my English listening skills.
- (7) I believe in my own capabilities to overcome difficult listening tasks.
- (8) I won't be stressed out even if I make mistakes in listening tasks.
- (9) I know I can deal with any unexpected difficulties I may face in listening tasks.
- (10) I know I can improve my listening skills if I continue my study.

**Appendix 2: English study motivation questionnaire items**

Q1. Have you been able to sustain your motivation to study English since you entered university?

Q2. If so, let us understand why you were able to do so. If not, let us understand why you weren't able to do so.

Q3. For those students who were able to sustain motivation to study English, do you always make concrete plans to accomplish study objectives?

Q4. For those students who were able to sustain their motivation to study English and always make concrete plans to accomplish study objectives, do you reflect on your study strategies to see if your learning strategies are working or not?

Q5. For those students who have completely lost interest in English study, what caused you to lose interest in English study?

Yuichi Todaka  
SELF-EFFICACY OF ENGLISH LISTENING SKILLS IN JAPANESE COLLEGE EFL LEARNERS:  
QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSES

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