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Articles

Coordination, Teacher Autonomy, and Collaboration in EFL Programs in Japanese Higher Education

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Both teacher autonomy and program coordination have potential benefits. Recent research on *English for speakers of other languages* (ESOL) programs in the United States has suggested that programs tend to have significant levels of coordination and collaboration while maintaining teacher autonomy. Although Japanese universities have long had a culture of teacher autonomy, EFL educators based in higher educational institutions have described efforts to coordinate their programs. However, researchers have not explicitly analyzed EFL programs in Japan to determine how widespread these coordination efforts have become. In this study, we empirically evaluated levels of teacher autonomy, top-down coordination, and administration-staff collaboration in EFL programs in Japanese universities and colleges. The results suggest that these programs have high levels of curricular autonomy and general teaching autonomy related to pedagogy and classroom management. In contrast, the programs are reported to have low levels of top-down coordination and, compared to U.S. ESOL programs, significantly less coordination and collaboration.

教師の自律 (teacher autonomy) とプログラム内でのトップダウンによる協調 (program coordination) には潜在的利益がある。米国のESOL (English for speakers of other languages) プログラムに関する最近の研究によると、教師の自律を維持すると同時に、プログラム内でトップ

ダウンの協調と協働 (collaboration) を行う傾向がある。日本の大学では、長年教師の自律を支える文化がある一方で、高等教育機関に勤務する多くのEFL教育者は、プログラム内の協調に努力してきたと報告している。しかし、日本のEFLプログラムにおいてそのような協調の努力がどの程度行われているかを明確に分析した研究はほとんどない。そこで、本研究では、日本の大学や短大のEFLプログラムにおける教師の自律、トップダウン式による協調、管理部門と教育スタッフ間の協働のレベルの評価を行った。その結果、これらのプログラムは、教授法と教室マネジメントに関して、カリキュラム上、また一般教育上の自律を担保していることを示唆している。対照的に、トップダウン式の協調はあまり行われていないことが報告された。米国におけるESOLプログラムと比較すると、日本のプログラムでは、トップダウンによる協調と協働のレベルが低いことが判明した。

Program coordination efforts and standardization can conflict with teachers' desire for autonomy, leading to tension between instructors and the administration (English, 2010; Veugelers, 2004). Research in education suggests that both program coordination and teacher autonomy are necessary. On one hand, oversight and coordination of course objectives, materials, and instruction can maximize efficiency and improve learning outcomes by ensuring that instruction is effective and that different courses complement each other (Brezicha, Bergmark, & Mitra, 2015; Yilmaki, 2012). On the other hand, teacher autonomy allows instructors to adapt their teaching strengths and interests to student needs. Moreover, teacher autonomy is strongly connected to feelings of efficacy and job satisfaction (Thomas, Kaminska-Labbé, & McKelvey, 2005). Considering the benefits of teacher autonomy and program-wide coordination, program administrators need to find ways to offer appropriate levels of both (Prichard & Moore, 2016a). A lack of either teacher autonomy or program coordination may reduce the efficacy of instruction and lead to dissatisfaction among stakeholders.

In recent research by the authors concerning teacher autonomy and coordination in 130 English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programs in higher education in the United States (Prichard & Moore, 2016a), most programs were reported to have somewhat similar levels of coordination and teacher autonomy. However, there was great variation in the results, and follow-up research (Prichard & Moore, 2016b) suggested that many program-specific variables affected the results. Despite the influence that program coordination and teacher autonomy can have on student learning and stakeholders' satisfaction, the issue has not been examined empirically in EFL programs in Japan. As demands for accountability in Japanese universities once lagged behind world standards (Amano, 1999; McVeigh, 2002), it could be hypothesized that EFL programs in Japan have relatively low levels of co-

ordination. However, the Ministry of Education, Health, Science and Welfare (MEXT) has called for increasing standards (Amano & Poole, 2005; Nagatomo, 2009), and many EFL programs in Japanese universities are reported to have undertaken curricular reforms (e.g., Berger, 2012; Cote, Milliner, McBride, Imai, & Ogane, 2014; Fryer, Stewart, Anderson, Bovee, & Gibson, 2011; Grossman & Cisar, 1997; Hadley, 1999; Prichard, 2006; Sheehan, Sugiura, & Ryan, 2012). Nevertheless, it is unclear how far Japanese EFL program administrators have come in coordinating their programs.

In this paper, we describe the results of a survey from 62 EFL programs in Japanese colleges and universities to determine the levels of teacher autonomy, top-down coordination, and administration–staff collaboration in these programs. The results will also be compared with U.S. ESOL programs (see Prichard & Moore, 2016a) to begin to explore how and why Japanese programs differ from their U.S. counterparts.

Literature Review

After research on teacher autonomy and program coordination in general educational contexts is reviewed, the issue will be discussed as it relates to English language teaching in Japanese higher education.

Teacher Autonomy

Teacher autonomy can enhance student learning as instruction can be adapted to the specific needs of a class. Indeed, effective teachers have “a strong sense of personal responsibility” for their instruction, and they constantly reflect on how students are progressing (Little, 1995, p. 179). Moreover, ESOL educators have long valued learner autonomy, which necessitates that the curriculum be flexible enough to allow students to pursue their individual goals (Little, 1995). Teacher autonomy may also benefit student learning because autonomy can increase teachers’ commitment (Marks & Louis, 1999). Indeed, high levels of teacher autonomy have correlated with feelings of professionalism among K-12 U.S. teachers (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005) and teacher efficacy among junior high instructors in Italy (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006).

In contrast, a lack of teacher autonomy correlates with feelings of powerlessness among teachers, and this can lead to distress and tension (Mayer, Donaldson, LeChasseur, Welton, & Cobb, 2013). Language educators are increasingly realizing that language acquisition is highly complex and non-linear (Beckner et al., 2009), but teachers in English programs are often

forced to teach around entrance exams and standardized tests that often ignore this complexity (Crookes, 1997). K-12 research in the United States suggests that teachers often feel compelled to maneuver around restraints on their autonomy (Benson, 2000; English, 2010; Lamb, 2000), especially concerning curricular guidelines, materials selection, and classroom policies (Lepine, 2007; McGrath, 2000). Top-down policies and accountability measures are often seen as bureaucratic, time-consuming measures that hinder effective education and lead to a “culture of fear” (Carpenter, Weber, & Schugurensky, 2012, p. 145).

Top-Down Coordination & Administration–Staff Collaboration

There has been a movement towards increasing accountability and standards in education worldwide (Altbach, 2007; Ylimaki, 2012), and this has included ESOL contexts (Kibler, Valdés, & Walqui, 2015). Top-down governmental reforms are done with good intentions; for example, South Korea implemented a teacher certification scheme to ensure English teaching is communicative (Choi & Andon, 2014). Research based in U.S. high schools suggests that calls for new standards or program-wide reforms also come from campus administration and program leaders who feel it is their duty to maximize learning outcomes (Gonzalez & Firestone, 2013). Leaders may feel that program policies concerning pedagogy and class management can enhance student learning by ensuring that teachers use effective methods and procedures (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

Moreover, program-wide curricular coordination can ensure that different courses work together to enhance student learning. Consistency and continuity are the intended results of a coordinated and articulated curriculum (English, 2010). Top-down coordination can also lead to a more program-wide perspective as administrators and core faculty often have more awareness of the role and objectives of the entire program. Such global perspectives can be especially important in programs that have a high percentage of adjunct teachers as these teachers may only be cognizant of their own classes (Prichard & Moore, 2016a).

Although teachers often resist any challenges to their autonomy, such resistance highly depends on the leadership style of the administrators and program coordinators. Across professional fields, transformational leadership, which includes building vision, inspiring change, and supporting others, has been shown to be much more effective than transactional leadership, in which leaders aim to control followers through reward and punishment (Bass & Riggio, 2005; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam,

1996). Moreover, program coordination does not need to be top-down; teachers can be involved in program-wide planning through administration-staff collaboration or teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teacher collaboration correlated with a sense of teacher efficacy in second language education (Crookes, 1997) and in general education in the United States (Moore & Esselman, 1992). In research of middle school teachers in Hong Kong (Pang, 1996) and elementary school teachers in the Netherlands (Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011), teachers who collaborate in program decision making have reported being more engaged and satisfied with their jobs.

As both teacher autonomy and program-wide coordination have many benefits, the question might be raised as to whether programs should have somewhat similar levels of each. ESOL programs in the United States are reported to have relatively similar levels of teacher autonomy and top-down coordination and high levels of administration-staff collaboration (Prichard & Moore, 2016a). However, as is discussed below, there are several context-specific variables that influence programs to be more coordinated or to have more teacher autonomy, so there may not be one ideal for all programs (Prichard & Moore, 2016b). Moreover, research explicitly examining this issue among EFL programs in Japan has been relatively sparse, and it is not clear how Japanese EFL teachers feel about teacher autonomy, top-down coordination, and administration-faculty collaboration.

Coordination and Teacher Autonomy in Japan

A study of Japanese cultural norms might lead one to believe that Japan's educational programs would have much more coordination than in the United States. Although Hofstede's influential work on cultural dimensions (The Hofstede Centre, n.d.) has been criticized for being theoretically problematic and flawed in its research methods (e.g., Baskerville-Morley, 2005), the data suggest that Japanese culture tends to have a strong orientation towards uncertainty avoidance, restraint, long-term orientation, masculinity (e.g., highly valuing achievement), hierarchy, and collectivism. Although these claims may be overstated, all of these constructs are seemingly more compatible with coordination than individual autonomy.

In direct contrast to these findings, Japanese colleges and universities have long had high levels of teacher autonomy and low levels of coordination (Amano, 1999), and this has also been the case among EFL programs in Japan (Nagatomo, 2009; Stewart, 2005). Nevertheless, there has been a recent movement towards coordination and accountability, and several

EFL authors in Japan have described attempts to coordinate their EFL programs (e.g., Berger, 2012; Sheehan, Sugiura, & Ryan, 2012). In the following sections, we will examine variables that may be leading to increased levels of coordination in Japanese programs.

External Pressure

External pressure, such as maintaining accreditation or dealing with demanding stakeholders, may influence programs to have more coordination (Prichard & Moore, 2016b). In U.S. ESOL programs, external pressure predicted levels of coordination. However, this variable may not be as strong in Japanese higher education as it is not as regulated as are other levels of education (Nagatomo, 2012; Poole, 2003). In McVeigh's (2002) critique of Japanese tertiary education, he went so far as to label it a "charade" (p. 10) and a "myth" (p. 14) because so little is expected of it. In the late 1990s, Japanese universities lacked accreditation, assessments, and course evaluations (Poole, 2003).

However, since the turn of the century, pressure on higher education has greatly increased, partly because colleges need to increase market accountability to attract students in the age of decreasing student population (Cooper, 2014; Goodman, 2009). Although this is especially the case among private universities as tuition is their primary revenue source, public universities have different pressures. Public universities became independent bodies formally separated from MEXT in 2004, and they have been required to increase accountability and efficiency through planning, self-assessment, external evaluation, and performance-based funding (Yamamoto, 2014). It is clear that these top-down pressures have had some effect. For example, in universities throughout Japan, administrators have started requiring that syllabi be posted publicly, and course evaluations are now widely administered (Amano & Poole, 2005; Nagatomo, 2009).

More specifically related to EFL programs, MEXT has continued to push to improve the English proficiency of students in Japan to increase global competitiveness (MEXT, 2014). This bureaucratic pressure has led college administrators to strive to increase their students' English proficiency test scores through program-wide reforms. For example, Sheehan et al. (2012) explained that their university used significant funds to purchase e-learning software, and in turn, the EFL program felt obliged to require students to use it and to create assessments for all staff to use.

However, there can also be resistance to outside pressures as influential stakeholders in Japanese universities often resist reforms (Hadley, 1999).

According to Yamamoto (2014), the effect of many of MEXT's accountability initiatives has been "marginal" (p. 122), and each faculty still has extensive autonomy. Overall, it seems that Japanese EFL programs still face less external pressure than do U.S. programs, which are increasingly pressured to undergo a strict and lengthy accreditation process.

Program Complexity

Prichard and Moore (2016b) hypothesized that programs with numerous courses, levels, and class sections would have more top-down coordination and less teacher autonomy because these programs need to be more coordinated and the course content clearly articulated in order to avoid overlap (see Altbach, 2007). This was indeed the case among U.S. ESOL programs. Programs with more courses and levels tend to be those with more students and teachers, and Japanese EFL programs are even larger than U.S. ESOL programs as Japanese EFL programs often serve the entire university population. For example, Fryer et al. (2011) described a curricular coordination project for a Japanese EFL program with 200 classes. To ensure consistency, program administrators adopted mandatory materials and assessments. Cote et al. (2014) described several coordination efforts that were initiated because the program was rapidly expanding. Berger (2012) described a curricular project that was initiated to deal with inconsistency among classes that caused issues when students advanced to the next level.

However, not all programs are complex. For example, some faculties in Japanese universities require just one general English class. In addition, courses in U.S. programs tend to be coordinated by proficiency level, not year, and this means the course content at each level needs to be clearly articulated (Prichard & Moore, 2016b). Therefore, it is unclear if Japanese programs are more complex than their U.S. counterparts.

Qualified Program Leaders (Compared to Staff)

In previous research, Prichard and Moore (2016b) also hypothesized that there would be more coordination and less teacher autonomy in programs in which program leaders are more qualified and experienced than the rest of the staff. This is because less qualified and novice teachers tend to need and accept more support and guidance (Hoy & Spero, 2005). This was found to be a significant predictor of the level of coordination in U.S. programs (Prichard & Moore, 2016b).

In Japanese universities, part-time teachers outnumber full-time staff (MEXT, 2015), and these part-time staff members often lack professional

development opportunities. Moreover, according to Stewart (2005), some EFL teachers in Japan lack training in second language acquisition, and many lack “even the remotest notion of what method is most relevant” (p. 282). However, because of the increasing pressure to reform, the makeup of faculties has changed. More universities in Japan are requiring higher qualifications for new staff, including expertise in applied linguistics, experience overseas for Japanese teachers, a PhD, or all of these (Goodman, 2009; Nagatomo, 2009). Also, as some colleges are closing, new positions are becoming more competitive and new hires are increasingly qualified.

Finally, program leaders in Japanese EFL programs are not always more qualified than other staff members. Although the practice is changing (Yamamoto, 2014), many institutions in Japan still rely on length of experience for promotion; many of the older generation who have been promoted to leadership roles have degrees in nonrelated fields and some lack interest in applied linguistics (Nagatomo, 2009). Therefore, compared to U.S. programs, which often hire qualified and experienced directors and coordinators, EFL programs in Japan may be led by those with fewer qualifications or less willingness to coordinate a program. Of course, there are many exceptions, and research has not explicitly examined this issue. Overall, it is unclear if this variable will be more or less influential in Japanese EFL programs.

Feasibility of Coordination

In the United States, various contexts were found to be conducive to coordination and thus have more coordination and collaboration (Prichard & Moore, 2016b). Factors include teachers’ willingness to share ideas and whether teachers and administrators have time and a means to collaborate. In Japanese programs, there are often large differences in how instructors teach depending on their backgrounds (Nagatomo, 2009; Stewart, 2005), and this can lead to tension (Goodman, 2009). Stewart’s (2005) interviews of several English teachers revealed how much teachers can disagree on English education:

Because [my colleague] has this image that he’s in an Oxford college giving tutorials to people about things that he’s interested in, like . . . biblical cartography . . . [He] doesn’t want to have anything to do with language teaching . . . So anyway, he makes me sick, really. I’d like to shoot him and get somebody who’s really interested in language and it’d make things so much better. (p. 206)

It is clear that in such a context, autonomy is easier than collaboration and coordination.

Other EFL programs face other challenges that threaten the success of coordination. For example, Prichard (2006) described the frequent turnover rate among teachers and coordinators (because of their nontenured status) as the main reason for the lack of coordination of one EFL program. Overall, it seems Japanese programs may face many challenges to coordinating their programs.

Consistency in Student Needs

Previous research (Prichard & Moore, 2016b) suggested that programs in which student needs vary may be more difficult to coordinate. Although this variable was not a factor in the U.S. data, it may be influential in other settings. Japanese EFL students vary widely in their experiences, proficiency, and motivation, but there may be less variation when compared to U.S. ESOL contexts: A great majority of Japanese students who enter universities are native Japanese speakers with 6 years of formal English education. Conversely, Japanese classes tend to be fairly large, and this reduces the ability of teachers to adapt to meet students' needs. In contrast, classes in U.S. ESOL programs are smaller and the student population is more variable, which suggests significant levels of teacher autonomy may be necessary to adapt to those needs.

Summary

Context-specific variables are influential in predicting whether a program has more coordination and collaboration. Although the context has changed significantly in Japan in recent years, two context-specific factors promoting coordination are still relatively lacking in Japanese EFL programs, at least compared to the United States: external pressure and feasibility. Based on these contextual factors, it is hypothesized that Japanese programs will have somewhat more teacher autonomy than coordination and collaboration. Moreover, it is hypothesized that these measures will be significantly different than in U.S. programs.

Methods

In this study we aimed to identify levels of teacher autonomy, top-down coordination, and administration–faculty collaboration in Japanese EFL programs in higher education. Sixty-two programs were involved (39 in

private universities, 18 in public universities, and five in 2-year colleges). One core faculty member from each of the institutions agreed to participate and took a survey online.

Instrument and Analysis

The survey consisted of four variables: general autonomy, curricular autonomy, top-down coordination, and administration–staff collaboration (see Appendix). The survey used in this study was identical to the one used in our U.S. ESOL study (Prichard & Moore, 2016a) to allow for comparison. It had been piloted in both countries to increase its validity and was made available in English and Japanese. Each construct consisted of five 4-point Likert-scale items. Using the statistical software Winsteps (Linacre, 2012), the Likert-scale values were converted to an interval scale so that the items could reliably be compared, with the Winsteps default of zero logits equal to the mean item difficulty (Bond & Fox, 2007). Items with higher logit measures indicate responses that were more difficult to agree with. Persons with higher logit measures are relatively more inclined to agree with the items defining the construct.

To check the construct validity of the questionnaire, four separate Rasch analyses were run: one for each construct. Using the Likert-scale infit and outfit range of 0.5-1.5 (Bond & Fox, 2007), the initial analysis showed good fit for all items except one, which had an infit means squared of 1.77. The item did not affect the overall unidimensionality for the construct, and because it had fit well with the U.S. data, we retained this item for comparison purposes.

The results of the Japanese data were then compared to the data collected from the U.S. ESOL programs (Prichard & Moore, 2016a). Using Winsteps, the responses from both countries were combined, a demographic indicator was used to calibrate the data to the same zero point, and then differential item functioning (DIF) was investigated to determine whether the items were interpreted consistently between the two groups. The new person measures, from the combined data, were then used to make comparisons and conduct *t* tests.

Results

As is shown in Table 1, Japanese EFL programs in higher education tended to have strong agreement with the general autonomy and the curricular autonomy constructs. The logit mean of 0.167 suggests that programs

tended to have less agreement on whether their programs involved administration–staff collaboration. Finally, the participants showed a tendency to disagree with the top-down coordination construct.

Table 1. Logit Results in the Japanese EFL Programs ($N = 62$)

Construct	Logit M	SD	SEM
Top-down coordination	-0.706	1.034	0.131
Curricular autonomy	1.120	1.833	0.233
General autonomy	1.445	1.753	0.223
Admin–staff collaboration	0.167	1.780	0.226

Descriptive statistics for various program types are presented in Table 2. Faculty members in programs in 4-year public universities reported more coordination and collaboration and less teacher autonomy than did those in private universities. Programs with fewer than 100 students showed less agreement with the general autonomy items and relatively more agreement with the top-down coordination construct compared to larger programs. Finally, faculty members in programs that relied more on adjunct teachers, as opposed to core faculty, reported somewhat less top-down coordination, somewhat more general and curricular autonomy, and much less collaboration.

Comparing Japanese and U.S. Programs

New person measure logits based on combining data sets from Japanese and U.S. programs show great differences in management styles in the two countries (see Figure 1). The mean results suggest that programs in the United States have more coordination and collaboration than Japanese programs. In contrast, Japanese programs offer more curricular and general autonomy. The results of independent t tests of the United States and Japan data indicate that the differences concerning all constructs are statistically significant (see Table 3). However, the results of the Mantel-Haenszel test indicated that two items in the general autonomy construct were statistically significant ($p = .02$ and $p = .04$), suggesting the differences between the Japan and U.S. populations cannot be safely compared. No other items showed evidence of differences between the two national groups.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics by Program Type and Size, and Core Faculty Percentage

Group (<i>N</i>)	Construct							
	Top-down coordination		General autonomy		Curricular autonomy		Admin-staff collaboration	
	Logit (<i>SD</i>)	95% CI	Logit (<i>SD</i>)	95% CI	Logit (<i>SD</i>)	95% CI	Logit (<i>SD</i>)	95% CI
Overall (62)	-0.71 (1.03)	[-0.97, -0.44]	1.44 (1.75)	[1.00, 1.89]	1.12 (1.83)	[0.65, 1.59]	0.17 (1.78)	[-0.29, 0.62]
Program type								
2-yr. college (5)	-0.84 (0.34)	[-1.78, 0.10]	2.03 (0.45)	[0.77, 3.29]	0.53 (0.45)	[-0.73, 1.79]	-0.46 (0.94)	[-3.06, 2.14]
4-yr. private (39)	-1.02 (0.17)	[-1.36, -0.68]	1.69 (0.26)	[1.15, 2.21]	1.37 (0.30)	[0.76, 2.0]	-0.16 (0.29)	[-0.75, 0.42]
4-yr. public (18)	.01 (0.16)	[-0.32, 0.34]	0.76 (0.47)	[-0.24, 1.76]	0.73 (0.43)	[-0.18, 1.65]	1.06 (0.33)	[0.37, 1.74]
Program size								
0-99 (11)	-0.23 (0.29)	[-0.87, 0.41]	0.64 (0.69)	[-0.91, 2.19]	0.76 (0.77)	[-0.96, 2.49]	0.68 (0.35)	[-0.10, 1.46]
100-199 (13)	-0.72 (0.25)	[-1.27, -0.18]	1.70 (0.41)	[0.81, 2.58]	1.21 (0.33)	[0.48, 1.93]	-0.29 (0.60)	[-1.59, 1.00]
200-299 (9)	-0.72 (0.38)	[-1.59, 0.16]	1.28 (0.54)	[0.02, 2.53]	0.85 (0.43)	[-0.15, 1.85]	0.94 (0.50)	[-0.22, 2.10]
300+ (29)	-0.88 (0.20)	[-1.29, -0.46]	1.69 (0.31)	[1.06, 2.32]	1.30 (0.36)	[0.56, 2.04]	-0.06 (0.34)	[-0.76, 0.64]
Core faculty %								
0-25 (26)	-0.95 (0.19)	[-1.33, -0.56]	1.66 (0.30)	[1.03, 2.28]	1.32 (0.34)	[0.62, 2.02]	-0.32 (0.27)	[-0.88, 0.25]
26-50 (23)	-0.37 (0.22)	[-0.82, 0.08]	1.11 (0.41)	[0.27, 1.96]	0.88 (0.39)	[0.07, 1.69]	0.66 (0.39)	[-0.14, 1.45]
51-100 (12)	-0.71 (0.31)	[-1.40, -0.02]	1.48 (0.52)	[0.32, 2.63]	1.04 (0.60)	[-0.28, 2.37]	0.64 (0.53)	[-0.52, 1.80]

Note. Based on Rasch item measure logits; CI = confidence interval.

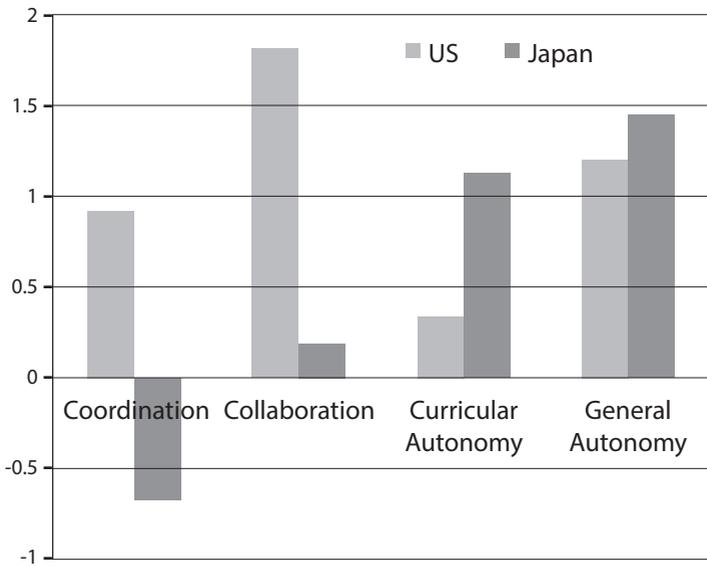


Figure 1. Program management constructs, as measured in logits.

Table 3. Statistical Analysis of the Difference Between the Japanese and U.S. Programs

Construct	Levene's test for equality of variances		t test for equality of means					
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Difference		
						M	SE	95% CI
Top-down coordination	1.370	.243	8.535	190	.000	1.617	0.189	[1.24, 1.99]
Curricular autonomy	14.444	.000*	-3.103	89.5	.003	-0.800	0.258	[-1.31, -0.29]
General autonomy	2.239	.136	-0.986	190	.325	-0.246	0.249	[-0.77, 0.25]
Admin-staff collaboration	0.687	.408	6.697	190	.000	1.650	0.247	[1.165, 2.14]

Note. Based on Rasch item measure logits; * = equal variances not assumed; Sig. = significance; CI = confidence interval.

Discussion

As reported in the literature, many Japanese EFL programs in higher education have made coordination efforts, but tightly coordinated programs do not seem to be the norm in Japan, based on the results of the current study. The findings indicate that programs tend to allow significant levels of teacher autonomy and that they have much less top-down coordination. The comparison of Japanese and U.S. ESOL programs in higher education suggests that there are significant differences in how the two countries manage their programs, with Japanese programs having less coordination and collaboration.

Top-Down Coordination and Administration–Staff Collaboration

Respondents from Japan tended to disagree with the items in the top-down coordination construct. Items with particularly low agreement concerned whether instructors were supervised and whether instructors received preservice training. In contrast, programs in the United States tended to agree that they had coordination. Results of *t* tests confirmed the differences are statistically significant, as hypothesized.

Responses concerning Japanese programs also indicated that they have less administration–staff collaboration than do U.S. programs. In the United States, this was the most agreed upon construct, but it was third in the Japanese data. The least agreed upon item in the construct concerned whether instructors work together with program leaders to design the curriculum.

Teacher Autonomy

EFL teachers in Japan reportedly have considerable freedom in general autonomy, including pedagogy and classroom management. The most agreed upon construct in the survey related to whether each instructor chose the teaching methods used in class. These programs also tended to allow significant levels of curricular autonomy. For example, most respondents agreed that each teacher had a say in deciding the content and skills taught.

Although the DIF analysis suggested differences in general autonomy between the Japan and U.S. populations cannot be reliably compared, there was a significant difference in the comparison of curricular autonomy. U.S. programs were reported to have much less curricular autonomy than general autonomy. Some programs in the United States reported that autonomy was dependent on curricular coordination: As long as students were meeting the stated learning objectives, teachers could teach how they pleased. Although

more research is needed, this does not seem to be the case in the Japanese programs, as they allowed high levels of both curricular and general autonomy.

Variation

The data suggest that teachers are allowed more autonomy in certain programs than in others. In fact, there was even more variation in the two teacher autonomy constructs in Japanese programs than in the U.S. programs. One reason for the variation could be program-specific variables, which will be explored more in follow-up research. Variables collected in this study only related to program type, student numbers, and the position of the faculty, but these data did show some interesting results. Private colleges reported lower levels of coordination than public universities, perhaps suggesting that MEXT's demands for standards and accountability are indeed influential for public universities. As in similar U.S. programs, Japanese programs relying on adjunct teachers reported less coordination and collaboration. This may further highlight the difficulty to design a coordinated program with few full-time faculty and administrators. However, unlike in the United States, in Japan smaller rather than bigger programs reported more coordination

Another reason for the variance in the data may be due to administrator variables; that is, different program leaders have drastically different leadership styles irrespective of the context in which they work. Qualitative data in the U.S. study suggested that administrator variables may have been the largest cause of the variation in the program management (Prichard & Moore, 2016b). This may also be an important factor in Japan, as shown by Amano (1999) in descriptions of the different attitudes professors have about increasing standards and accountability. If a professor who feels strongly that universities must have accountability is the director, the program is likely to be more coordinated regardless of the context variables. This needs to be explored in further research.

Potential Reasons for Japan and U.S. Differences

There are several possible reasons why faculty in Japanese programs tended to report less coordination and collaboration than was found in ESOL programs in the United States. Many of these ideas were explored in the literature, such as the long-standing culture of teacher autonomy in Japanese universities. Two variables described in the literature review (external pressure and feasibility of coordinating the program) suggested

that U.S. programs would have more coordination. Although these constructs will be analyzed empirically in follow-up research, data collected already concerning program size suggest feasibility may be a factor: Japanese programs have fewer full-time staff and rely even more on part-time instructors than do programs in the United States.

Limitations

One potential limitation in the current research study is that 96 of the 158 programs we contacted chose not to participate in the study. It is unclear why respondents from certain programs chose not to participate, but the management style of these programs may be different from the style of the programs that participated. In other words, it is unclear if the data collected in this study adequately represent EFL programs in Japan. Finally, this stage of the research consisted solely of Likert-scale items with no qualitative component, such as open-end questions. Follow-up research should utilize such procedures to better verify, explore, and explain the quantitative data.

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that Japanese EFL programs based in higher education have high levels of teacher autonomy, including both curricular and general autonomy. In contrast, faculty members reported less collaboration and much less top-down coordination compared to U.S. programs. Japanese programs are also reported to have significantly more curricular autonomy. However, it would be premature to conclude prescriptively that Japanese programs are managed better or worse than U.S. programs based on these findings. Although research suggests that teacher autonomy, coordination, and collaboration are all important, research has not shown what the ideal balance is. The ideal likely varies from program to program based on context-specific variables.

Although future research is necessary, the findings in this study have several possible implications. First, educators and scholars who are working in the two countries may benefit from being cognizant of the ways in which programs operate differently. For example, a program coordinator with experience in the United States who is hired to lead a program in Japan would benefit from knowing that Japanese EFL programs tend to have less coordination. Second, it may be useful for educators in Japan to consider why their programs may have less coordination and collaboration than their United States counterparts. It could be that teacher autonomy is needed

because of valid program-specific variables, such as the availability of qualified teachers and small classes in which teachers can adjust to student needs. Indeed, there are many benefits and reasons to have teacher autonomy, and some programs would likely benefit from having even more. On the other hand, a lack of coordination in a program may simply be because the organizational culture favors autonomy or that the program managers have a *laissez-faire* leadership style. In some cases, a thorough program review may indicate that more curricular coordination would benefit student learning outcomes and better satisfy other stakeholders.

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Appendix: Survey Constructs and Sample Items

Dependent Variables

Curricular Autonomy

- The instructors write their own syllabus for their classes.
- Each class focuses on the goals/objectives determined by the instructor.

General Autonomy

- Each instructor selects the teaching methods and strategies used for his/her own class.
- Lesson planning is under each instructor's control.

Top-down Coordination

- Instructors are observed by program administrators/core faculty.
- Instructors receive a program handbook that describes, in detail, the courses and/or teaching approaches.

Administration–Staff Collaboration

- Each instructor helps form the curriculum by working together with program administrators/core faculty.
- Each instructor is encouraged to share ideas about the program.