Japanese Language Teachers' Reported Beliefs and Strategies for Enhancing Learner Self-Efficacy in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Qualitative Study

Shaun Glasier

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Abstract

Self-efficacy (SE) plays a critical role in second language acquisition (SLA). This qualitative study explored Japanese language teachers' reported beliefs and strategies related to enhancing learner SE in Aotearoa New Zealand secondary schools. While the contemporary context is defined by declining participation and limited institutional support, the inherent linguistic challenges of Japanese foreground the need for intentional SE support. The study gained insight into how SE is supported in the classroom through semi-structured interviews with five teachers, informed by a preliminary questionnaire. Data were analysed using directed content analysis and categorised according to Bandura's four sources of SE (Bandura, 1997). Findings indicate that teachers' strategies were shaped by their own learning experiences and personalities, revealing a tension between scaffolded structured learning and exploratory autonomy, as well as the need to balance challenging mastery experiences with foreign language enjoyment to sustain learner engagement. These findings align with evidence that, in New Zealand, learners' persistence in Japanese is closely tied to their immediate classroom experiences and self-belief. These results suggest that targeted professional development (PD) in SE-enhancing practices may improve learner persistence in Japanese language education.

Keywords: Japanese language teachers; teacher beliefs; teaching strategies; learner self-efficacy; SE; Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy; Japanese language education; Aotearoa New Zealand; qualitative study; mastery experience; vicarious experience; social persuasion; affective states

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Doubt is a silent force that can undermine any endeavour, whether academic, athletic, or spiritual. My hope is that this work encourages fellow language teachers and learners, and anyone committed to strengthening the self-belief of others, to persist with confidence in whatever arena of life they serve.

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Abbreviations

ESOL …….. English for Speakers of Other Languages

ESL …….. English as a Second Language

JFL …….. Japanese as a Foreign Language

NCEA …….. National Certificate of Educational Achievement
(New Zealand's main secondary school qualification)

NZC …….. New Zealand Curriculum

PD …….. Professional Development

SE …….. Self-Efficacy

SLA …….. Second Language Acquisition

ZPD …….. Zone of Proximal Development

Glossary

Anime …….. Japanese animation e.g. Pokemon

Chirashi-zushi …….. sushi rice with different toppings spread on top

Furigana …….. *kana* written above *kanji* describing the *kanji* pronunciation

Furoshiki …….. traditional Japanese handkerchief folding

Hiragana …….. syllabary alphabet primarily used for Japanese originated words

Kana …….. both *hiragana* and *katakana*

Kanji …….. logographic old Chinese characters

Karuta …….. a traditional card game

Katakana …….. syllabary alphabet primarily used for foreign originated words

Keigo …….. polite, formal language

Kenshougo …….. humble language used to discuss yourself to a higher status person

Manga …….. Japanese traditional comic books

Pepehā …….. a traditional Māori self-introduction

Rōmaji …….. the Latin alphabet used to write Japanese

Sonkeigo …….. honorific language used to discuss someone of higher status

Teineigo …….. general formal, polite language

Yamato-kotoba ……. Japanese originated words

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Throughout my time as both a Japanese language learner and a secondary school Japanese teacher within the New Zealand school system, I have encountered and observed many challenges related to addressing my own negative efficacy beliefs as a learner, while also guiding students, as a teacher, to transcend similar beliefs. My teaching practice is rooted in a personal struggle with linguistic "silence." Despite eight years of Japanese study, my first year in Japan was defined by a humiliating sense of inarticulacy. Unable to process the spoken language or sustain a conversation, I was consumed by the anger of feeling "not intelligent enough" to learn. This frustration sparked a search for effective communication strategies. A watershed moment occurred years later while studying te reo Māori. After using voice recordings for self-instruction, I instinctively recited a full *pepeha*[1] to my aunt, a fellow Māori language learner. Her amazement at my fluency led me to eventually introduce the use of voice recording in my Japanese teaching practice, producing several successes in students' improved self-belief and outcomes. These prompted me to wonder which strategies effectively foster the genuine belief in students that linguistic proficiency is attainable. It is this question that formed the basis for this study.

1.2 Formulating the Problem

During my master's programme I came across the term *self-efficacy* (SE)—a concept defined and explored in detail in Chapter Two—which refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1997). As a Japanese teacher and learner, the concept of SE improvement resonated with me as a means to improve

[1] A traditional Māori introduction in New Zealand that shares a person's identity and connection to their land, ancestors, and people

achievement and perceived success. My preliminary investigations into literature on SE revealed a lack of research outside of English language learning, and even less with regards to SE improvement. Because of this, I decided that my research should focus on SE enhancement strategies used by Japanese secondary school teachers in New Zealand, and what they perceived was effective teaching practice for tackling the various challenges of learning Japanese.

1.3 Japanese Language Features

Central to these challenges are several key linguistic features unique to Japanese. Among them, the writing system stands out, integrating three scripts: logographic *kanji* and the phonetic syllabaries *hiragana* and *katakana* (Limantoro & Atma, 2024; Seeley, 2023). Each *kana* (*hiragana* and *katakana*) involves 46 characters, and more than 70 combinations, or diacritics. While *kana* are almost completely consistently phonetic i.e. each character is pronounced as it looks in almost all situations, *kanji* is not. In the approximately 2000 characters necessary for functional literacy (Cook & Bassetti, 2005), *kanji* readings can range from one to over 10 (Shinmura, 2018), with pronunciation being often context-dependent and irregular (Richmond, 2005; Wydell et al., 1995). Globally, largely due to the requisite *kanji*, Japanese learners exhibit a reading deficit compared to those in alphabet-based languages (Dwyer, 1997), taking three or four times as long' as European languages to achieve literacy (Rose, 2013). Consequently, this burden contributes to high dropout rates (Kato, 2002) as English speakers—lacking the linguistic cognates available in European languages—must rely entirely on their own effort and self-belief to achieve baseline Japanese literacy.

Cultural influences both within and without Japan add to its richness and complexity when contrasted with English language and culture. Japanese is a member of the rare Japonic language family found solely on the Japanese archipelago, making its language distinct and unique from all other languages (Huisman et al., 2025; Vovin, 2017). *Yamato-kotoba*[2] provide the fundamental

[2] *Yamato*-kotoba, also known as *wago*, are Japanese originated words.

vocabulary and grammar of Japanese, although Sino-Japanese terms constitute the largest component of the contemporary Japanese lexicon (Kinoshita, 2025; Shibatani, 1990). This linguistic layering reflects a history of East Asian exchange, where Chinese philosophy and Buddhism—introduced via the mainland—were integrated with native Shintoism to shape modern idioms, proverbs, and social values (Bushelle, 2025; Davies, 2016; Miller, 1977). Social hierarchy is embedded in the language through levels of formality (*keigo*); polite (*teineigo*[3]), honorific (*sonkeigo*[4]), and humble (*kenjougo*[5]) forms often require entirely different morphological choices depending on the speaker's relative status (Amri et al., 2023; McGloin, 1983; Obana, 2020). Such intricate features contribute to the widespread reputation of Japanese as an exceptionally difficult language to master.

However, this perceived difficulty often overshadows several logical features that can streamline the learning process. The language has a canonical SOV order but allows flexible word order for information-structure purposes (Frellesvig, 2010; Miyagawa & Saito, 2008; Shibatani, 1990; Tamaoka, 2023), lacks grammatical gender, and employs only two tenses—past and non-past—with the latter conveying future actions (Frellesvig, 2010; Miyagawa & Saito, 2008; Shibatani, 1990). This efficiency extends to its 'pro-drop' nature; unlike English, which relies on repetitive pronouns, Japanese omits established subjects once the context is clear (Lee & Yonezawa, 2008; Otsuki, 2024). Consequently, single words can function as complete, standalone sentences, streamlining communication in a way many alphabet-based languages cannot (Nukada, 1965; Ōya, 2015). This structural simplicity is reinforced by an agglutinative morphology, where predictable suffixes are 'glued' to a stable verb root. Unlike the complex irregular forms of 'fusional' languages like English, this system allows learners to build meaning through consistent, concatenative formations (Kageyama, 2020; Miyagawa & Saito, 2008). For instance, the root *tabe-* (eat) transforms predictably

[3] *Teineigo* is used for general politeness e.g. when meeting people for the first time.
[4] *Sonkeigo* is polite Japanese used to show respect to a higher status person doing an action e.g. employee describing a boss's actions.
[5] *Koujougo* is polite Japanese used to show humility regarding one's own actions e.g an employee describing their own actions to a boss.

into *tabemasu* (polite affirmative), *tabemasen* (polite negative), or *tabetai* (desire). Such regularity ensures that once a learner masters a handful of suffixes, their communicative range expands exponentially (Kageyama, 2020; Huisman et al., 2025).

This structural clarity extends to the use of particles—typically single *hiragana* characters placed after nouns to explicitly signal their grammatical role (e.g., topic, nominative, or accusative). These markers effectively eliminate syntactic ambiguity, allowing word order to remain flexible while simplifying sentence construction and interpretation meaning (Cardinal, 2006; Frellesvig, 2010). For instance, the particle *ga* denotes the cat (*neko)* as the subject (*neko ga*), while *wo* identifies the object (*neko wo*) and *ni* indicates direction (*neko ni* – to the cat). By providing these explicit 'signposts,' the language allows learners to navigate complex sentence structures with logical precision. In support of this perspective, Hiranuma (1999), analysing spoken English and Japanese texts using dependency[6] as a measure of working-memory load, concludes that "Japanese is in fact no more difficult for syntactic processing than English" (p. 321), despite differences in sentence patterns and word order.

Modern loanwords further lower the barrier to entry; typically borrowed from English—such as *keeki* (cake), *kompyuutaa* (computer), and *painappuru* (pineapple)—these terms simplify both vocabulary acquisition and contextual guessing for English speaking learners (Hosokawa, 2023; Nambu, 2025). Along with predictable inflection, straightforward clause structures, the lack of articles, and a simple phonology, these efficiencies contribute to areas of relative simplicity (Miyagawa & Saito, 2008; Hasegawa, 2015). Collectively, these logical foundations allow learners to construct and interpret communication without the burden of the complex pronoun systems or irregular formations common in other languages.

While these features alleviate some challenges, Japanese is still considered one of the most difficult—if not *the* most difficult—language for English speakers to acquire (U.S. Department of

[6] *Dependency* refers to the distance between two words that are grammatically linked in a sentence.

State, n.d.), due to its substantial linguistic distance from English (Chiswick & Miller, 2005) and the added complexity of its writing system and cultural context (Wamuti, 2021). Achieving a high level of proficiency in Japanese is commonly associated with high demands on learner SE, as students must persist through multiple layers of perceived difficulty.

1.4 Teaching Japanese in New Zealand

Japanese entered New Zealand secondary education in the post-war period, and by the mid-1960s it was being taught in a growing number of secondary schools. (Copland, n.d.). By this time New Zealand Universities had dropped the previous requirement for students to study a foreign language, resulting in a significant decline in language learning numbers in secondary schools (McLauchlan, 2007). Despite this and its complex nature (see 1.3), Japanese steadily gained interest, becoming the most popular language at secondary schools during the 80's and 90's (Howard et al., 2016; McGee et al., 2013). This growth was supported by Japan's rising global presence and, later, by the cultural appeal of *anime* and *manga*, fostering broader cultural exchange, sister-city relationships, and school partnerships across New Zealand (Howard et al., 2016; McGee et al., 2013).

As Japanese peaked in popularity, broader debates emerged about the role of languages in the curriculum. The 1980s marked a pivotal shift where efforts to make language learning relevant coincided with urgent movements to arrest the decline of te reo Māori (the Māori language)—a decline precipitated by generations of English-only schooling (East, 2021; Te Huia, 2023). While this momentum successfully secured a revitalised status for te reo Māori, it also exposed the vulnerability of other languages, particularly given that 'Learning Languages' was not made compulsory when introduced as a core learning area in 2007 (East, 2021). This lack of a national mandate led to specific concerns for the long-term sustainability of Japanese, prompting concern from the Sasakawa Fellowship Foundation and leading to support for a review examining the post-2005 enrolment decline (McGee et al., 2013). Consequently, a divide emerged: while te reo Māori is anchored by robust institutional frameworks for revitalisation, other languages continue to depend on variable local

policies and resourcing (East, 2021; Hunter & Hunter, 2020), conditions that shape how teachers construe their role and the strategies they adopt to sustain learners' confidence.

This lack of a strategic mandate is reflected in the steady attrition of language learners, including in Japanese. Since 2008, Japanese language secondary school enrolments have plummeted from 18,157 to just 12,257 students in 2024 (Ministry of Education, 2024). Suggested reasons are multiple and predominantly structural. These include the erosion of Japan's global economic influence (Guthrie, 2005), monolingual attitudes in New Zealand (East, 2021; Howard, 2012), multilevel classes driven by resourcing constraints (Holt, 2006), teacher-centred instruction with limited perceived relevance (Harvey & Oshima, 2017), weak language policy (East, 2021; McGee et al., 2013), and shortages of qualified teachers (Howard, 2012; McGee et al., 2013). Together, these conditions create a climate in which learners' self-belief is easily eroded: Japanese is perceived as a difficult subject (East, 2012; Holt, 2006; McGee et al., 2013), and the pressure of competing for grades against native speakers further undermines confidence and discourages participation (McGee et al., 2013; McLauchlan, 2007). While all these existed prior to Japan's economic decline, their impact was less visible during the period of high demand for Japanese, when enrolments were buoyed by strong cultural and economic interest (Howard et al., 2016). In this context, teachers' beliefs about what maintains engagement take on added importance, informing the specific classroom practices they use to counter these pressures.

Against this structural backdrop, evidence from New Zealand shows that what sustains learners is not external utility but belief and experience in the classroom. In secondary settings, motivation for Japanese is highly sensitive to everyday classroom conditions and learners' self-belief (de Burgh-Hirabe, 2011). At the tertiary level, students who choose Japanese commonly cite interest and enjoyment, and their motivation likewise aligns more with immediate learning experience than instrumental necessity (Minagawa et al., 2020; Minagawa & Nesbitt, 2021; de Burgh-Hirabe, 2019). Collectively, these findings indicate that the most effective way to counter systemic challenges is

through the immediate, lesson-by-lesson classroom experience. Accordingly, these findings suggest the classroom is a key site for strengthening learners' self-belief through practices that foster interest and enjoyment and offer frequent, attainable successes (de Burgh-Hirabe, 2011; Bandura, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016), a focus that aligns with the present study's attention to teachers' reported beliefs and strategies.

Beyond student perceptions and enrolment trends, systemic difficulties in curriculum implementation present an additional layer of complexity that directly shapes teachers' pedagogical decision-making. The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) over the past few decades has changed several times, producing stress and confusion for teachers (Lilly, 2001; Lim, 2025). Frequent curriculum revisions have required teachers to reinterpret objectives, assessment expectations, and pedagogical approaches under significant time and resourcing constraints (Haba, 2014; Lilly, 2001; McGee et al., 2003). In response, many teachers adopt familiar strategies grounded in earlier curricular frameworks (Haba, 2014; Lim, 2025; McGee et al., 2003), not as resistance but as a practical adaptation to policy instability.

In addition to curriculum challenges, principal support and access to resourcing are critical for successful Japanese teaching, yet these are not always guaranteed (Haba, 2014; Lilly, 2001). Japanese teachers are often the sole language specialist in their school, limiting in-school networking and collaborative practice. Although professional development (PD) opportunities exist, access to locally situated or subject-specific support is constrained by workload and geographic dispersion (Gouëdard et al., 2020; Haba, 2014; McGee et al., 2013). For native Japanese teachers specifically, these challenges are compounded by the need to adapt to New Zealand learner culture compared to the much stricter, prescribed Japanese syllabus (Okamura, 2008). Under these conditions, teachers' personal beliefs about learning and motivation play a heightened role in shaping instructional strategies, particularly those aimed at sustaining learners' confidence and engagement when institutional supports are thin.

While the decline in Japanese enrolments is largely attributable to structural, policy, and resourcing factors, these lie beyond the scope of classroom-level inquiry and are not addressed in this study. This widely recognised difficulty forms part of the immediate learning context experienced by students, shaping how learners approach the subject. Within this context, teachers' beliefs and classroom strategies that build learners' self-belief are a central focus of this study, given their potential influence on persistence and engagement.

1.5 Aims of the Study

Ultimately, by examining how teachers understand and intentionally support learner beliefs, this study seeks to illuminate the role of SE within Japanese language classrooms, focusing on teacher-mediated classroom practice. This small-scale qualitative study therefore aims to explore the beliefs and strategies that teachers of Japanese use to enhance learners' SE. While SE has been widely examined within second language acquisition (SLA) research, there remains a notable scarcity of studies focused specifically on Japanese language learning, and particularly on pedagogical strategies designed to strengthen learners' SE beliefs (as detailed in Chapter Two). By examining teachers' reported beliefs and classroom practices, this study seeks to address this gap and contribute to the broader literature on SE enhancement in second language learning.

1.6 Research Context

This research is situated within Japanese language education in New Zealand secondary schools, focusing on teachers working with learners at junior and senior levels, including NCEA[7] contexts. The study centres on teachers as the primary unit of analysis, examining their beliefs, intentions, and teaching strategies related to the development of learner SE. Given that Japanese teachers frequently

[7] NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement) is New Zealand's main secondary school qualification, awarded to students in Years 11–13 through a credit-based assessment system (New Zealand Qualifications Authority [NZQA], n.d.).

operate as sole specialists within their schools, their pedagogical decision-making plays a significant role in shaping learners' confidence and persistence. This study therefore foregrounds teachers' perspectives to examine how SE is understood and intentionally supported within everyday classroom practice.

1.7 Overview of Thesis

There are six chapters in this thesis. Chapter one introduced the rationale for the study and formulated the research problem. It provided background on Japanese language features, challenges for English-speaking learners, and the status of Japanese within the New Zealand education system. The chapter concluded with the aims and context of the research, positioning learner SE as an important lens through which to understand student persistence.

Chapter two is the literature review. It begins by defining SE, followed by key SE studies in SLA, and research which specifically covers SE for Japanese language learning. Following this is defining terms within the sources of SE (Bandura, 1997). Because the literature is unclear about how autonomy and self-regulation relate to these sources, a separate paragraph is included to justify how they are categorised within this study so that the analytical framework remains consistent. Well-defined descriptions of each source as well as discussion on nuanced features and justifications for utilising SE sources as a framework are also provided. The section ends with SE improvement strategies, a summary of gaps in current literature, and the research question.

Chapter three is the methodology chapter. This chapter explains the research approach that was used for this study, providing the benefits of qualitative research for delving into teacher beliefs and practices whilst also considering the limitations. It explains the decision to take a qualitative approach and describes and justifies the instruments and processes used for data collection, followed by ethical considerations of this research.

Chapter four presents the study's key findings organised into three sections: questionnaire results, teachers' beliefs about SE, and reported classroom strategies. The beliefs and strategy findings are grouped according to Bandura's sources of SE to provide a structured analysis.

Chapter five is the discussion chapter presenting the findings in relation to existing literature, highlighting consistencies, divergences, and implications for practice. It interprets the results through Bandura's framework and considers their significance for Japanese language teaching in New Zealand.

Chapter six concludes the study by revisiting the research questions, summarising key contributions, acknowledging limitations, and suggesting directions for future research. Lastly, some final thoughts and reflections will be presented. An appendix, including the questions in the online survey and prompt questions used in the interviews, follows the reference section.

Chapter Two: Literature Review:

This chapter outlines key definitions and the theoretical framework underpinning the study, drawing on relevant literature to establish the rationale for investigating self-efficacy (SE) in Japanese language education. It begins by defining SE and reviewing research SLA and Japanese language learning, followed by an explanation of Bandura's sources of SE (Bandura, 1997). The discussion then examines research on strategies for enhancing SE and identifies methodological and contextual gaps in the literature. These gaps directly inform the research questions that follow, situating the present study within ongoing SLA research.

2.1 Self-Efficacy Definition

Research into SE began in psychology as a tool for overcoming phobias but has since become central to education and, increasingly, SLA. (Scott & Cervone, 2008; Irie, 2021). Self-efficacy—defined by Bandura (1986) as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (p. 391), —shapes learners' willingness to engage and persevere through challenging tasks (Bandura, 1991). Self-efficacy is not a measure of actual skill but of perceived capability— a person's beliefs that they possess the necessary skills to complete a specific task successfully (Chao et al., 2019), This perception influences motivation (Irie, 2021), goal setting, and resilience (Bandura, 1991): highly self-efficacious individuals attribute setbacks to insufficient effort and keep trying, while those with low SE often interpret failure as inability, leading to avoidance (Bandura, 1991). Because these beliefs govern choices, aspirations, and perseverance, SE acts as "an important set of proximal determinants of human self-regulation" (Bandura, 1991, p 257) guiding how learners plan, monitor, and adjust their actions toward achieving goals. Irie (2021) further describes it as "essentially a self-evaluation of how able you feel to carry out a specific task in a specific situation successfully" (p. 100). In short, SE is both a predictor and a driver of performance,

making it a foundational construct for understanding how people engage with complex learning tasks (Jabbarifar, 2011).

2.2 Self-efficacy in Second Language Acquisition

Self-efficacy has gained increasing attention in SLA research for its role in shaping learners' motivation, strategy use, and overall development (Irie, 2021; Wyatt, 2022). Evidence suggests learners with high language learning SE persist through challenges, engage meaningfully, and regulate their progress (Raoofi et al., 2012). Within this growing body of work, research has tended to focus on methods and dimensions of SE, particularly in English-dominant contexts (Fryer et al., 2025; Irie, 2021; Stracke, 2016; Wyatt, 2022). Research has been dominated by quantitative approaches, with relatively few studies exploring SE through qualitative or situated, classroom-embedded perspectives (Irie, 2021). Existing studies largely focus on individual skills (e.g., listening, speaking) and how instruction and learner autonomy influence both skill growth and SE beliefs (Wyatt, 2022). Far less is known about how SE is shaped in situ through everyday teaching practices and teacher–learner interaction (Irie, 2021; Wyatt, 2022). Taken together, these findings establish SE as a critical factor in SLA and point to this underexplored classroom dimension.

Several meta-analyses in SLA have explicitly identified significant gaps in the scope and methodology of existing research. Fryer, Li, Guo, Liang and Zhong (2025), in their systematic review of 166 articles on SE research in SLA between 2006 and 2023, noted that few studies were solely qualitative (7.23%), even fewer were person-centred (3.01%), and none focused on Japanese language learning, highlighting the dearth of research beyond English. In another meta-analysis of 32 articles examining learner SE beliefs, Raoofi, Tan and Chan (2012) concluded that "no study has examined the combined effects or separate effects of sources of SE on the development of SE beliefs" (p. 66). These findings demonstrate a clear need for research that moves beyond quantitative dominance and examines how Bandura's (1997) sources of SE operate in tandem within classroom contexts. Such qualitative or mixed-method investigations could deepen understanding of teacher and learner

strategies that foster SE, particularly in less commonly studied languages such as Japanese, where learning demands may shape SE development in distinct ways.

While meta-analyses highlight methodological gaps, individual case studies illuminate how specific classroom strategies shape learners' SE beliefs. Wang and Pape's (2005) case study of four fifth-grade English as a Second Language (ESL) students examined strategies that contributed to SE development and uncovered "a relationship between self-efficacy, self-regulated learning strategies, and participants' English language proficiency" (p. 76). They suggested encouraging "explicit instruction related to SRL [self-regulated learning] strategies and help[ing] students develop strategies suitable to their characteristics and the learning context" (p. 85). Other research, such as Gahungu (2007) and Wong (2005), also identified positive relationships between learner-reported strategies, SE, and learner outcomes in English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) contexts. These findings position SE as closely intertwined with broader learning processes, underscoring the importance of deliberate teacher strategy design to sustain learner engagement. They also reinforce the need to explore whether similar relationships exist in non-EFL/ESL contexts, where linguistic demands and instructional conditions may differ.

More targeted research examining the effects of self-regulated learning on SE in language memorisation has also been conducted. In a longitudinal study with three groups, only learners who received a self-regulated learning (SRL)-based vocabulary intervention "showed a steady increase in self-efficacy and vocabulary knowledge" compared with two contrast groups (Mizumoto, 2013, p. 15). This indicates that integrating SRL can enhance learners' SE and, indirectly, support vocabulary development. However, these findings emerge from a Japanese-to-English learning context, in which learners may benefit from partial cognate or loanword support (see 1.3). For English-speaking learners of Japanese, vocabulary learning involves far fewer cognates, a different writing system, and greater memorisation demands, highlighting the need to examine how SRL and SE develop in the reverse learning direction.

Building on this broader focus, research has also examined how SE relates to the four core language skills, offering insight into its role in overall language proficiency. Graham and Macaro (2008), for example, investigated listening skills instruction and its effects on listening comprehension and SE among lower-intermediate French learners in the UK. Their study found that effective strategy training significantly improved learners' listening abilities as well as their confidence in performing listening tasks. This demonstrates how targeted instructional approaches can simultaneously support skill development and learner self-beliefs, encouraging deeper engagement with language learning (Wang & Pape, 2005; Mizumoto, 2013). Such findings suggest the value of examining how teaching approaches relate to learner confidence in more complex and demanding language learning contexts.

With technology transforming how learners interact, research has increasingly examined how online platforms influence SE and engagement. Sánchez-Castro and Mrowa-Hopkins (2012) investigated how Spanish learners with low and high levels of SE developed discourse skills, engagement, and participation through synchronous online chats. They found that students developed interactive communication skills and participation over time, with learners reporting lower SE showing notable improvement. While not central to the present study, these findings highlight the influence of digital interaction on SE and provide additional context for how varied learning strategies can support confidence and engagement.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that SE is closely linked to self-regulation, strategy use, and learner outcomes, often enhanced through targeted instruction and collaborative activities. However, significant gaps remain. Research is dominated by quantitative approaches, with limited qualitative or mixed-method studies, and little attention to the combined operation of Bandura's (1997) four sources of SE. While existing studies have examined SE in relation to individual skills and online interaction, there is limited investigation into how everyday classroom practices and instructional decision-making shape SE development, particularly in non-English language contexts. Taken together,

these limitations point to a need for qualitative, classroom-based research that examines teachers' beliefs and strategies across a wider range of language learning contexts, including Japanese.

2.3 Self-efficacy Research in Japanese Language Learning

Reflecting broader trends in the literature, research on SE in SLA has predominantly focused on English-dominant contexts and learner-level outcomes. Within Japanese language learning, research on SE remains comparatively limited, with studies dispersed across diverse contexts and methodological approaches. While existing work has begun to explore SE in relation to motivation, learning experiences, and learner beliefs, a cohesive understanding of how SE is shaped within Japanese language classrooms is still emerging.

Rong (2019) investigated how a Chinese technical intern trainee (H), despite not passing advanced Japanese Language Proficiency Tests, navigated language learning while living and working in Japan. Using a qualitative case study and data collected through semi-structured interviews regarding study strategies, Rong concluded that H already had a high perceived efficacy when she said, 「自分は日本語が少しできたから日本に行ってきっと暮らせる」("I could speak a little Japanese, so I'll definitely be able to go and live in Japan.") (p 66). Rong concluded that her SE was strengthened further the more she interacted with Japanese people. Just as these external interactions built H's confidence, investigating how teachers in the classroom provide Japanese language learners opportunities to communicate in natural conversation furthering SE development could provide a significant contribution to research.

Complementing these findings on social interaction, Özşen and İrim (2018) investigated developing scales for measuring anxiety and SE specifically for Japanese as a foreign language (JFL). Using 108 students of Japanese at a university in Turkey, they conducted a quantitative exploratory factor analysis on both constructs. Eleven items consisting of four factors – Reading-Listening, Speaking, The Power of Expression of Japanese, and Cultural Understanding – were included in the

final version of Japanese as a Foreign Language Self-Efficacy Scale (JFL/SES). While this scale captures the multidimensional nature of SE, its findings remain specific to a single Turkish university. The extent to which these specific factors manifest in Japanese language classrooms around the world remain a significant gap in the literature.

Moving beyond measurement, Tothill-Brown (2019) examined how teacher identity and classroom context shape SE beliefs among beginner learners of Japanese. Through interviews with ten students and observations conducted over their first four months of study, the research illustrated how instructor background shaped early learning experiences. As the author notes, "instructor cultural and linguistic identity… significantly affected many students' self-efficacy and drive to continue learning Japanese" (p. ii). At the same time, pedagogical factors such as feedback, praise, and opportunities for engagement also played a meaningful role. This study is valuable for the present research because it highlights how both teacher identity and day-to-day teaching practices contribute to students' developing sense of capability—underscoring the importance of investigating teachers' own beliefs and strategies for fostering SE in Japanese language classrooms in New Zealand.

Only one study was found which investigated SE enhancement in Japanese learners. Kawahara (2021) researched how Japanese language learners develop SE in their Japanese proficiency. From her survey of six foreign students at a local Japanese language school, she found that SE was comparatively high, while students generally stated that vicarious experiences (observing others succeed), followed by verbal persuasion (encouragement from others) and physiological affect (positive mood and low stress) were the most influential sources of SE. The semi-structured interview reported more specific sources: the presence of friends regardless of nationality, a sense of growth, feelings of security in the classroom environment, and whether they had a role in the group. The absence of mastery experiences (successfully performing a task) highlights a contrast from other research in other languages which puts experiences of success as the major source (Irie, 2021; Wyatt, 2022). Further research is needed

to uncover differences potentially due to languages being studied or the cultural background of the learners.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that SE in Japanese language learning is shaped by a complex interplay of authentic interaction (Rong, 2019), motivational dynamics (Lee, 2003), and instructor identity (Tothill-Brown, 2019). While research has established specialised measurement scales (Özşen & İrim, 2018) and identified that in this instance vicarious experience outweighs mastery in JFL contexts (Kawahara, 2021), a significant gap remains regarding the teacher's role. Such contrasts underscore the importance of further investigation into whether these differences reflect characteristics of the language being studied or the cultural contexts of the learners.

2.4 Sources of Self-Efficacy

While the aforementioned studies identify various influences on learner perceived efficacy, Bandura's (1997) four sources of SE provide a pertinent theoretical framework for exploring how intentional classroom strategies translate into increased learner SE. Bandura postulated that an individual's belief in their ability to succeed is derived from four primary channels: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological or affective states. The following sections define these sources within the context of language acquisition and justify their application as a framework for examining how pedagogical strategies can intentionally enhance perceived efficacy.

2.4.1 Master Experiences

According to Bandura (1994), mastery experiences are the most powerful way to build strong SE beliefs. Mastery experience "indicates learners' individual interpretation of their past performance" (Zheng et al., 2017, p. 331). Mastery beliefs are largely determined by a learner's experience of success, which results in either an active or passive attitude to new challenges (Ross & Broh, 2000). Self-efficacy improves through success while "failures undermine it, especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established" (Bandura, 1994, p 2). Resilient SE grows when individuals

persist through obstacles and learn to interpret failures as sources of insight rather than discouragement (Bandura, 2012). One's interpretation of one's own experiences of success or failure, therefore, are the most powerful indicator of SE (Bandura, 1986). Thus, language learning environments which encourage tasks for learners' mastery tend toward greater SE in students (Leeming, 2017).

2.4.2 Vicarious Experiences

While mastery is the primary source, vicarious experiences offer another potent pathway to SE. According to Lee (2005), "[v]icarious learning […] arises in situations where a learning experience is witnessed and reacted to as a learning experience by another learner." (p. 1958). Witnessing competent peers or adults succeed offers learners a concrete benchmark for their own performance and fosters stronger SE beliefs (Bandura, 2012). Observation of a successful model "provides a standard [for the observer to pursue] and this can help the observer set goals for his or her own teaching" (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2009, p. 230). Crucially, perceived similarity between the model and observer amplifies this effect, making peers often more influential than teachers (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2009). In language education, this principle underpins near-peer modelling, where learners observe classmates performing valued tasks successfully (Murphey & Arao, 2001). For such modelling to be effective in the language classroom, tasks must produce success while being challenging, valued and meaningful to the aims of the learner (Graham, 2022). Notably, research on Japanese language learners has even found vicarious experiences to outweigh mastery experiences as sources of SE (Kawahara, 2021), suggesting that in some JFL contexts observational learning may play an unusually prominent role and offering a valuable lens for examining how teacher-designed modelling opportunities might intentionally strengthen learners' SE.

2.4.3 Social Persuasion

Beyond merely observing others, learners also derive efficacy from direct interpersonal influence via social persuasion. Social or verbal persuasion refers to encouragement or feedback from significant others, peers, or family (Bandura, 2012). In classrooms, this includes positive reinforcement from

teachers or classmates. While persuasion alone is limited, combined with other sources it strengthens SE (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2009). Like vicarious experiences, credibility and perceived similarity between encourager and learner make tasks seem more attainable (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016). Persuasive feedback fosters perseverance toward higher levels of resolution but discouraging messages undermine SE more easily than encouragement can build it (Bandura, 1994; 2012). Similarly, inflated confidence can be fragile and quickly collapses when efforts fail (Bandura, 1994; 2012). Learners convinced they lack ability avoid challenges that could build their skills and give up easily when facing difficulties (Bandura, 1994). For instance, a student who is told they 'aren't good at speaking' may withdraw from oral activities, thereby limiting opportunities to improve. Because of these vulnerabilities, research emphasises that verbal persuasion rarely produces lasting increases in SE unless it is supported by opportunities for mastery or credible modelling; without these, its effects tend to be shallow and easily disrupted (Bandura, 1994; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2009). Thus, positive encouragement in the language classroom needs to be significant and deliberate to reduce the negative effects of potential criticism.

2.4.4 Positive Affect

Beyond the impact of external encouragement, the internal interpretation of these experiences manifests as affective states. These emotional responses, ranging from interest, enjoyment, anxiety, stress, and their interpretation, constitute a key source of SE (Bandura, 2012; Oh, 2024; Zheng et al., 2017). Beliefs may be reinforced when learners manage anxiety and low mood effectively, develop resilience, and learn to interpret their physical and emotional states more accurately (Bandura, 2012). In language classrooms, this involves minimal criticism, frequent praise, short opportunities for authentic conversation, activities which pique interest in the subject, and reframing mistakes as learning. Perception and interpretation strongly influence SE: tasks viewed as challenging but manageable focus energy, "whereas high levels of arousal perceived as a threat might interfere with making the best use of one's skills and capabilities" (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2009, p. 231). Emotional

states bias judgments—failure in a good mood inflates ability, success in a bad mood deflates it (Bandura, 1997). SE built on positive mood alone is fragile—unrealistic beliefs collapse after setbacks, while low efficacy leads learners to avoid challenges and quit early (Bandura, 1994). Thus, effective learning environments should provide opportunities for attainable successes, protect against premature failure, and frame progress as self-improvement rather than comparison (Bandura, 1994).

2.4.5 Justification for Framework Use

Bandura's (1997, 2012) four sources of SE provide a widely supported and practical theoretical framework for understanding learner confidence and strategy use within language learning contexts (Mills, 2014; Phan & Locke, 2015; Waddington, 2023). The framework provides a clear, theory-driven structure for organising diverse practices, enabling systematic comparison across teachers and linking qualitative data to established theory. It serves as a common language for integrating findings with broader research on SE in education, and researchers continue to highlight its relevance for further investigation (Irie, 2021; Raoofi et al., 2012).

However, several limitations to the framework should be considered. For instance, when students are paired to observe each other, they may encounter vicarious and mastery experiences at the same time. Such a convergence of sources can lead to ambiguity when attempting to code or interpret them separately. In addition, not all strategies fit neatly into the four sources. Certain language-specific pedagogical practices, such as encouraging students to reflect on long-term progress rather than focusing on individual tests, reflect beliefs about learner identity and development that are not fully captured by the framework. A further tension exists between reducing anxiety and maintaining sufficient challenge to foster mastery experiences. Teachers may lower task difficulty to reduce stress, which can make students feel more confident in the short term, yet limit opportunities for genuine mastery and enduring SE. This creates difficulty in interpreting whether SE has truly increased or whether students merely perceive tasks as easier.

Although these limitations present challenges, they also create opportunities to deepen theoretical understanding. How strategies blur categorical boundaries or reveal gaps in the framework can deepen understanding of how the sources operate in practice. Nevertheless, Bandura's model remains a valuable, theory-driven tool for organising diverse strategies and linking classroom practices to established research. Its adaptability and clarity make it particularly useful for analysing teachers' approaches in Japanese language classrooms, while limitations, far from diminishing its value, point to promising directions for refinement and further research.

2.5 Categorising Autonomy and Self-Regulation

Although self-regulation and autonomy are concepts prominent in SE research (Bandura, 1991; Wyatt, 2022; Zimmerman, 2000;), the link between them and Bandura's sources appears to be underexplored in existing research. Self-regulation is "self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment of personal goals." (Zimmerman, 2000, p 14), whereas autonomy is defined as "[t]he ability to take charge of one's own learning, which is specified as to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning" (Holec, 1981, p.3), focusing more on freedom of choice rather than regulation. Learners who demonstrate autonomous actions and regulate their practices and thoughts in their pursuit of language proficiency demonstrate mastery over their learning tools and strategies. Thus, in this research, strategies which promote autonomous learning and self-regulation will be categorised as largely mastery experience, as they involve learners successfully taking charge of their own progress. If these self-directed learning actions are observed by peers, they will also be categorised as vicarious experiences.

2.6 Teaching Strategies Categorised by Self-Efficacy Source

Research demonstrates a variety of SE producing strategies from various fields including psychology, trauma recovery, SLA and education. This section provides a list of SE improving strategy examples, including how they could be utilised within a Japanese language learning scenario. While not

exhaustive, this list allows readers to see examples of teaching strategies which can be categorised into the four sources.

- Memorisation is critical in language learning for SE enhancement (Wang & Pape, 2005), which is especially applicable in Japanese with a necessity to know numerous characters off by heart. This could be done through *kanji* flashcards, mobile apps and matching games.
- Rehearsals are also effective (Wang & Pape, 2005; Warner & French, 2020), which could be played out through role playing activities preparing for interactions with native Japanese. For example, a teacher might role play a shopping scenario to practice grammar points or language in context.
- Clear learning objectives (Wade, 2002) and goal setting (Bandura, 1986) can be implemented in a Japanese language classroom at the start of the lesson on the board to help guide the students learning and give them autonomy over the direction of their learning.
- Opportunities for autonomous learning and self-regulation (see 2.5) could also be played out by giving students the choice of learning tools or learning sequence within a unit.
- Modelling coping attitudes while used for alleviating trauma and phobia (Benight & Bandura, 2004) have applications in teaching to overcome fear of using the language incorrectly in online interactions with native speakers, such as demonstrating how perseverant effort can overcome difficulties (Benight & Bandura, 2004). For example, a teacher might role play a student struggling to speak online due to lack of perceived ability, but then demonstrate how to change topic, express useful expressions, or simply stay silent.
- Teachers could provide incentives (Benight & Bandura, 2004) such as Japanese stickers or a film everyone can watch when the assignment has been completed.
- Consistent supportive feedback from both teachers and peers also improves efficacious beliefs (Benight & Bandura, 2004; Ruegg, 2018); which could be produced by encouraging pair

checking in class, and "marking" of assessments which focuses on constructive criticism and praise.

- Positive mentoring relationships produces positive SE beliefs (Costello & Stone, 2012). This could be set up through similar pairing structure perhaps focusing on senior students tutoring juniors.

Table 1 categorises the strategies described above according to Bandura's four sources of SE. This organisation provides a structured basis for analysing and interpreting teacher-reported practices. As some activities may draw on multiple sources of SE, certain strategies are categorised in more than one domain; for example, pair mentoring reflects both vicarious experience and positive affect. This categorisation enables clearer identification of which sources of SE are commonly supported, underutilised, or overlooked in classroom practice.

Table 1: *Example of Self-Efficacy Improving Strategies Categorised into Bandura's (1997) Four Sources.*

Source of SE	**General Strategies for Enhancing SE**	**Classroom Strategy Examples**
Mastery Experience	Memorisation	*Kanji* flashcards and mobile applications
	Rehearsals.	Role-playing activities
	Clear learning objectives	Lesson instructions on board
	Goal setting	Students to set monthly *kanji* learning goals.
	Self-regulation	Choice of order of language topics
	Autonomy	Allowed to choose self-learning study techniques
Vicarious Experience	Modelling	Teacher demonstrates online conversation problems and solutions
	Pair mentoring	Senior-junior pairing for tutoring
Social Persuasion	Provide incentives	Stickers for completed work
	Consistent supportive feedback	Pair checking of assignments; teacher feedback

Positive Affect	Pair mentoring	Senior-junior pairing for tutoring

2.7 Research Questions:

While SLA research demonstrates the importance of SE for learner engagement and persistence, significant methodological and contextual gaps remain. Existing studies are predominantly quantitative, English-focused, and learner-centred, with limited examination of how SE is fostered through classroom practice. Moreover, Bandura's four sources of SE (1997) are rarely examined in an integrated, classroom-based manner, and research in Japanese language learning has seldom explored SE from the perspective of teachers' beliefs and pedagogical strategies. In response to these gaps, and building on the context and aims outlined in Chapter 1, the following research questions have been developed to guide this study:

1. What are teachers' self-reported beliefs about improving learner SE with regards to teaching practice in secondary school Japanese language classrooms?

2. What strategies do teachers report as being effective in improving their learners' SE in secondary school Japanese language classrooms?

Chapter Three: Methodology

This section outlines the methodological approach adopted to address the research questions concerning teachers' self-reported beliefs and strategies for enhancing learners' self-efficacy (SE). It begins by justifying the chosen research design and situating the study within the context of common teaching experiences and classroom situations. The section then describes the participants, followed by an explanation and rationale for the instruments used—namely, a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Next, it details the step-by-step procedures for conducting the research and the methods employed for data analysis. Finally, ethical considerations relevant to the methodologies are discussed.

3.1 Research Design

Qualitative research was chosen for this study because, as Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey (2016) note, it is "used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective" (p. 499), and can reveal deeper patterns and insights. Since the research aims to explore subjective experiences, personal beliefs, and teaching strategies in a context that has not been extensively studied, qualitative methods are well suited (Irie, 2021; Jamshed, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2009). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) also suggest that qualitative approaches enhance data interpretation through deeper analysis of individual experience. This is particularly advantageous for exploring the nuanced beliefs of Japanese language teachers in a field where established data is currently scarce.

Within this qualitative framework, semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary method of data collection to allow for in-depth exploration of participants' beliefs and strategies related to enhancing student SE. Semi-structured interviews enable researchers to maintain focus on core themes while adapting the conversation to participants' responses, fostering a natural dialogue that encourages detailed and authentic insights (Ruslin et al., 2022; Turner, 2010). As this research was exploratory in nature, Bandura's four sources of SE (Bandura, 1997) were adopted as this model

provided a simple and systematic way to categorise and examine patterns of beliefs and strategies reported by teachers.

A questionnaire was also included to both recruit participants and elicit information to assist in personalising the interview questions (Sha et al., 2013). Following Harris & Brown (2010), questionnaire responses were used to directly inform the development and sequencing of semi-structured interview questions. This questionnaire aimed at determining the range of different topics focusing largely on teaching experiences, as opposed to data and frequency driven quantitative data (Jansen, 2010). From those that volunteered to interview, five were selected, who were interviewed either online video call or in person.

While limitations of qualitative research include small sample sizes and limited generalisability (Hammarberg et al., 2016), this study was intended as an initial step, opening the way for future investigations using quantitative or mixed methods designs. Given that researching SE—and in particular, SE enhancement—remains largely unexplored in the current Japanese foreign language literature, qualitative semi-structured interviews were appropriate to gain broad, in-depth insights into teachers' perspectives and practices.

3.2 Context of the Study

This study is situated within Japanese language education in New Zealand secondary schools, focusing on teachers of Japanese across Years 9–13. These schools offer Japanese as a timetabled subject within the languages learning area, progressing from introductory levels to NCEA Levels 1–3. Secondary schools were chosen because they employ specialist Japanese teachers with formal training and established networks, ensuring informed strategy use. Small class sizes and enrolment pressures further influence teachers' strategy choice, as senior Japanese classes are often small or combined across year levels, requiring teachers to select approaches that maintain both engagement and achievement to support retention. These dynamics reflect broader structural conditions discussed in

section 1.4, which shape the context in which teachers' beliefs and practices develop. (Al Khresheh, 2025; Zeng, 2021)

3.3 Participants

Japanese language teachers were invited to complete an open-ended questionnaire, with no set limit on the number of participants. I contacted current and former teachers in the province where I live, as well as others through the New Zealand Association of Language Teachers (NZALT), by sending an email with a link to the questionnaire, which the organisation agreed to advertise to teachers. In total, 24 teachers completed the questionnaire. The aim was to gather information about their experiences teaching Japanese, including both practical challenges and strategies they had found effective in the classroom. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were invited to volunteer for a follow-up interview. From those who volunteered, five participants were purposively selected based on their relevance to the study aims and their willingness to engage in in-depth discussion. This willingness was reflected in how promptly they responded to the interview request email, which served as a practical indicator of their availability and commitment. Two exceptions were made: one participant was selected due to our shared workplace, which streamlined logistical coordination and ensured ease of access, while another was included to provide male representation, allowing for the exploration of potential gender-related differences in pedagogical beliefs and strategies.

This approach aligns with the principles of purposive sampling, which is widely recommended in qualitative research to obtain rich, in-depth information rather than statistical representativeness (Carminati, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2007; Yadav, 2022). Purposive sampling provides "the better matching of the sample to the aims and objectives of the research, thus improving the rigour of the study and trustworthiness of the data and results" (Campbell et al., 2020, p. 653). In this study, purposive sampling ensured that interviewees not only had substantial teaching experience but also offered diverse perspectives on strategies for fostering students' SE. The sample size was guided by

recommendations that, in under-researched contexts, smaller groups allow for richer qualitative analysis capable of yielding insights of wider relevance and theoretical significance (Duff, 2011, p. 96).

Interview participant anonymous identifiers and profiles are presented below to contextualise quotations in the findings. To ensure confidentiality, demographic items were non-identifiable, and participants chose their own pseudonyms, which were later assigned. This explains the variation, with some identifiers shown as initials and others as full names. All participants are from English-speaking backgrounds except RM, who is a native Japanese speaker, and all are female with the exception of Ray, who is male.

CB: a veteran teacher with decades of experience instructing at a secondary school in the North Island.

Sally: new to high-school Japanese instruction but with many years of university-level language teaching in both New Zealand and Japan.

RM: a native Japanese speaker passionate about her mother tongue, with extensive teaching experience in secondary schools across New Zealand.

Ray: a secondary school teacher in the North Island who entered Japanese teaching opportunistically and has since developed a deep commitment to the subject.

NJ: who taught English in Japan for several years before returning to New Zealand to teach Japanese at secondary level.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

This section describes the details regarding the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. Also included is a description of how the questionnaire information links to the construction and implementation of the interviews.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire (see Appendix One) was designed to gather demographic and professional background information, including years of teaching experience, subjects and year levels taught, school context, and strategies teachers reported using to enhance student SE (Bandura, 1986; 1991; Benight & Bandura, 2004; Ruegg, 2018; Wade, 2002; Wang & Pape, 2005; Warner & French, 2020; Wyatt, 2022; Zimmerman, 2000), Responses from participants who volunteered for interviews were used to inform the development of tailored interview questions, ensuring alignment with each participant's context and deepening the quality of subsequent discussions. For example, when a teacher indicated experience teaching subjects other than Japanese, this prompted interview questions about how that experience influenced their views on SE and related strategies.

The questionnaire was administered online via SurveyMonkey and consisted primarily of multiple-choice items, many with an "Other" option to allow participants to personalise responses. This design encouraged honest feedback and reduced bias (Brown & Shulruf, 2023; Hadler, 2025). Before distribution, the questionnaire was piloted with two secondary school teachers, whose feedback led to improvements in clarity and conciseness. For example, one teacher advised changing a question that required exactly three responses to "select up to three," so respondents with varying experience could answer appropriately. These refinements ensured the questionnaire addressed key topics such as challenges in learning and teaching Japanese, reasons students continued or discontinued study, moments when students experienced achievement, and strategies teachers used to strengthen students' self-belief. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were invited to volunteer for a follow-up interview.

3.4.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted one-on-one, either in person or via video conferencing, depending on participant availability and preference. This format provided flexibility while maintaining focus on research aims. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was audio or

video/audio-recorded with consent. The setting was informal and conversational to encourage openness and reduce feelings of obligation or performance pressure.

An interview guide (see Appendix Two) was developed from questionnaire themes, particularly belief-enhancing strategies, offering a structured yet adaptable framework for exploring teachers' experiences. Its purpose was to "ensure that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee…[providing] more focus than the conversational approach, but still [allowing] a degree of freedom and adaptability" (McNamara, 2009). Open-ended questions targeted teaching experiences, classroom strategies, and beliefs about SE in language learners, eliciting discussion around Bandura's four sources of SE and broader areas such as goal setting, classroom environment, and relationships. Question sequences were adjusted when teachers raised related points (e.g., moving feedback questions forward when feedback was mentioned) to maintain a natural flow. Individualisation was achieved by incorporating non-prompted questionnaire responses (e.g., online conversations as strategies). Some guide questions allowed participants to substitute their own answers (e.g., for "Appealing aspects"), providing space for deeper exploration while still aligning responses with the study's theoretical framework.

To encourage authentic responses, simplified terms such as "belief that students can do it," "self-belief," and "confidence" were used instead of the technical term "self-efficacy." While SE refers to "belief in one's ability to organise and execute actions required to achieve specific goals" (Bandura, 1997), this construct often appears in more intuitive, colloquial forms in teaching practice. Dörnyei (2001) notes that self-confidence is a "generalised perception of one's coping potentials, relevant to a range of tasks and subject domains" (p. 56), suggesting that self-confidence could be viewed as generalised SE (Almutlaq, 2018).

This approach extended to SE sources. The term 'mastery experiences' was retained as common language, while 'vicarious experiences' and 'social persuasion' were expressed through familiar terms such as 'modelling,' 'feedback,' and 'encouragement.' Positive affect was not explicitly

referenced because emotions naturally arise when discussing instructional strategies. Students' positive emotions are an essential element of successful learning in school because they are directly related to learning strategies and performance (Harley et al., 2019; Kouhsari et al., 2024; Pekrun et al., 2017; Pekrun et al., 2002), suggesting that emotional engagement is likely to emerge naturally from teachers' beliefs and strategy decisions.

To ensure quality, the format was piloted with a former French and current Māori teacher. Their feedback improved clarity, and reviewing pilot recordings refined timing and identified language cues related to SE. For example, during one pilot, the French teacher began discussing students' personalities, and I did not redirect promptly toward SE, highlighting the need for more timely intervention to keep the discussion focused.

3.5 Procedure

This section describes the procedure of the research. It begins with a step-by-step account of the research process, followed by details of recruitment, consent, and data collection.

3.5.1 Step-by-Step Account and Timeline of the Research Process

The research process began with obtaining ethical approval from the university's Human Ethics Committee in June 2024 (see Appendix Three), ensuring compliance with institutional requirements for research involving human participants (further details about the ethical process are provided in section 3.7). Following approval, I contacted the New Zealand Association of Japanese Language Teachers (NZAJLT) in July 2024, requesting that they distribute an online questionnaire link to their members via group email or similar communication channels to invite participation. To broaden recruitment, I also approached local Japanese teachers directly. Responses received in August 2024 formed the pool of potential interviewees. In September 2024, consent forms were emailed along with participant information sheets (see Appendix Four). Signed consent was returned before interviews were scheduled. Between September and October 2024, five one-hour, semi-structured interviews

were conducted. Four interviews were conducted remotely at mutually convenient times, while one took place in person at the teacher's secondary school.

3.5.2 Recruitment and Consent

Once interviewees were confirmed, each received a participant information sheet outlining the study's aim—to explore strategies for enhancing learner SE—along with a consent form and their questionnaire responses for reference (see Appendix Four). Participation was voluntary, and consent was obtained via signed forms returned by email prior to interviews. In all cases, participants confirmed receipt of documents and returned signed consent forms before their scheduled interview.

3.5.3 Data Collection

The questionnaire served two purposes:

1. To gather background information on Japanese-language teaching practices.
2. To identify individuals willing to participate in follow-up interviews.

The interview guide was applied flexibly during interviews to build on questionnaire responses. For example, if a teacher had experience teaching multiple subjects beyond Japanese, I asked how this shaped their perspective on SE and related strategies. Question order and wording were adapted during the interview, and the first two questions in each section served as lead-ins but were omitted when participants introduced the topic naturally. While a guiding structure was in place, interviews remained conversational: participants could elaborate on areas they considered important and were followed up with clarifying questions. All interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Transcription was completed by October 2024.

3.6 Data analysis

This section explains how the data were analysed. It begins by outlining the analytical methods selected for this study, supported by relevant literature, and then describes the procedures used to process and interpret the questionnaire and interview data.

3.6.1 Description of Analytical Methods

Interview data were analysed using a theory-informed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Selvi, 2019; Szabó et al., 2025) In line with deductive content analysis, which "requires a theoretical structure from which a researcher can build an analysis matrix" (Kyngäs & Kaakinen, 2019), initial codes were grouped into two grid matrices mapping participant's beliefs, and the other, their strategies. Both matrices categorised data deductively under Bandura's four sources of SE (Bandura, 1997): mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states. This process employed the operational definitions suggested by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), ensuring that data which did not fit the initial framework could be identified as potential new subcategories. Each piece of data was redistributed under the respective participant's name and described in terms of the sources. From these categorised data patterns were identified and grouped into categories representing recurring ideas. These categories were then synthesised into broader commonalities across interviewees, and findings were refined into concise statements for reporting. Coding was completed manually to ensure close engagement with participants' language.

The questionnaire (Appendix One) served as a preliminary tool to gather foundational information and inform the design of the semi-structured interview questions. To extract general patterns, a descriptive analysis of the multiple-choice responses was first conducted to identify prevalent pedagogical trends and common challenges. A preliminary thematic review of the open-ended "Other" responses was then performed, coding recurring keywords related to Bandura's four sources of SE. These patterns were mapped against the initial interview guide to ensure that the topics (e.g., student persistence and assessment) were grounded in the participants' reported realities.

Furthermore, identifying unique or outliers in the responses—such as specific strategies mentioned by only one participant—provided an opportunity to create tailored follow-up prompts that explored these distinctive beliefs in greater depth. By reviewing these responses in advance, I was able to streamline the interviews, focusing less on descriptive background and more on a nuanced exploration of the factors influencing SE.

3.6.2 Strategies for Ensuring Trustworthiness

To enhance the trustworthiness of this study, two key strategies were employed: triangulation and member checking. Methodological triangulation (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024) was used by combining data from both the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. This approach strengthens credibility by validating findings through multiple sources and providing a more holistic understanding of participants' beliefs and strategies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Meydan & Akkaş, 2024). The questionnaire provided a foundational overview and informed the direction of the interviews, while the interviews allowed for deeper exploration. Additionally, member checking was conducted by sending a summary of findings to each interview participant via email. They were asked to confirm whether the interpretations accurately reflected their beliefs and reported strategies. This process helped ensure credibility by verifying that participants' voices are authentically represented in the analysis (Birt et al., 2016; McKim, 2023).

Due to the small sample size of five interview participants, the findings of this study are not intended to be generalisable to all Japanese language teachers or educational contexts. The qualitative nature of the research prioritises depth over breadth, focusing on individual experiences and teacher-reported strategies within a specific context. However, by providing rich descriptions of participant backgrounds and the educational settings in which they work, the study aims to offer insights that may be transferable to similar language teaching environments. Readers are encouraged to consider the relevance of the findings in relation to their own teaching contexts and learner needs.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Prior to applying for ethics approval, my research methodology was peer-reviewed by a non-supervising academic staff member to identify any potential ethical concerns. Following this, I submitted a formal low-risk ethics application, which was approved in June 2024 (see Appendix Three). The study strictly adhered to the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching, and Evaluations involving Human Participants (Massey University, 2017).

Informed consent was obtained from all participants through a signed consent form returned prior to the commencement of any interviews (see Appendix Four). Participants were provided with an information sheet (Appendix Four) outlining their rights, including the right to decline any question, request that the audio recorder be turned off, and withdraw from the study at any point until the day of the interview. To ensure ongoing autonomy, these rights—particularly the freedom to withdraw without prejudice—were verbally reiterated to every participant immediately before their interview began. Participants were also informed that any identifying details would be anonymised and that they could request a summary of the research findings upon completion.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained using pseudonyms and by omitting or generalising details related to participants' teaching context, such as specific locations or employment history. All data was securely stored to preserve participant anonymity. Particular care was taken to ensure participant well-being by conducting all interactions professionally and ethically, with sensitivity to the potential for unintended disclosure or harm.

To address the dual-role relationship involving a professional colleague, these standard safeguards served the additional purpose of ensuring voluntary participation and mitigating relational bias. By strictly adhering to a neutral interview protocol, I ensured that our professional familiarity did not unduly influence the data collection process. Furthermore, the formal consent process for this

participant was used to explicitly decouple the research from professional standing, ensuring that the existing relationship did not create a sense of compulsion or affect the participant's autonomy.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter presents the research findings. The chapter begins with the discussion on the questionnaire results as a summary of participants' reported background, experience and strategies related to building students' self-belief (see 4.1). This is followed by the interview findings which are divided into two subsections based on the two research questions:

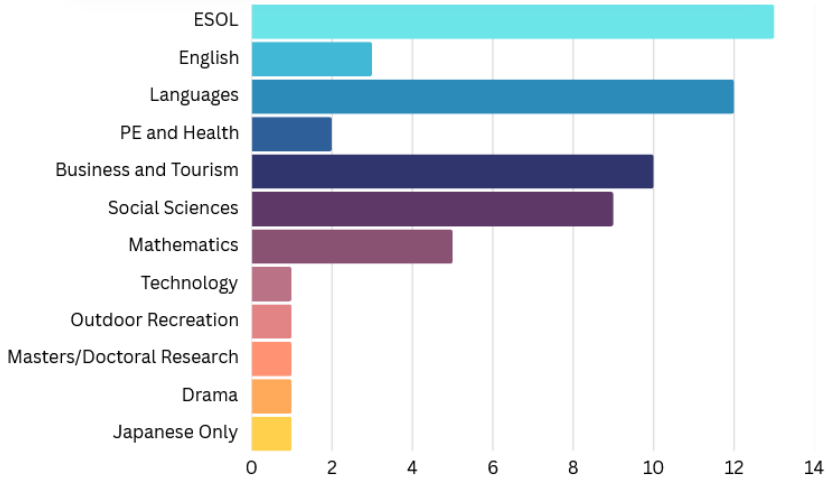
- Part one: teacher beliefs regarding self-efficacy (SE) enhancement in the classroom, focusing on their reported perceptions highlighting what is important for improving student personal efficacy appraisals. (see 4.2)
- Part two: teacher reported strategies which enhance student SE beliefs. (see 4.3)

These subsections are further organised according to the sources of SE in which were cultivated, with a summary after each section, and final chapter summary to conclude.

4.1 Questionnaire Findings

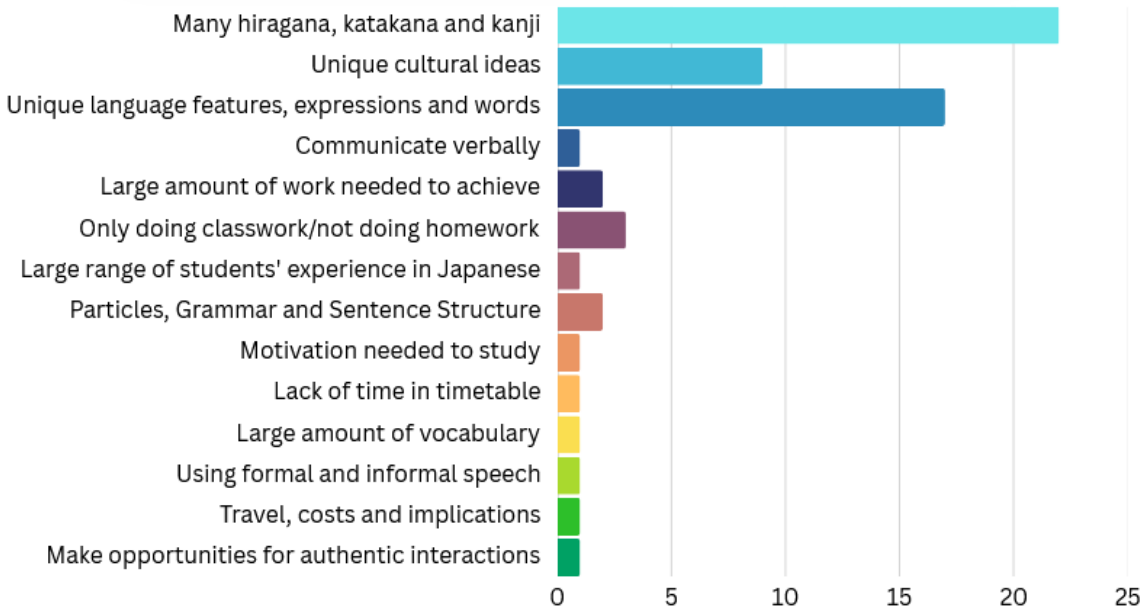
Twenty-four teachers completed the questionnaire (see Appendix One). The questionnaire was used to gather descriptive information about teachers' reported strategies and beliefs related to enhancing learner SE and to inform the focus and design of the follow-up interviews by identifying potential areas of interest. The questionnaire data are presented to provide contextual background and to explain the development of the interview protocol; analytical claims and interpretations in the discussion chapter are based on interview data only. Each item included a set of prompted response options, followed by an open-ended 'Other (please specify)' option that allowed participants to provide personalised responses. The number of prompted options is indicated in brackets beneath each graph title and counted from the top result downward (e.g., '*Prompted answers: top 4*'). Responses beyond these prompted options reflect strategies and perspectives voluntarily contributed by participants.

Figure 1
Other Subjects Taught by Survey Participants
(Prompted answers: top 8).



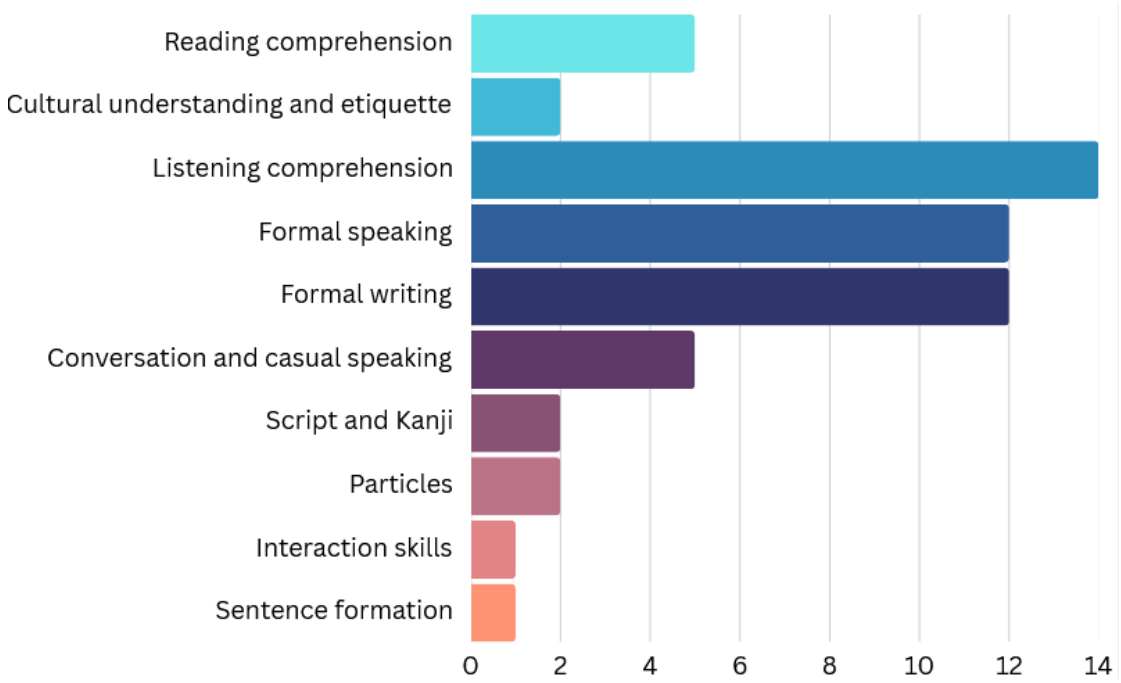
All participants were current or former Japanese teachers, primarily at the secondary school level. Many also reported experience teaching other subjects, including ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), additional languages, business studies, social studies, and mathematics. This highlights the range of teaching contexts represented within the participant group and indicates that many teachers drew on professional experience beyond Japanese language classrooms.

Figure 2
Reported unique challenges to learning Japanese language
(Prompted answers: top 3)



Participants most frequently selected challenges related to sustained effort and communicative competence. As expected, the most frequently selected responses were the prompted answers - *kana* and *kanji*, unique language features, and unique cultural aspects. Additional challenges frequently related to workload demands, including limited opportunities for study beyond class time, large vocabulary requirements, and the overall volume of learning required for proficiency.

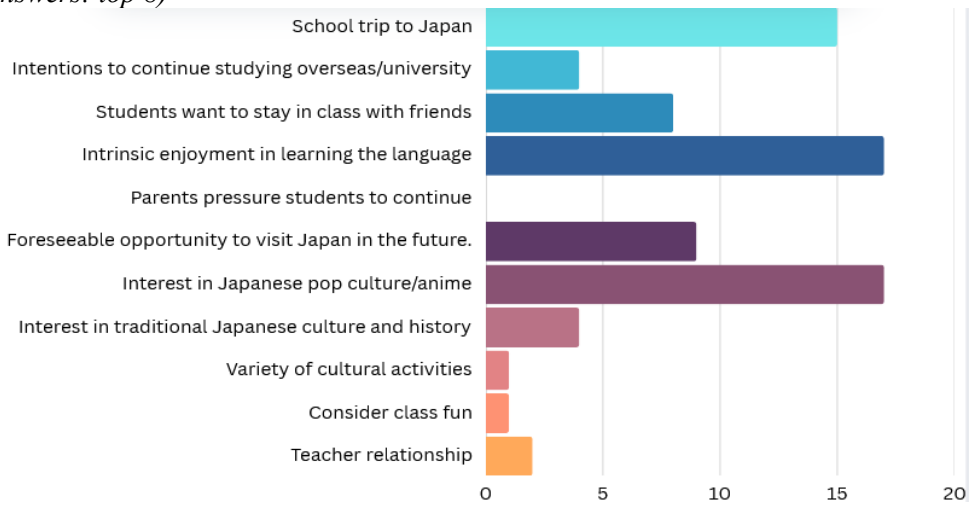
Figure 3
Reported areas challenging to teaching Japanese
(Prompted answers: top 5)



Reported challenges in teaching Japanese centred on formal writing and speaking, as well as listening comprehension. Notably, the most common personalised response was conversation and casual speaking, reported at a similar frequency to reading comprehension. These responses point to multiple skill areas in which teachers perceived instructional difficulty.

Figure 4

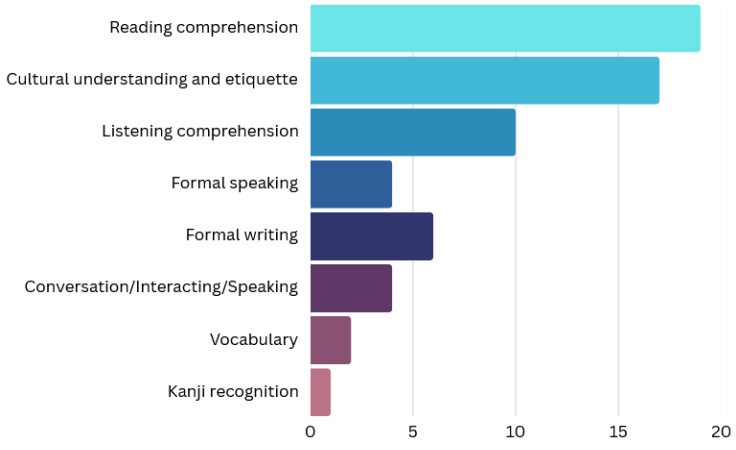
Reported main reasons students continue studying Japanese (Suggested answers: top 8)



The most frequently reported reasons for continuing Japanese were intrinsic enjoyment and interest in Japanese popular culture (e.g., anime). School trips and potential visits to Japan were also commonly selected, reflecting motivation linked to specific goals. Responses related to friendships, teacher relationships, and class enjoyment suggest that social and relational factors were also perceived as relevant to continued participation.

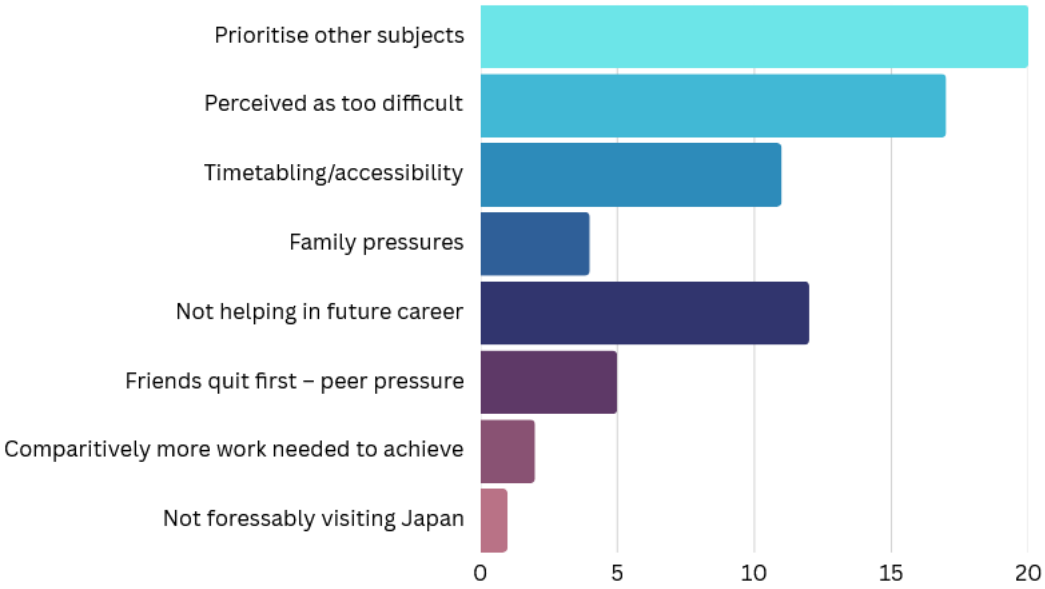
Figure 5

Reported areas easiest to get students to gain a sense of achievability (Prompted answers: top 5)



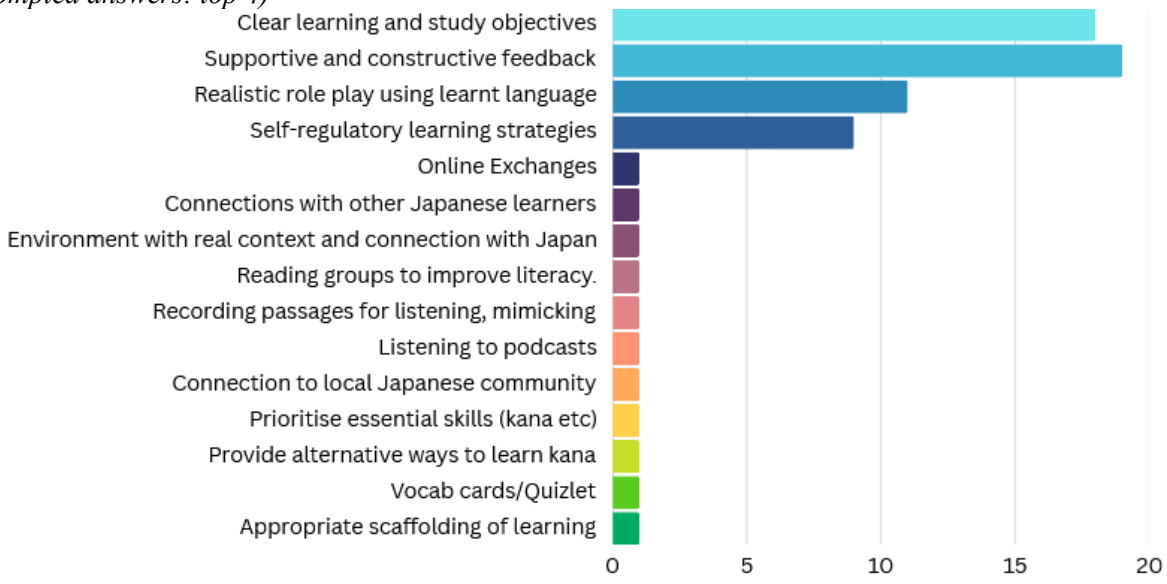
Reading comprehension and cultural understanding, followed by listening comprehension, were most frequently reported as areas in which students gained a sense of achievability. Formal speaking (a prompted option) and conversation (entered under "Other") were selected at similar rates, indicating that speaking was also perceived as an area where students could experience progress.

Figure 6:
Reported main reasons for quitting Japanese
(Prompted answers: top 6)



The most commonly reported reasons for discontinuing Japanese were prioritisation of other subjects, perceptions of difficulty, limited perceived career benefit, and timetabling constraints. These responses reflect a range of practical and academic considerations associated with decisions to discontinue language study.

Figure 7
Reported strategies used that enhance self-belief
(Prompted answers: top 4)



While the prompted strategies were frequently selected, participants also reported a wide range of additional strategies. Many responses referred to opportunities for realistic interaction, including role play, online exchanges, peer interaction, authentic contexts, and engagement with local Japanese communities. Another recurring theme was the use of varied study techniques, particularly independent self-study.

4.1.1 Conclusion

The questionnaire data provided a descriptive backdrop for the study, highlighting broad trends in teacher perceptions of learner motivation and achievability. While these results served primarily as contextual background, they informed the subsequent interviews where these patterns were examined at an individual level. This deeper inquiry revealed that while general trends existed, participants' specific beliefs and strategies were frequently shaped by their distinct professional contexts.

4.2 Interview Findings: Beliefs

This section presents teachers' self-reported beliefs about SE enhancement disclosed during the interviews. The aim is to identify, articulate, and categorise teachers' beliefs, rather than to describe the strategies they reported using. Teachers' beliefs are presented according to the relevant sources (or combinations of sources) within Bandura's framework (Bandura, 1997), beginning with mastery experiences, followed by mastery experiences and affective states, combined vicarious experiences, social persuasion and affective states, and finally emotional states.

4.2.1 Beliefs about Self-Efficacy Enhancement through Mastery Experiences

Mastery experiences—personal successes achieved through completing a task (Bandura, 1997)—emerged as one of the most frequently discussed beliefs for improving SE. These beliefs include approaches to teacher-directed versus student-directed learning, structured versus autonomous strategies, reframing difficulty and failure, and reading and writing mastery, alongside the importance of repeated, attainable successes to build confidence and persistence.

4.2.1.1 Beliefs about Teacher-Directed and Student-Directed Learning

Across all interviewees, a shared reluctance to allow students to independently set learning goals or direct their own learning strategies emerged. As will be illustrated in this section, this suggests that teachers' beliefs about mastery experiences are shaped by both professional experience and underlying dispositions. Teacher-directed approaches can create structured opportunities for success, while limiting autonomy might reduce chances for students to experience mastery through self-chosen tasks. They view Japanese as heavily reliant on scaffolding language structures, though goal setting and self-directed learning are cautiously encouraged within their teaching approaches.

RM's beliefs illustrate how limited experience with goal setting, combined with a cautious disposition toward learner autonomy, influences how mastery experiences are structured in her classroom. She was unsure why she tends to reject having students set learning goals, admitting little

experience with goal setting. Yet she recognises a contradiction: while she sees the need for specific goals, she rarely sets or discusses them herself. Despite this, she promotes autonomy by letting students choose topics for writing: “If they can give them a choice in terms of topics, they're going to write…, I think that's important.” She values imperfect, playful attempts: “…some students…come up with really interesting ideas…even though it doesn't make complete sense…as long as they are doing Japanese and learning.” However, she warns against complete freedom: “…they don't know what they need. So, they need some kind of framework…” While RM’s reluctance to cede control over goals reflects a cautious personality, her use of bounded autonomy suggests she believes structured independence is the safest path to fostering student mastery and SE.

Although Ray shares this reluctance to encourage students to set personal goals, his decisions are shaped by a pragmatic belief that Japanese is mastered through practical doing—a view formed through his accidental entry into the language, early university study, and later everyday use—and this pragmatism aligns naturally with the school trip to Japan as the real-world test of that mastery. He identifies the long-term class aim as the opportunity to join the trip but avoids placing responsibility on students to articulate or manage their own learning pathways. However. he makes an exception for disengaged students by narrowing the focus to immediate, achievable aims: “[M]y whole sort of approach has been based on what people can do each day.” This suggests that Ray’s preference for immediate, pragmatic wins over long-term autonomy serves as a stabilising force, allowing his grounded approach to simplify the path toward SE while protecting his students from the pressures of self-regulation

NJ’s beliefs appear to be shaped by a preference for collective structure, influencing her cautious approach to individualised goal setting. She explains with regret: “We should have been clearer on our expectations of ourselves…I guess as a class we did [make goals], but not individually.”. She balances informal goals like "class enjoyment" with non-negotiable academic needs, noting that "we also have these words... and this grammar we have to learn." Her reflections suggest she sees value

in greater autonomy within structured guidance, though she acknowledges students have previously struggled to meet even extended deadlines, highlighting her belief that without student engagement in self-regulation SE is less likely to improve.

CB holds that carefully sequenced tasks provide necessary scaffolding so students can experience success at each step, even if it means limiting student autonomy. Her beliefs reflect a strong preference for structure and predictability, suggesting a disposition toward maintaining control over classroom direction and learning processes: “I have some of it that's compulsory to do, and then they have a choice. But as to what the flow of the lessons, that's my choice.” She explains that mastering basic sentence patterns and vocabulary for her year 10 students is essential before introducing more complex elements, such as *kanji* or negative adjective forms. This positions creativity as permissible only within clearly defined boundaries, emphasising her belief in the SE–protective role of teacher control and tightly scaffolded progression over open-ended learner autonomy.

Sally’s beliefs about autonomy and self-regulation were shaped by her experience moving to Japan and learning organically with no prior knowledge: “So, I had that confidence of being a teenager who just tries things, I suppose….just being in the situation where I had to cope.” From this, she developed a conviction that learners should have control over their learning, reflected in her university teaching experiences. However, she also believes autonomy must exist within a predictable, structured framework with clear goals: “A routine's also important…. They know that they're going to be tested on their ability.” In contrast to CB and RM, Sally’s beliefs reflect a greater tolerance for learner-directed activity, shaped by her personal learning experience, while still valuing structure as a stabilising influence on learner SE.

In summary, each teacher, while having a nuance to their beliefs, concluded that the fluidity of SE producing autonomy and self-regulation needs a strong skeletal structure of scaffolded learning. This perspective appears to be shaped by teaching experiences and personality differences. While

providing a tension, they see this as a necessary harmony in which SE enhancing mastery can be attained.

4.2.1.2 Beliefs about Vocabulary as Foundational to Listening and Reading Mastery

Teachers expressed differing beliefs about what conditions are necessary for learners to experience mastery in listening and reading. While vocabulary was identified as a shared prerequisite for building confidence, teachers differed on whether SE is best fostered through protective scaffolding or naturalistic engagement. These contrasting perspectives reveal a fundamental tension between preserving learner SE through predictability and fostering it through autonomous meaning-making.

CB stressed the importance of pre-teaching vocabulary because she believes listening efficacy collapses when learners encounter material beyond their perceived control: “Listening can be tricky because you can only put in what you’ve already taught the kids.” Her justification positions listening as a constrained skill, one in which unfamiliar input directly undermines learners’ sense of control and perceived competence.

RM similarly believes that mastery-based SE is dependent on prior lexical access: “...it's all about vocabulary. So, if you don't know vocabulary, there's nothing much you can do.” This belief reflects her assumption that confidence emerges only after repeated, uninterrupted success, particularly in reading. She therefore believes that vocabulary knowledge is the gatekeeper to mastery — without it, repeated success with texts is unlikely. RM also noted that reading tends to offer more readily available opportunities for practice than listening, and she treats that availability as enabling the repeated mastery experiences students need.

In contrast, Sally’s approach reflects a belief that SE develops through authentic engagement rather than controlled sequencing, drawing on parallels with first-language acquisition, such as reading aloud: “that’s… how a lot of language development happens naturally with kids in their first language.”

She suggested that aligning Japanese listening and reading practice with how we learn our first language reduces the barrier of unfamiliarity and allows students to succeed in ways that feel natural.

Together, these beliefs reveal contrasting assumptions about how learner confidence is formed: for CB and RM, SE is protected through predictability and prior control, whereas for Sally it is fostered through trust in learners' capacity to construct meaning independently. The same classroom practices thus reflect fundamentally different beliefs about how mastery and SE emerge in demanding language learning contexts.

4.2.1.3 Summary of Beliefs about Self-Efficacy Enhancement through Mastery Experiences

Across the interviews, teachers consistently framed mastery experiences as the central pathway for strengthening learner SE. While their orientations varied—from structured, teacher-directed progression to more learner-directed engagement—a shared belief emerged that confidence develops through *doing*, not through waiting for full readiness. They described mastery as the product of repeated, attainable successes and the reframing of difficulty as an ordinary, necessary component of learning. Their beliefs revealed an ongoing tension between providing structure and allowing autonomy: structure was viewed as essential for enabling early achievements, yet some degree of learner-directed action was considered important for students to generate their own mastery. Despite differences in background and disposition, all teachers agreed that SE grows when learners act with incomplete knowledge, recognise small achievements as meaningful progress, and steadily accumulate evidence of capability through experience.

4.2.2 Beliefs about Self-Efficacy Enhancement through Mastery Experiences and Affective States

Mastery experiences and affective states were the most frequently discussed beliefs regarding SE improvement. Teachers emphasised that mastery is not isolated; it is reinforced by positive emotions

that emerge when learners move from anxiety to confidence. This section explores three themes: attempting before mastery, beliefs about assessment success, and conversational mastery experiences.

4.2.2.1 Beliefs about Attempting before Mastery

Learning to speak and read Japanese requires frequent performance with incomplete knowledge—especially early on—so anxiety often precedes progress. Three teachers framed this initial discomfort as an expected stage rather than a failure signal. CB and Sally emphasised stepping into real use as the point at which learners discover what they can already do, whereas RM highlighted the apprehension created by the sheer volume of content required for mastery. Success in Japanese, as these teachers describe it, demands moving through discomfort toward success and relief from anxiety, not waiting for mastery and positive emotion before attempting use.

CB viewed leaving the comfort zone as a form of immediate feedback: "Sometimes you have to be out of your comfort zone, but if you don't do that, then you'll never know what you're capable of." While living in Japan after studying Japanese for many years, she only relinquished her comprehensive Japanese notes once she felt able to rely on others as trustworthy linguistic resources. This reflects her stance that structure is valuable, but that supports must eventually be removed for genuine progress to occur. In her view, negative affective states are something to move through, as doing so opens the way to the positive emotional highs that follow successful engagement.

RM noted that learners often feel incapable at being proficient at Japanese because of what they have yet to learn, reflecting a self-doubting nature rooted in her own early struggles with linguistic isolation in New Zealand. She stated: "I think it's really important [having confidence]… because when you are learning a language, there are so much [sic] things that you don't know. You feel like you're always so not good at it. Like I'm not good enough." This shift from "you're" to "I'm not good enough" suggests that her teaching is shaped by her own SE journey, reflected in her account of how emotionally difficult learning English was and how she only felt genuine mastery in her final years of secondary school, particularly in conversation and listening. Accordingly, she treats discomfort as a necessary

phase, designing instruction that normalises acting before full mastery so small successes accumulate into mastery experiences, reduced anxiety, and strengthen efficacy appraisals.

Sally's experience learning Japanese from scratch strengthened her belief that language must be used before full mastery is possible. When she first went to Japan, she recalled knowing only "maybe ten words", yet through repeated attempts and the discomfort of feeling inadequate, she gradually became fluent and highly proficient. This personal history, combined with her independent and empathetic disposition, underpins her beliefs that stepping into communicative situations with limited knowledge is essential for progress: "You just can't… master everything and then use it. You have to sort of use it as you go." For Sally, moving through the negative emotions that accompany early use enables learners to reach the positive feelings that follow successful communication. Such moments accumulate into mastery experiences and reduce anxiety, strengthening learners' SE over time.

Across the three accounts, a shared belief emerges: discomfort is an expected and necessary part of language learning, not a sign of inadequacy. Although they emphasised different aspects—CB the value of stepping out of comfort, RM the emotional weight of feeling inadequate, and Sally the need to use partial knowledge—all three described risk-taking as the point where learners begin to re-evaluate their capability. In this view, moving through discomfort allows mastery moments to surface, lowers anxiety over time, and strengthens SE, reinforcing continued effort.

4.2.2.2 Beliefs about Assessments

The teachers' perspectives on assessment reveal a fundamental concern regarding how high-stakes evaluation can undermine the development of SE. Sally and RM discussed how assessment contexts often hinder SE, either due to linguistic complexity or the pressures of formal evaluation.

Sally emphasised scaffolding mastery experiences that simulate assessments: "I think if they fail, they'll believe they'll fail next time." Reflecting her empathetic and independent nature, she

focuses on preventing the marginalisation of students who struggle with rigid structures. She warned that repeated failure risks lowering SE, while structured success can interrupt this cycle. Sally also noted that Japanese is often perceived as expendable: “[Japanese is] the extra one, so it’s the option subject.” This perception reduces effort and limits opportunities for mastery.

RM highlighted structural challenges in written assessments, such as NCEA standards: “The NCEA punish you if you… [make] too many mistakes...”. She also expressed concern about listening assessments, where students have only three attempts: “…once they sort of missed it, that’s it.” This focus on precision and the fear of "missing out on excellence" echoes her own self-doubting experiences as a language learner who once struggled to navigate the expectations of a foreign system.

Both teachers agreed that assessments create stress which hinder mastery opportunities. They acknowledged that assessments are stressful and that mastery must develop alongside positive emotional states requiring a deliberate shift from punitive evaluation toward supported success for SE to be built.

4.2.2.3 Beliefs about Teacher-Student Relationships

An important belief mentioned by multiple participants was that a positive learning environment based on authentic relationships with minimal negativity is crucial for improved SE. Positive teacher–student relationships help to enhance SE by building trust and reducing anxiety, thereby enabling learning.

CB expressed a relational pragmatism, believing that a structured classroom is best sustained through mutual rapport: “If you've got a relationship with them... they're going to be happier to do the work.” While she acknowledges that enhancing SE is never guaranteed, she suggests that relaxed teacher–student interactions can improve efficacy, as shown by students’ greater willingness to engage in work and attempt tasks.

RM similarly emphasised the central role of teacher–student relationships in shaping classroom affect, particularly through her responsibility for maintaining emotional safety. She described how her

active intervention as the teacher prevents ridicule and communicates clear expectations of respect: "[If] someone is … laughing at someone because of their Japanese, then I just shut it down straight away." In this way, RM positions the teacher–student relationship as protective and trust-building; by consistently intervening, she signals support and care for learners' efforts. For RM, this teacher-led regulation of interactions reduces anxiety and encourages students to participate without fear of failure, strengthening SE through positive emotional states and sustained engagement.

Reflecting her empathetic disposition, Sally also argues that positive relationships build SE in students, stressing the harm of negativity: "Criticism kills self-efficiency [sic]. So let them do what they can do." Sally recognised that building a positive relationship with students is iterative: "I think I'm developing some trust with them and me, so I'm trusting them…. So, I think you sort of have to earn their trust in a way, they have to get used to your style of teaching." For Sally, prioritising positive relationships and minimising negative feedback supports students' willingness to try and their belief in their capacity to achieve in Japanese.

Positive teacher–student relationships are thus positioned as a core source of SE, fostering trust and regulating emotional responses to learning. Interviewees describe these relationships as catalysts for engagement and repeated attempts at mastery, with reduced anxiety and increased willingness to participate strengthening learners' confidence and Japanese language SE.

4.2.2.4 Beliefs about Reframing Challenges to Overcome Initial Barriers

Two teachers identified misconceptions about Japanese language difficulty as barriers to SE and mastery. Although both emphasise reframing challenge to support confidence, their beliefs reflect different orientations shaped by their learning histories and teaching pathways—conversation and real-world use for Ray, and character complexity for NJ.

According to Ray, students often equate fluency with perfect speed or accuracy, and this unrealistic standard can undermine their SE. Reflecting his pragmatic orientation toward language as

a functional tool, Ray believes that reframing fluency as the ability to sustain a conversation—particularly for relational purposes such as making friendships—helps reduce anxiety, a key affective state influencing efficacy. He views communicative success, rather than formal accuracy, as the primary indicator of progress, particularly in preparation for authentic contexts such as the Japan trip. He sees creating friendships first—regardless of the amount of Japanese used—as improving mastery experiences: "[O]nce they learn the personalities [of native speakers] that they're dealing with on the other side…. they'll begin that relationship and become more comfortable with those kinds of people." By lowering stress and making success appear attainable, students experience mastery organically, persisting and expanding their skills.

NJ's belief regarding reframing challenging aspects of Japanese stems from her own learning experiences and a disposition toward engaging with linguistic complexity as an intellectual challenge: "…I was pretty dedicated to [learning Japanese], but I also did find it hard, but because it was hard, I wanted to like keep going, like solving a puzzle, like it just doesn't really stop." She draws on this perception of Japanese as a 'puzzle' to encourage her students, presenting difficulty as something to be worked through rather than avoided. This reflects a belief that sustained effort and pattern recognition can foster confidence, helping students believe they can make progress even when confronted with the complexity of *kanji* and *kana*.

Perceptions of Japanese are often shaped by its linguistic and orthographic differences. Ray's reframing aligns with a goal-oriented, real-world conception of language use, while NJ's approach reflects a more analytical orientation grounded in engagement with structure and form. For a linguistically demanding language such as Japanese, these differing belief orientations nevertheless converge in their effect, allowing SE to develop through gradual success under reduced stress.

4.2.2.5 Summary of Beliefs about Self-Efficacy Enhancement through Mastery Experiences and Affective States

Collectively, these beliefs show that teachers view SE in Japanese as something cultivated through supported risk-taking that gradually converts anxiety into confidence. Whether encouraging early use before mastery, reshaping assessment experiences, building trusting classroom relationships, or reframing difficulty as an attainable challenge, teachers emphasise that SE strengthens when learners attempt real tasks within emotionally safe environments. Despite their different orientations, all share the view that mastery grows through action, and positive affect grows through mastery. By reducing stress, offering structured opportunities for small successes, and maintaining relational safety, teachers create the conditions for learners to recalibrate their SE upward and persist in the demanding process of learning Japanese.

4.2.3 Beliefs about Self-Efficacy Enhancement through Multiple Sources

Self-efficacy through multiple sources emerged as a common belief for improving SE. Teachers emphasized cultural activities, affective conditions, and strategies for overcoming character-learning and conversational challenges. These were seen as interconnected sources of efficacy, fostering positive emotions and providing authentic models through teachers' own language-learning experiences. Collectively, these beliefs position teachers as key facilitators of perceived success through mastery experiences, positive affect, and cultural exposure.

4.2.3.1 Beliefs about Cultural Activities

Four teachers highlighted their belief that cultural events and activities enhance students' SE by offering alternative success pathways beyond standard academics. These activities are believed to provide accessible mastery experiences, foster enjoyment, and sometimes create opportunities for vicarious learning through authentic cultural perspectives, with occasional social persuasion through affirming feedback.

CB emphasised that cultural events allow all students—not just high achievers—to experience success: “[I]t gives all the kids an opportunity to do something out of the classroom…which builds their… interest in something different than just normal book work…” She explained that less capable students benefit because expectations are clear and attainable: “[I]f they're not completely academically able, they can still succeed by completing a cultural [activity].” CB’s belief foregrounds mastery experiences supported by clear success criteria that reduce negative arousal and stabilise affect. In her view, by separating academic success from cultural competency, students access believable mastery, while benefiting from structured validation inherent in well-defined objectives, consistent with her directive style.

Sally reported believing cultural variety offers multiple mastery experiences, with inherent appeal that lifts affective states: “[T]here's a whole lot of appealing things about Japan… martial arts and the food and the origami … there's just so many attractive things.” She emphasised multiple entry points for success beyond language skills for younger learners: “…[F]or year nines… if they get a good score for [a cultural activity] … [according to themselves] they're good at Japanese.” This reflects her belief that broadening the domain of success multiplies accessible mastery experiences, while enjoyment elevates affect consolidating perceived efficacy.

RM articulates a belief that cultural events are a chance to engage with native speakers and experience authentic contemporary Japan, providing vicarious learning that sustains interest and supports positive affect: “[W]hen I have those native speakers, the exchange students in class, I'll ask them to share their stories because my experience [as an adult Japanese] might be a little bit old.” Possibly influenced by earlier linguistic self-doubt, she was less emphatic about direct SE effects, but acknowledged these activities sustain interest: “I think it’s helped them stay interested in learning Japanese.” Although cautious about direct claims, her stance tends to be that credible cultural models nurture persistence and improved affect over time enable gradual SE growth.

As examinations frequently include cultural content, NJ sees cultural learning for students as ways to improve academic SE: “Those kinds of cultural moments… help students build self-efficacy not only in cultural understanding… but also in building belief for exams.” In her account, combining cultural events and activities with examination study allows students to master cultural and academic knowledge in structured yet enjoyable ways.

Taken together, the teachers’ beliefs emphasise that SE rises through cultural learning by providing diverse mastery experiences, allowing vicarious learning from native Japanese, while in a supportive and enjoyable learning environment. While implying that real Japanese learning comes from using the language particularly in academic settings, they nevertheless see cultural activities as pathways to improving learner SE, particularly through reducing barriers to perceived success

4.2.3.2 Beliefs about Learning Japanese Characters

Two teachers discussed their beliefs about overcoming the difficult task of memorising large numbers of characters. RM discussed how students’ perceptions of *kanji* perpetuate negative beliefs surrounding learning large numbers of characters, while Ray believes that early use of *hiragana* counteracts such negative beliefs about Japanese scripts.

For RM, the biggest challenge was not teaching the scripts themselves but how students talked about them. Persistent messages that “Japanese is hard” and “it's hard, and especially *kanji*” function as negative verbal persuasion that she believes leads students to doubt their capacity to improve. Combined with feelings of frustration or disappointment and seeing others struggle in class, she emphasises that these beliefs can be difficult to shift, even for otherwise strong students.

By contrast, Ray believed that using Japanese scripts as early as possible helps students move through initial anxiety rather than avoid it. He viewed early engagement with *hiragana* and *katakana* as critical for building writing confidence: “[T]hat's me trying to move them towards using *hiragana*

and *katakana* as opposed to *rōmaji*[8] … I reject [using *rōmaji*] pretty quickly." Ray maintains that navigating early discomfort is vital for cultivating long-term literacy SE, particularly for high-stakes contexts like assessments or school trips.

Interviewees viewed overcoming character-learning challenges as drawing primarily on affective regulation and mastery experiences. RM highlighted how negative self and peer-talk undermines efficacy, while Ray emphasised early and repeated engagement with Japanese scripts as a way to push through anxiety and establish mastery. Together, these beliefs suggest that reducing discouraging messages and supporting early mastery experiences strengthens students' confidence in reading and writing Japanese.

4.2.3.3 Beliefs about Conversational Mastery through Positive Interactions

Two teachers reported beliefs that conversational mastery—not performance—drives SE: real dialogue validates progress when learners can keep interactions moving under reduced stress and positive affective conditions. While vicarious experiences are available in peer exchanges, both accounts foreground the learner's own mastery moments—small, attainable conversational successes—as the decisive source of perceived efficacy.

RM's conceptualisation of mastery is distinctly interpersonal, viewing authentic dialogue as the primary vehicle for validating a learner's progress. She interpreted Japanese mastery as referring specifically to the ability to converse with native speakers, emphasising the importance of conversation skills:

> …I think it's really important because when they can actually have a conversation, not just like one way communication… because that's what we do, isn't it? We don't give a speech that often, but we have a conversation with people.

[8] *Rōmaji* —the Latin alphabet used for Japanese—enables beginners to access the language immediately, making it a common tool for introductory instruction.

This preference for reciprocal, functional dialogue aligns with both mastery experiences and positive affect, as real conversations produce the nervousness and enjoyment inherent to success. Her focus on social connection over formal performance mirrors her own pivotal mastery experience in New Zealand, where she equated English proficiency with the transformative ability to finally build friendships and engage in meaningful communication. Consequently, RM's beliefs about SE are rooted in the belief that true confidence emerges when the language serves as a bridge to others rather than just an academic exercise.

Building on RM's view that conversation constitutes real mastery, Ray discussed reframing conversational success as friendship-first and interaction-centred rather than accuracy-bound. He mentioned asking students to value keeping talk going over perfect form: "just because it's not a fluid conversation, it doesn't mean that it's not fluent," and he instructs classes to "focus on the actual interaction rather than the language." He views that the relationship is key to improving conversational ability:

> Once they learn the personalities that they're dealing with at the other side, … the online interactions that really do find that investment that comes from shared interests, that's when they'll begin that relationship and become more comfortable with those kind of people

Ultimately, Ray sees his teaching role as to "open the door" for students to engage with native speakers. By fostering relationship-building and emphasising that mastery emerges from comfort and repeated interaction, he creates the affective support and attainable conversational experiences that strengthen students' SE.

Taken together, these beliefs frame SE as emerging from achievable conversational mastery supported by affective ease. While vicarious experience can be implied as a source of SE, neither teacher reported interpreting the Japanese native speakers as models of language use. Nevertheless, perceived efficacy is seen to grow when students feel socially anchored and can sustain talk—

friendship-first or authenticity-first—so that communication becomes realistic and fluid, rather than perfect.

4.2.3.4 Summary of Beliefs about Self-Efficacy Enhancement through Multiple Sources

Overall, teachers conceptualise SE in Japanese as strengthened through multiple, interlinked sources—cultural engagement, relational support, and strategies that help learners push through script-related challenges and conversational hesitation. Cultural activities broaden the terrain of possible success, allowing students to experience mastery and enjoyment beyond purely academic tasks. Positive teacher–student relationships and authentic interactions reinforce emotional safety, sustaining the confidence needed for repeated attempts. Early engagement with Japanese scripts and opportunities for real dialogue provide attainable mastery moments that counteract negative talk and anxiety. Together, these beliefs present SE as developing where diverse pathways to success are deliberately opened: culturally rich experiences, supportive relationships, and structured opportunities for linguistic risk-taking collectively build students' belief that they *can* make progress in Japanese.

4.2.4 Summary of Beliefs

Across interviews, teachers expressed the belief that learner SE develops when structured guidance is balanced with carefully extended autonomy, and when learning is sequenced and practised in low-stakes conditions learners perceive as attainable, enabling repeated experiences of success without fear of failure. They also believe that positive affect enables efficacy, highlighting encouragement, reframing difficulty, and strong teacher–student relationships—beliefs that reflect differing orientations toward structure, empathy, and classroom control. Character learning is viewed as a persistent challenge to SE, with teachers expressing the belief that early script use and the active disruption of negative self-talk support confidence in reading and writing Japanese. The teachers share a commitment to incremental, multi-modal support, believing that SE is best cultivated through a holistic engagement with all four sources of SE.

4.3 Interview Findings: Strategies

This section presents the teaching strategies described by participants during the interviews categorised into Bandura's (1997) sources of SE. The subsections include strategies aimed at producing mastery experiences; mastery experiences and positive affect; mastery, vicarious experiences and positive affect; vicarious experiences; verbal persuasion; and finally positive affect. In many cases, a clear link between beliefs and strategies is evident, and these connections are highlighted where possible to show how teachers' practices align with their stated views.

4.3.1 Strategies Producing Mastery Experiences

Out of the strategies which produced a singular source of SE, mastery experiences were the most abundant. These covered introducing learning objectives; balancing sequence and self-regulated learning; and character mastery routines. Teachers discussed multiple nuanced approaches to learning and how these altered states of learner SE beliefs.

4.3.1.1 Introducing Learning Objectives to Students

All teachers open lessons by clarifying goals, but the pathways to SE differ between teachers and are not entirely straightforward. Across cases, explicit goals and visible expectations create the conditions for mastery, but their effect on SE hinges on whether students notice, interpret, and use them.

RM and NJ foreground the day's aims. RM writes the objective on the board and talks through what will happen—students "quite like knowing what's going to happen"—which positions the lesson as predictable and thus lowers activation barriers, supporting mastery via reduced uncertainty. NJ uses a television display to present lesson plans and 'can-do/must-do' checklists, making progress tangible. By ticking off tasks against clear standards, students achieve proximal wins that provide immediate reinforcement of their SE.

At the unit level, Ray and CB widen the frame by starting with an overview and learning expectations. CB begins each unit with a full overview, including grammar, *kanji*, and assessment

expectations. Ray also provides an overview in the form of a comprehensive unit checklist, which each student pastes at the front of their notebooks encouraging students to underline what they do not yet understand. Examples of items on this checklist range from specific linguistic goals, such as "entries 21 to 30 of *Kuikku Kanji* (‘Quick *Kanji* - a *kanji* list he uses) " and "the way to use *yori* (than)," to functional strategies like " something in English, like, what to do when I don’t agree with something.” Thus, while both teachers promote transparency and progress tracking, Ray’s approach privileges breadth and practical meaning-making, whereas CB reflects a more assessment-centred clarity of expectations—revealing distinct but aligned pedagogical priorities.

While these strategies vary in scope and immediacy—from daily lesson aims to unit-wide overviews—they reflect a shared belief, most evident in CB’s approach, that structured sequencing and explicit expectations as central to fostering mastery (see 4.2.1.1). However, CB raised concern that unless students actively attend to, interpret, and use these summaries, genuine mastery is not guaranteed. SE improvement depends not only on clear frameworks, but on learners’ engagement with them.

4.3.1.2 Language Learning Sequence, Self-Regulated Learning and Autonomy

Three teachers described strategies that balance student autonomy with a structured learning sequence. This shared tension over how much control students should have is handled differently, with each teacher varying the degree of constraint and freedom.

CB allows students to choose activities to practise a language point, while keeping the learning sequence teacher-led: “I have some of it that's compulsory to do, and then they have a choice. But as to what the flow of the lessons, that's my choice. Because they build on each other.” She emphasises careful ordering in year 10 adjectives—building sentence patterns before *kanji* and negative forms—to prevent overload: “If they don't know how to say they are big or that the hair is black to start with, then they can't do the other bit [change to negative form].” This reflects CB’s preference for clear

structure and predictable progression, aligning with her belief that sequenced steps protect SE (see 4.2.1.1). Autonomy remains bounded, as too much freedom can confuse and erode confidence.

In contrast to CB's tightly sequenced, teacher-directed progression, Sally differentiates learning so students can succeed at an appropriate level of challenge. Sally uses worksheets and tiered criteria for junior formal speaking: a supported read-aloud for a passing mark, with memorisation or personalisation for higher grading. She adjusts support to individual needs—a nurturing, autonomy-encouraging stance shaped by her own independent learning in Japan and university teaching experience that valued self-direction:

> [L]et them do what they can do. …[I]f they're translating a sentence, they can't say the whole sentence, then now I'll go through …. And if they don't know, I tell them. And then they know all the English words, so they just have to put the English sentence together.

By pitching tasks just beyond current ability, students experience scaffolded mastery that strengthens SE.

Similarly, Ray differentiates learning by scaffolding conversation skills from rehearsed statements to student-generated questions in year 10: from *PLACE ni sundeimasu* ("I live in PLACE") to *Doko ni sundeimasuka* ("Where do you live?"), recycling known language rather than introducing new forms. Thus, "by the end of year 10…they would have 20 different questions to ask a Japanese person.", Mirroring his focus on immediate, achievable wins and clear next steps (see 4.2.1.1), this pragmatic approach lowers entry barriers while prompting extension for stronger learners, tailoring mastery and SE improvement at students' levels.

Consistent with their beliefs, teachers report improving SE by pairing structured sequencing with targeted autonomy. CB's structured predictability, Sally's nurturing responsiveness, and Ray's pragmatic focus on immediate, recycled mastery tasks subtly shape how each enacts this balance.

4.3.1.3 Summary of Strategies Producing Mastery Experiences

Across cases, teachers reported improving learner SE through mastery experiences by making learning goals explicit and progress visible, enabling students to experience frequent, attributable success. However, they contrasted in how this was enacted: RM, NJ, and CB emphasised structured sequencing and clear expectations to reduce uncertainty and protect confidence, while Sally and Ray focused on differentiated task entry points to ensure success at an appropriate level of challenge. Collectively, these strategies suggest that mastery enhances SE when learners actively engage with clearly sequenced tasks that allow them to recognise their own growing competence.

4.3.2 Strategies Producing Mastery and Positive Affect

Mastery and positive affect emerged as key drivers in strategies designed to strengthen learners' SE. Teachers employed approaches such as gamified character learning, writing-based mastery, and examination preparation to provide repeated opportunities for success, reduce stress, and promote autonomy. These methods foster confidence and motivation, illustrating how mastery experiences combined with positive emotional states can significantly enhance perceived efficacy in language learning.

4.3.2.1 Character Achievement through Improved Perception and Play

All teachers consistently described using *kana* and *kanji* mastery-enhancing strategies that also regulate affect, reducing negative emotions or promoting positive ones to support students' SE. Combining mastery with reduced stress or increased enjoyment, teachers aimed to alleviate the tension associated with learning multiple characters while keeping progress feeling attainable.

RM mentioned supporting *kanji* mastery by drawing on her native knowledge of character history to make *kanji* appear more familiar and less overwhelming. She connected meanings to historical origins, component parts, and recurring radicals, helping students recognise structure rather than randomness. As she explained, "the more they learn it, and the more similar words come up or similar shape come up… trying to make the connection with a previous knowledge so that it's easier

for them to understand, remember." Grounded in her belief that deficit talk about *kanji* erodes confidence (see 4.2.3.2), RM teaches the logic of characters—origins, components, and radicals—in order to show learners that *kanji* follow predictable patterns rather than arbitrary forms. Based on this reported strategy, making the system intelligible and explicitly countering discouraging narratives about *kanji* appears to cultivate positive affect through generating interest and a sense of manageability, alongside cognitive clarity. In turn, this combination increases the frequency of small mastery moments and reduces anxiety, creating conditions in which learner SE can steadily grow.

CB, in contrast, described a more explicitly scaffolded approach aimed at reducing the affective and cognitive load of script learning. Her visual supports and sequenced worksheets—starting with *hiragana* and progressing to *kanji* with *furigana* (*kana* written above *kanji* describing its pronunciation designed to reduce the pressure of memorising pronunciation while still building literacy). She withdrew supports transparently to maintain trust in students' mastery: "last reading test… there was more *furigana*… this term… no *furigana* whatsoever. Because then I want to know what their real ability is." Alongside this, she employed games such as matching, *karuta* (a traditional Japanese card matching game), reading recognition, and *kana–rōmaji* dominoes to make practice more enjoyable. Her 'karate belt' system for attaining *hiragana* "belts" as students progressively learned sets of characters similarly transformed progress into small, recognisable achievements, framing script learning as both challenging and enjoyable. Reflecting her structured, teacher-led approach (see 4.2.1.1), these activities broke learning into manageable steps, created frequent successes, and maintained novelty, reinforcing students' belief that mastery was possible.

Building on CB's gamification, NJ discussed embedding character mastery into playful, multisensory tasks that students could pursue at their own pace. Her use of card games, matching exercises, puzzles, and online platforms such as Blooket and Wordwall—hosted on her class website—provided varied, low-pressure entry points into vocabulary and script learning. This multimodal approach offered frequent, tangible successes that made progress feel achievable. A striking example

involved a highly anxious but motivated student who independently used the website and the Duolingo language learning app: “She's already learned in three weeks, she's learned all the *hiragana* by herself, because I haven't put any pressure on her to speak… [she’s] found her little passion.” Removing pressure to speak turned “extreme anxiety” into achievable mastery, and improvements in SE carried over into other subjects.

Sally also reported an emphasis on autonomy through a wide range of resources—cards, worksheets, and digital tools—allowing students to choose methods suited to their learning preferences. Drawing on her experience as a solo learner in Japan and a university instructor (see 4.2.1.1), she stressed that personal agency is essential for internalising Japanese script. “I'm giving them various resources so that depending on their learning styles, they have a way to learn it.*”* By enabling students to select tools that fit their style, she facilitated mastery in ways that kept progress attainable while reducing anxiety and supporting positive affect.

Extending this pattern of mastery-supported affect regulation, Ray reported using competitive recall tasks to energise students and strengthen their sense of capability. When learners became “a little bit restless,” he introduced an optional challenge: “We've seen 20 characters now. If you think you know them all…, you're on target for excellence.” This strategy appears to grow out of his belief in the importance of mastering writing using Japanese characters as soon as possible (see 4.2.3.2). Although demanding—requiring perfect recall—he recalled that many students “love it.” Ray attributed this to the motivational pull of competition, noting that “they obviously want to experience the success” and are “willing to take a chance.” Interestingly, he observed that “it’s almost always the ones that aren’t that engaged” that responded most strongly, suggesting that competitive excitement helped reframe physiological arousal as determination rather than anxiety. As with NJ’s anxious learner, this strategy provided an unexpected pathway for atypical students to achieve mastery.

Across these varied practices, teachers consistently paired structured mastery opportunities with affective support. Whether through scaffolding, choice, game-based learning, or competitive challenge, these strategies reduced the stress, promoted positive emotion, and strengthened students' perceptions of their capability in Japanese script learning.

4.3.2.2 Developing Language through Writing Mastery and Reduced Negative affect

Three teachers discussed strategies in which exercises were used to teach correct writing and language usage. They found that it is important to adjust expectations to allow students to demonstrate mastery over their written skills while reducing stress, a factor necessary in such a complex writing system.

Sally mentioned adjusting expectations by year level to optimise students' perceived efficacy, emphasising that learners should clearly understand what will be tested. She described how year 9 students are required to complete a short answer test while using their notes, allowing them to "sort of copy out of their books if they have been taking notes properly" Japanese formal writing introduces a high cognitive load due to unfamiliar characters, sentence structures, and expressions. By lowering the required memorisation and output in the early stages, Sally's reported strategy gives learners the opportunity to experience success with reduced stress, which strengthens their SE appraisal.

Complementing this, NJ described addressing the distinction between casual conversation and formal writing. She mentioned using a letter writing task to demonstrate formal voice usage which she strictly monitors: She explains the importance of formal language in senior levels through analogy: "If you write a letter to the mayor in English you need to use formal language." By making expectations transparent and justified, she reduces uncertainty for students while enabling them to experience mastery not only in writing but also in listening, reading, and speaking.

In contrast to a more scaffolded approach, RM discussed beginning writing tasks by giving students freedom to attempt playful and imperfect practices as part of the learning process. To offset the tension of too much autonomy, she believes while interest is important, giving boundaries to their

topics was also necessary (see 4.2.1.1). Consistent with this belief, she implements a low-stakes free-writing routine in which students may "write whatever they want," even if the content is "quirky" or not fully coherent, provided they keep producing Japanese. This approach creates frequent, achievable mastery moments (through successful grammatical production) while lowering affective load by removing high-stakes constraints, thereby supporting students' SE.

By adjusting expectations and clarifying formal register for creative practice, Sally and NJ create structured conditions for success. RM, however, improves SE by maximising autonomy, allowing playful but bounded free-writing to serve as achievable grammatical mastery. Across these approaches, students can see their progress in producing accurate Japanese while experiencing reduced stress, which strengthens their SE appraisal.

4.3.2.3 Examination Self-Efficacy Enhancement

Three teachers reported linking assessment preparation to mastery experiences and the reduction of stress and anxiety. While the precise balance differed across teachers, the underlying aim was consistent—to enable students to experience success on assessment-related tasks while keeping the emotional demands of high-stakes testing manageable.

Sally reported prioritising stress reduction as a prerequisite for mastery. She provides students with clear objectives but delays testing to reduce negative emotion:

> …these are the *kanji* you need to know. This is grammar that you need to know. This is what we're going to learn this year. …[For the] first term at least…there's no assessments. There's no pressure…

By providing clarity on what must be learned and delaying assessments, she reduces anxiety and gives students space to build mastery experiences through manageable goals. Aligning with her concern over repeated failure and its negative effect on SE (see 4.2.2.2), this helps to alleviate potential for failure by making prerequisite knowledge clear and precise.

Sally also mentioned using past examinations to build examination stamina. She noticed students faltering in the final stages of long exams and began training them for endurance: "…I'll work on their stamina to get through the whole hour of listening, rather than… one question [in the examination], and that's it for the day." By scaffolding both task familiarity and endurance, students encounter repeated success in conditions closer to the real exam, which reinforces their belief in their ability to complete high-stakes assessments. Stamina is not an inherent ability, but a skill developed through practice, meaning SE gains depend on consistent effort and engagement.

CB reported a strategy which aims to lower stress through organisation. She requires students keep handwritten notebooks which she calls "their Bible", which allow students to flip through and locate material quickly, removing the stress of trying to locate important knowledge: "They need that for an assessment, otherwise they're stuck". She further supplements this by providing access to concise grammar and vocabulary booklets, downloadable notes, and take-home vocabulary and *kanji* lists, so gaps in their notebooks can be filled quickly. In doing so, CB's strategy mitigates the grammatical and structural barriers RM described as common sources of reduced examination efficacy, offering learners predictable tools that support more resilient SE (see 4.2.2.2). While CB notes the uncertainty of whether or how students utilise these notes, having a thorough knowledge resource can develop confidence in students' abilities to meet the unique demands of Japanese examinations.

Both RM and CB use past assessments as deliberate SE levers, enacted in line with their dispositions. RM's cautious, reassurance-oriented stance (see 4.2.2.2) foregrounds predictability: "…we do a lot of practice, explain to them what [is] required… and explain exactly what you have to do to get what sort of grades." For RM, expectations feel structured and attainable meaning by year 12–13 students "know what to expect," even if some nervousness remains. This aligns with her belief-side emphasis on managing apprehension before mastery can consolidate (see 4.2.2.1). CB's organised approach also relies on repetition but leans into social persuasion and emotional regulation: she provides multiple past papers and urges students to "just practise, practise, practise," normalising

exam discomfort until familiarity converts anxiety into mastery moments. Her broader belief in tightly sequenced, teacher-directed structure underpins this enactment (see 4.2.1.1). Together, these cases show a contribution beyond a list of techniques: teachers are designing conditions under which mastery and reduced anxiety co-occur, better facilitating the context-sensitive emergence of these sources within a high-stakes, linguistically demanding subject like Japanese.

Three teachers approached assessment preparation by deliberately pairing mastery opportunities with reduced test-related stress, creating conditions where success felt both attainable and emotionally manageable. Through Sally's delayed testing and stamina-building, CB's organised and predictable study resources, or RM's criteria-focused rehearsal, teachers used assessment as a structured space for strengthening learner self-belief. Together, these reported strategies illustrate how assessment conditions can be intentionally designed to enhance SE, integrating mastery and affect even within high-stakes Japanese examinations.

4.3.2.4 Summary of strategies producing mastery and positive affect

Across script learning, creative writing, and assessment preparation, teachers consistently treated mastery and affect as interdependent, designing instruction so that cognitive challenge was always paired with emotional support. In script learning, scaffolding, choice, and playful practice reduced stress while enabling repeated success, helping students reinterpret Japanese scripts as learnable rather than overwhelming. In writing, Sally and NJ created structured pathways to mastery by adjusting expectations and clarifying formal register, while RM used low-stakes creative freedom to turn grammatical accuracy into an achievable form of mastery. In assessment preparation, all three teachers transformed exams from high-pressure events into SE-enhancing environments through delayed testing, predictable resources, criteria-focused rehearsal, and stamina-building routines. Taken together, these strategies show that teachers were not simply applying techniques but actively shaping learning conditions where mastery could occur without excessive anxiety, allowing students to experience progress, confidence, and reduced negative emotion as mutually reinforcing outcomes.

4.3.3 Strategies Producing Mastery, Vicarious Experiences and Positive Affect

This section explores strategies that enhance SE by combining authentic experiences, observation of peers, and emotionally positive contexts. Teachers described approaches such as school trips, cultural events, verbal persuasion, and online exchanges as powerful tools for reinforcing students' belief in their ability to succeed. These strategies provide opportunities for mastery through real-life application, vicarious learning by observing others, and positive affect by reducing anxiety and making language learning enjoyable. Together, they illustrate how SE can be strengthened through experiences that connect classroom learning to meaningful, authentic interactions

4.3.3.1 School Trip for Mastery, Vicarious Experiences and Positive Affect

The school trip emerged as a powerful extrinsic motivator for studying Japanese (see 4.1 Figure 4), enhancing students' SE through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and positive affective states. As a former secondary school learner myself, the trip shifted Japanese from an abstract classroom subject to something lived and achievable, strengthening my belief that I could genuinely use the language. The teachers in this study similarly perceived school trips as the moment when learning becomes real: students experience Japan directly and interact with Japanese speakers in authentic contexts.

NJ described her intention to implement biannual trips and create exchange opportunities. She views these as motivational anchors that give students authentic reference points for their learning: "Having that connection definitely will encourage kids to keep going or want to study more." Exchanges, in her view, provide both individual mastery experiences and vicarious inspiration for peers. She noted that one returning exchange student significantly boosted another learner's self-belief:

> …that encouraged another girl in our class. She's like, "Oh but I want to go too, Miss" so she's going to go this year for a couple of months on an exchange."

For the observing student, seeing a peer manage real conversations and daily life abroad reframed what success looked like, strengthening her belief that an overseas exchange was possible for her as well. This illustrated how situated mastery events and vicarious modelling work together to build stronger learner SE.

For Ray, whose approach is more pragmatic and outcome-focused, the school trip is the central purpose of learning Japanese. His programme is deliberately designed so that students can "go off on their own and just manage life in Japan." Online interactions with Japanese peers (see 4.3.3.3) form early affective and relational experiences that later solidify during the trip. This cumulative design aims to ensure continuity between classroom, online, and in-country experiences. Ray describes a striking case: "a 14-year-old… caught the train from Osaka to Yokohama, met the family [of a former classmate who moved to Japan], did it all in Japanese." While this could be framed as self-regulatory efficacy, Ray interprets it as the culmination of mastery-based scaffolding, arguing that the trip is not an add-on but the authentic proving ground where students discover whether their skills hold up in real life.

Similarly, CB reported using the prospect of the school trip to Japan as both a motivator and a determiner of learning outcomes, deliberately shaping mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and positive affect through her structured classroom design. Combining her directive teaching style (see 4.2.1.1) with her belief that cultural activities provide achievable mastery opportunities that broaden access to success (see 4.2.3.1), she teaches topics tied directly to what students will encounter in Japan: "When we were doing the housing topic… this is what you're going to see… in year 13… one of the chapters is about tourist spots in Tokyo… we're going to go to this place." Her use of classroom artefacts creates indirect vicarious experiences that help students imagine themselves in these contexts, often resurfacing during the trip itself: "It's making it a bit more real for them." Although she acknowledges that not all students convert this knowledge into confidence, several reported that the

preparation lowered stress in Japan and increased their mastery in Japan, highlighting a clear boost in SE as familiar content made successful action feel attainable.

Across teachers, school trips function as high-impact SE events that combine mastery, vicarious modelling, and positive affective states. NJ emphasises exchange-based modelling, Ray frames the trip as the authentic test of mastery, and CB strengthens anticipatory SE through structured cultural preparation. Despite their differing personalities and pedagogical orientations, all view school Japan trips as a key mechanism for transforming Japanese from classroom knowledge into lived capability, reinforcing students' belief that they can genuinely use the language beyond school.

4.3.3.2 Cultural Self-Efficacy Enhancement

Three teachers discussed using cultural events to promote SE by giving students opportunities for mastery, vicarious learning, and positive affect in low-stakes settings. While Japanese is content-heavy due to its unique writing systems, this culture-focused strategy widens access to success and strengthens perceived efficacy.

NJ promotes Japanese learning through school events such as 'Japan Day' and 'Choice As Day', using cultural participation as visible vicarious modelling and attainable mastery. On 'Japan Day', students run activities like origami, allowing non-Japanese learners to see themselves as legitimate representatives of the language, as NJ affirms: "…but we're not Japanese." "Oh yeah but you're doing Japanese…" Choice As Day' is a workshop day on the last day of the first three terms in which teachers teach something that is a passion and is outside of normal academic work. She recalled using a workshop to address a practice examination question that referred to *chirashi zushi*—sushi rice topped with a variety of ingredients. Students neither recognised nor understood the dish when it appeared in the examination description. To address this, she prepared *chirashi zushi* during the workshop to show students what it was, helping them better understand the examination content. This aligns with her belief that cultural events can merge cultural and academic mastery to reinforce SE through multiple sources (see 4.2.3.1).

CB and Sally use cultural trivia nights to create low-pressure mastery moments and vicarious motivation, engaging students in successful cultural learning. CB explains: “They're quite competitive… Normally it's the better kids that end up going on trivia anyway… they can always go back, oh, remember when we did this.” Recalling these wins consolidates mastery and sustains positive affect. Sally highlights year 10 students’ enjoyment and increased confidence: “One of the year 11s… said she loved to come back… I asked if she could help out as a marker… she came along as well.” Both view such events as SE-enhancing because they pair achievable mastery with interest-driven participation, while peers’ successes provide vicarious cues (see 4.2.3.1). Positive memories attached to competent performance consolidate SE and invite further engagement.

Across teachers, Japanese cultural events operate as blended SE engines—students achieve cultural mastery, vicariously learn from others, and enjoy low-stress participation. While teachers tended to view cultural learning as distinct from academic achievement, when cultural and academic aims are intentionally connected, these experiences appear to have the capacity to further amplify perceived capability and leaner perceived efficacy.

4.3.3.3 Native Japanese for Mastery, Vicarious Experiences and Positive Affect

All interviewees mentioned strategising the use of native Japanese speakers, though approach to implementation varied. Native Japanese speakers provide opportunities for authentic conversation, where students can succeed in low-stakes interactions, linking mastery with positive affect. Shifting beyond isolated language elements to organic, real-world use strengthens SE by making capability observable and felt.

CB reported regularly welcoming Japanese visitors—from sister schools to cultural advisors—to create experiences that extend beyond the usual classroom routine. She recalls a visit from a Japanese teaching advisor during which students learned *furoshiki* (traditional cloth wrapping). She noted the strong affective impact of the session, explaining that “it gave the students an opportunity for someone else to teach them something instead of me… the students really enjoyed it… because it

was a break from normal class." For CB, visits make culture tangible without overseas travel and provide credible models of practice that students can observe and emulate. This is primarily a vicarious mechanism, with spillover into mastery and affect, consistent with her view that cultural events can generate SE from multiple sources (see 4.2.3.1).

Sally discussed intentionally providing her students with authentic opportunities to interact with native Japanese speakers, drawing on international cultural groups such as Friendship Force and Hippo, as well as intergenerational pairs of visiting grandparents and grandchildren. Through her connections with tertiary institutions, she also involves Japanese university students. Such encounters function as genuine mastery and improved affect through enhancing interest, while also allowing vicarious observation of authentic interaction, which Sally sees as more powerful for SE than classroom-only success.

NJ arranges four to eight native-speaker visits annually including native Japanese friends, community members in teacher training, and exchange students:

> I get some of them to come in to make it like how I experienced that realistic, like, 'Oh, I just talked to a Japanese person'… actually make it real, not talking to your friend who you would never speak Japanese with anyway.

For her, these visits transform learning into authentic mastery opportunities that mirror real-life language use. She layers vicarious credibility with micro-mastery, using peer teaching with native speakers to clarify nuance. "When you use… *kashikomarimashita* ('certainly'), what does that mean? … they're like '…It's like *wakarimashita* ('I understand/understood') but …real fancy, real formal.'" She justifies this strategy as she observes that students "listen more to when they're being told by a real Japanese person, not by me". This is similar to CB's strategy for peer feedback to enhance SE (see 4.3.5.1) as native peers provide authentic, contextually rich explanations that she alone may not convey, particularly for subtle distinctions in formality or nuance.

RM invites Japanese native speakers to visit her class periodically. She sees these encounters as opportunities for students to build confidence by applying what they have learned and develop interaction skills, such as asking and responding to questions (see 4.2.3.3). Because students perceive the visitors as authentic language users, success in these interactions provides clear mastery experiences. This aligns with RM's belief that structured guidance paired with opportunities for students to exercise limited autonomy enhances SE, as learners experience observable success linked to their own effort and decision-making (see 4.2.1.1). Native speaker interactions were seen to provide students with some autonomy in navigating unpredictable conversations, demonstrating how mastery and self-regulated learning can intersect within a teacher-guided framework.

Ray also facilitates opportunities for student groups to be hosted at his school, aiming to increase authentic Japanese conversation. One example involved a visiting group from Nagoya, where the connections formed led several students to independently extend their trip in Japan:

> We'd already decided where we were going [on our school trip], and then once they'd met over here they all decided they wanted to spend some time with each other, …it was 17 students that went over on the trip, and five out of those ones stayed on and went by themselves to Nagoya, and just spent another week or so with the people that they hosted in New Zealand…

Ray reflects that these experiences visibly raised the students' SE, demonstrating the potential of well-structured interactions with native speakers. He poignantly notes, "we can only open the doors for them to walk through," emphasizing his belief that the teacher's role in creating opportunities rather than guaranteeing outcomes (see 4.2.3.3). Prioritizing relationships and authentic encounters allow students to experience Japanese language and culture in a less pressured, socially rich environment, enhancing perceived efficacy while accommodating varying levels of confidence.

Authentic interaction with native Japanese speakers consistently strengthens SE across cases by combining vicarious credibility, meaningful mastery, and positive affect. Although teachers differ

in emphasis—cultural experience, linguistic precision, autonomous practice, or relational immersion—the shared outcome is increased student confidence rooted in real-world use. Native-speaker engagement therefore acts as a convergent mechanism through which diverse pedagogical beliefs ultimately produce similar SE gains.

4.3.3.4 Online Exchanges for Mastery, Vicarious Experiences and Positive Affect

Two teachers use online interaction strategically to enhance SE by combining mastery experiences, with social ease and opportunities for peer modelling. Ray operationalises this through friendship-first exchanges (see 4.2.3.3) whereas RM foregrounds authentic successes as the primary driver of SE.

RM highlighted the potential of online exchanges with native speakers to foster self-belief through authentic, SE enhancing interactions. Reflecting her beliefs about its importance (see 4.2.3.3), she noted that students often experience a clear sense of achievement when they manage to communicate with Japanese peers in Japan:

> …because they actually managed to speak to the Japanese people living in Japan, the real Japanese people about the same age. And then when they speak to them in Japanese, they actually understand their question, and they reply and they understand that too.

Interestingly, she observes that her own role as a native speaker does not carry the same weight: “I think they think that I'm not real Japanese… because they can communicate to me in English.” Thus, authenticity amplifies the SE effect, as students interpret real-world success as evidence of genuine capability. From a SE perspective, these moments function as mastery experiences, strengthened by positive affect in the excitement of successful communication. While vicarious elements exist—students witnessing classmates attempt and succeed—RM frames the impact as arising primarily from the authenticity of the interaction itself. What emerges is a concise picture: authentic success produces the strongest efficacy boost, even when the source blends mastery and affective reward.

Ray bases his strategy on his belief in the primacy of friendship-building as a precursor to conversation (see 4.2.3.3), arguing that the positive affect arising from new relationships lowers barriers to risk-taking and enables subsequent mastery experiences. He uses structured online exchanges with age-matched peers to cultivate social ease before pressing for language gains, treating emotional comfort as the enabling condition for mastery. He acknowledges uneven outcomes—some students remain hesitant or reliant on scaffolds—indicating that affective comfort and vicarious observation are helpful but insufficient without situated success.

Ray discussed further supporting beginners through routine and structure. Year 9 students meet online at a fixed time and use a booklet anticipating likely utterances, then begin the interactions in English before gradually moving to Japanese. This reduces anxiety and redirects attention to meaning rather than perfect form: "We'll try and just focus on the actual interaction rather than the language… For novices, he recognises that Japanese sound and meaning are not yet aligned, and that premature expectations of fluency risk discouragement. From an SE perspective, this design lowers the entry threshold for mastery experiences, stabilises affective states, and provides incidental vicarious modelling as peers attempt the same tasks. The overlap of these mechanisms underscores the difficulty of separating Bandura's sources (1997) cleanly in practice, but illustrates the effectiveness that online conversation serves as a strategy for improved Japanese learner SE.

Together, these teachers use online interaction to enhance SE by combining attainable mastery experiences with social ease and opportunities for incidental peer modelling. Ray operationalises this through friendship-first exchanges, whereas RM foregrounds authentic conversational successes as the primary catalyst for strengthened SE.

4.3.3.5 Listening Strategies for Self-Efficacy Improvement

Three teachers discussed strategies to improve listening comprehension SE through combining mastery, vicarious learning and improved affective states. While teachers' reports vary as to which sources and to what degree these sources interact and improve efficacious beliefs, they highlight how strategies

play an important role as to how students may overcome the psychological barriers which face such a challenging task.

Echoing her belief in sufficient prerequisite knowledge of vocabulary (see 4.2.1.2), CB reported ensuring students have adequate vocabulary knowledge through breadth of skills: “[M]ore exercises in class. Making sure that I'm doing a variety of listening, speaking, reading, writing. Over two lessons…” Covering the four major skills helps to cement knowledge and allows multiple opportunities for success. While learning vocabulary here is a mastery experience provider, as a strategy for listening comprehension improvement it also enhances SE by reducing anxiety by providing students with adequate knowledge for listening tasks.

RM uses role play and modelling strategies to enhance students’ perceived listening efficacy. She explains:

> …I pretend I'm a student and doing a listening exam. …I write out what I write as a note on the board…. I demonstrate how you should be taking notes and then how to use that information to come up with the answers because you have to now write in paragraphs. ….trying to model that kind of skills and practice ….”

Her justification is that students often lack procedural knowledge of how to engage with listening assessments. This addresses her beliefs in the tendency of listening assessments to reduce SE due to the limited number of chances to listen to the script (see 4.2.2.2). By breaking down and modelling each stage, SE is improved through RM’s vicarious model giving them the skills when imitated to experience success leading to reduced anxiety during listening assessments.

As Sally expressed her belief that learning the way we learn our first language is of great benefit (see 4.2.1.2), she mentioned reading aloud to students while they have the text in front of them to follow along as a SE enhancing method. She explains the effect: “They're reading while they're listening. So, they're listening, but they can see the words there. So that helps them to understand what

I'm saying because it's written in front of them." Her justification is that pairing text with audio supports comprehension. For Sally, this provides mastery experiences, as students confirm understanding through multiple input modes, modelling from teacher pronunciation and speaking skills, and reduced anxiety by making listening more predictable.

All three teachers reported SE enhancing strategies which approach listening comprehension in a nuanced way. Mastery is seen as of great import and yet modelling for students further improved student beliefs as they could see how listening could be improved particularly for assessment conditions. Simultaneously, these methods considered the significance of improving the affective states of students under pressured conditions, although not always directly. Nevertheless, listening strategies provide multiple ways in which SE potentially is attained and enhanced in learners.

4.3.3.6 Summary of Strategies Producing Mastery, Vicarious Experiences and Positive Affect

The strategies described in this section illustrate how teachers strengthen SE through combining mastery, vicarious experiences and emotional states by anchoring language learning in authentic, socially meaningful experiences. Across school trips, cultural events, native Japanese visitors, online exchanges, and listening strategies, students encounter attainable mastery moments, observe peers succeeding, and benefit from reduced anxiety and positive affect. While each teacher's emphasis differs, these approaches collectively demonstrate that SE grows most reliably when classroom learning connects to real interactions in ways that feel achievable, emotionally safe, and socially engaging. These belief-driven practices form a coherent pattern in which mastery, vicarious observation, and affective support operate together to make Japanese feel genuinely learnable.

4.3.4 Strategies Producing Self-Efficacy Enhancing Vicarious Experiences

This section examines how three teachers discussed creating vicarious learning through model students. Although incidental mastery and positive affect may occur, the primary purpose is to enable students to observe others' success, fostering their ability to imagine themselves achieving similar outcomes.

Teachers stressed careful management to avoid negative comparisons, keeping vicarious experience central even when other SE sources were subtly present.

4.3.4.1 Model Management for Enhanced Vicarious Experiences

Three teachers reported utilising model students to create vicarious learning opportunities. However, they each describe careful rules designed to prevent the disengagement that occurs when high-SE students dominate modelling, since other learners may withdraw, rely on them to do the work, or feel discouraged by unfavourable comparisons. These models describe the importance of optimising strategies to maximise SE improvement in students.

CB discussed using model students to promote further learning for others, though she acknowledges there are inherent limitations. Some students "always" put up their hands, which requires careful management. She explained how she handles this:

> Before you put your hand up, count to five first. And it's for them to understand why I'm doing that, because sometimes they feel she doesn't want me to answer anything anymore. But you've got to try and train them that I want others to have a go before you can give me the answer.

This wrestle shows the balance CB tries to strike—encouraging keen students without discouraging others, while still leaving space for wider participation. She uses model students to correct mistakes, asking, "How can we fix that?" but remains cautious not to pressure the less confident: "You've got to be careful that you're not picking on someone who doesn't understand." She further states: "The others will think… I don't need to do it… It would diminish their belief." Here she recognises that overreliance on confident students can damage SE for less confident learners, undermining their belief in their own capacity to succeed.

RM echoes this struggle. She uses confident students deliberately but sparingly: "I might ask those students questions first… so that they can model the answer for other students. But I don't do [it] as often." Her hesitation comes from awareness of the mixed results. For some, "it will boost their

confidence," but for others "they just don't like that kind of spotlight kind of moment." CB and RM see the risk that model students—especially those with shaky confidence in public speaking—may undermine SE if their attempt feels like a failure.

In NJ's combined senior class, she cultivates a *sempai–kōhai* dynamic, inviting year 13s to guide year 12s: "It'll be your chance… to teach the year 12s what you already know… you'll look really cool because you've already done year 12." The intent is dual: year 13 students consolidate knowledge through teaching while year 12 students observe competent peers. NJ concedes that resistance is an issue; some year 13s resist the "teacher" role and some year 12 students resist peer authority. Nevertheless, she sees more frequent modelling serves to improve SE in both learner groups. She also leverages authentic cultural examples, utilising a recent returnee from a two-month stay in Japan as a class "expert": "How was this when you're in Japan? Did you see this? … Can you tell us about when you went to blah blah blah?" This mirrors how exchange students can motivate peers to pursue exchanges themselves (see 4.3.3.1). In both cases, authenticity intensifies the vicarious impact, as recent and relatable success makes the pathway feel attainable.

Across these cases, teachers leverage model students and authentic exemplars to create vicarious learning while managing participation, so peers observe success without disengaging. Careful rules aim to preserve motivation and credibility, preventing over-reliance on high-SE students or deflating comparisons. Authentic experiences of peers further make pathways feel attainable, optimising SE gains from vicarious observation.

4.3.5 Strategies Producing Self-Efficacy Enhancing Social Persuasion

In this section, several strategies were interpreted as functioning primarily through social persuasion. Peer feedback was perceived as enhancing SE, whereas teacher verbal input was reported as aiming to discourage quitting and to counter negative perceptions arising from the complexity of Japanese.

Whether delivered through structured or informal review, discussion of the effectiveness of these strategies revealed mixed impacts on learners' perceptions of their own efficacy.

4.3.5.1 Peer Feedback Strategies

One teacher reported how peer-based strategies operate as social persuasion to enhance SE. CB described setting up peer reviews of each other's work by seating students in mixed-ability groups with at least one stronger student at each table. As CB explained: "They definitely help each other out if someone's getting stuck halfway through a sentence. Then the others will tell them what to say." She described this as a "goodie" because it allows peer teaching in a class too large for the teacher to help individually. CB's description indicates that this process supports perceived efficacy through peer interaction, although she recognises it depends on the quality of those interactions. When supportive, students experience encouragement from classmates in a way that feels relatable:

> Especially when they can't say much in one day, and the next day they've remembered a few more sentences, and they just keep building on it. …. Their mates are giving them the support instead of me.

CB acknowledged that outcomes are not guaranteed, as students must be willing to act on advice. However, the quote suggests that SE improves through repeated, peer-supported successes, with persuasion from classmates playing a key role for struggling learners.

4.3.5.2 Persuasion Attempts to Dissuade Quitting

Three teachers described strategies aimed at discouraging students from leaving the Japanese course. They emphasised the benefits of studying Japanese to promote continued engagement potentially enhancing SE. However, they noted that this approach alone produced uncertain SE gains without support from other efficacy sources.

RM discussed using verbal persuasion to encourage persistence through difficulty by highlighting both the challenge and reward of learning Japanese: “[I]t is hard, … there are a lot of things to learn, but you're learning a lot. … [T]he opportunity of speaking another language could open opportunity for you in the future.” However, RM remained unsure how effective persuasion is in boosting SE, perhaps influenced by her perception of how overwhelmingly difficult Japanese can be (see 4.2.3.2).

NJ described framing Japanese as a constructive challenge to discourage a student from quitting: “Actually Japanese teaches you so many skills about like problem solving and resilience … when it's hard you just keep going … you don't give up.” She too noted, however, uncertainty of the effectiveness in improving learner SE.

Similarly, CB recalled using positive reinforcement to dissuade one student who had just achieved an excellence mark from quitting:

> Hey, you're doing really well. … You did this without any feedback from me and look at the red marks on there. There's hardly anything. … [Y]ou can do this, and you're not going to do it next year?

Even though the student had achieved excellence above a friend who regularly excels but only received merit this time, CB acknowledged that quitting was almost inevitable, perhaps due to lack of successes outside of this instance.

All three emphasised the fragile role of persuasion in producing SE. While peer feedback and teacher encouragement can support learners’ efficacy appraisals, students’ beliefs are often shaped by additional factors. Moreover, although decisions to quit may stem from reasons beyond SE, insufficient efficacy-building experiences, such as mastery, can still undermine students, as CB’s case suggests. This highlights the need for multiple SE sources to operate alongside verbal persuasion to maximise efficacy gains.

4.3.5.3 Verbal Persuasion for Reframing Struggle

Two teachers deliberately reframed difficulty as a normal feature of language learning. NJ openly acknowledged Japanese's difficulty, while Sally explained the neural processes involved in struggling toward mastery. These techniques positioned persuasion as the primary means of supporting SE, with positive affect and increased success arising as secondary by-products supporting SE rather than distinct SE sources.

Like her belief in reframing difficulty as 'puzzle' solving (see 4.2.1.2), NJ emphasised frequent revision of vocabulary, *kanji*, *kana*, and grammar to normalise struggle: "I've always reminded the kids… if this is hard, it's okay.… you've got to repeat it. … I always say I'm going to have seven different ways before you actually remember it." This positions difficulty as a planned sequence of mastery attempts, normalising repetition as routine rather than a marker of inability.

Sally complements this approach by explaining the neural basis of learning, reframing failure as meaningful progress: "I'll just encourage them that … even if they can't get it this time by trying to do it, the neural pathways in their brains are developing and just keep trying and then one day they'll connect." This explicit verbal persuasion recasts errors as evidence of learning, supporting persistence until mastery. Aligned with her emphasis on positive teacher–student relationships (see 4.2.2.3), it encourages students to view failure as an essential step, reinforcing beliefs that success is attainable.

Taken together, these accounts depict belief-consistent verbal persuasion that indirectly scaffolds mastery experiences and regulates affect. By making difficulty expected and meaningful, they position effort as the route to attainable success, protecting learners from maladaptive interpretations of struggle and linking persistence to credible mastery over time.

4.3.5.4 Summary of Strategies Producing Self-Efficacy Enhancing Persuasion

These reported strategies aimed to persuade stronger SE beliefs. Peers provided valued, task-specific feedback, while teacher persuasion targeted broader beliefs—explicitly correcting misconceptions

about Japanese that threaten efficacy. Discussions of reframing drew on teachers' beliefs about how SE improves despite acknowledging difficult aspects of Japanese. In this sense, reframing can indirectly build mastery by helping students see challenge as natural and surmountable. Overall, persuasive strategies were viewed as useful, though evidence of their standalone impact on learner beliefs was limited.

4.3.6 Strategies Producing Positive Affect

Positive affect emerged as a central mechanism through which teachers sought to enhance students' SE. By creating enjoyment, safety, humour, inclusion, and cultural engagement, teachers established conditions that reduced anxiety and encouraged persistence. Yet across these cases, positive affect acted as a catalyst rather than a guarantee: its effect on SE depended on whether students also achieved meaningful mastery experiences.

4.3.6.1 Humour and Supportive Environments as Affective Enablers

Three teachers reported cultivating positive affect through lowering stress, building interest, and normalising error. Across accounts, light-hearted rapport, humour, and protection from criticism are used to make difficulty feel manageable and progress attainable.

CB's beliefs about positive relationships with students (see 4.2.3.2) were enacted through a relaxed, joking classroom tone: "Sometimes I can be a little bit sarcastic… but...we can have jokes in class." She believed this enjoyment increased students' willingness to invest effort: "They've got enjoyment in the class so therefore they're willing to put that little bit extra effort in." This low-stress, trusting environment encouraged fuller engagement, supporting growth in perceived efficacy.

NJ similarly used humour and anecdotal "dumb moments" to normalise error. Describing her father's faux pas, she explained how embarrassment did not deter persistence: "[Forgetting to take them off, her father wore] the toilet slippers in the middle of the restaurant of like hundreds of people and everyone was staring at him, but he's been back to Japan seven times since." By modelling

recovery from cultural or linguistic mistakes, NJ reframed error as compatible with enjoyment and eventual success, reducing anxiety around failure.

Extending this emphasis on emotional safety, RM reduced negative emotion through clear norms. As discussed in Section 4.2.2.3, RM described immediately intervening when students ridicule peers' language use, a practice through which the teacher communicates care, protection, and high expectations for respect. She links this to engagement and persistence: "It helps with the option choices… it's really helpful to have that positive experience environment." The positive affective climate functions as a condition for SE enhancement, enabling the mastery experiences needed for improvement.

Taken together, these practices lower stress, heighten interest, and normalise struggle, thereby supporting persistence and SE. By protecting positive affect and reframing difficulty, teachers help students perceive effort as credible progress toward mastery.

4.3.6.2 Inclusion as a Source of Calm Confidence

One teacher described deliberately cultivating a calm, inclusive classroom to support students who may feel marginalised or anxious in language learning contexts. Aligned with her view that criticism eliminates SE (see 4.2.2.3), Sally discussed using a calmer, inclusive class style tailored to students who are less socially typical or non-sporty: "I'm quite happy having these diverse people in my class… I don't force them to conform to how language classes are supposed to be." She provides low-pressure, one-on-one opportunities to practise language, allowing students to build confidence without anxiety. She recognises the impact of this safe space: "They're able to practise their language, and therefore their belief in themselves is obviously improving… it's a safe space for them." As with NJ's highly anxious student who achieved *hiragana* mastery when pressure was removed (see 4.3.2.1), reduced performance demands enabled engagement to precede confidence. When well-managed, such environments reduce stress, allow risk-taking, and sustain engagement—critical preconditions for SE to develop.

4.3.6.3 Summary of Strategies Producing Positive Affect

Across these accounts, positive affect functioned as an enabling condition rather than a standalone source of SE. Humour, inclusion, and protection from criticism lowered stress, normalised struggle, and kept interest high. When paired with low-pressure pathways, such as Sally's individualised learning, and clear norms that shut down ridicule, students could reappraise difficulty and convert engagement into credible mastery. Teachers often operationalised their beliefs through strategies they understood from teaching and learning experiences help to regulate emotional states. In Japanese specifically, this affect-first approach reframed challenge as manageable and effort as worthwhile, supporting a more durable pattern of learner investment over time.

4.3.7 Summary of Strategies

At the core of this design was the strategic structuring of mastery experiences as a primary source of SE, rather than the application of isolated techniques. Teachers described making goals explicit, sequencing content carefully, and calibrating challenge through tiered tasks, recycled language, and visible progress tracking, while keeping demands within tolerable bounds for learners' confidence to develop credibly. Where bounded autonomy was offered through limited choices of tasks or resources, it was paired with clear scaffolding to prevent overload—reflecting a shared belief that structured independence is the safest route to credible mastery, particularly for less confident learners.

Mastery was commonly supported through affect-regulating strategies intended to normalise difficulty and reduce stress. Teachers used gamified character learning, multimodal resources, low-pressure practice, and delayed or simulated assessments to soften performance pressure. These approaches converted anxiety into small, accumulative wins, illustrating how affect regulation enabled mastery by keeping challenge within tolerable bounds and avoiding demoralising attempts at success.

In many cases, mastery and affect supports were further strengthened through vicarious experience in authentic contexts. Learning was anchored in real interaction via school trips, cultural events, native-speaker visits, and online exchanges. In these settings, students observed peers succeed,

experienced genuine conversational wins, and engaged in low-stakes, socially meaningful tasks that strengthened learners' perceptions of their own ability. Teachers reported actively managing model student use to preserve vicarious benefits while protecting lower-SE learners from unfavourable comparisons.

Persuasion strategies complemented these designs by targeting misconceptions linked to difficulty and persistence. Teachers reframed challenge as expected and solvable, failure as evidence of neural growth, and Japanese learning as cumulative and effort-responsive. Supportive peer feedback in mixed-ability groups provided relatable persuasion that, when carefully managed, produced peer-scaffolded successes rather than discouraging comparisons.

Across cases, positive affect-first practices—including humour, clear norms against criticism, inclusive classroom climates, and one-to-one practice—lowered stress, increased interest, and normalised error. These practices created emotional safety for risk-taking, allowing engagement to be sustained long enough for progress to become visible and believable.

Overall, the interviews showed how teachers operationalised their beliefs by engineering frequent, credible successes under affectively supportive and socially authentic conditions. Across contexts, mastery was built through careful sequencing and bounded autonomy, with affect regulation, vicarious modelling, and targeted persuasion layered in to keep difficulty manageable, progress believable, and engagement capable of developing into stronger Japanese SE over time.

4.4 Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 presented questionnaire and interview findings on teachers' reported beliefs about strengthening learners' SE in Japanese and how they described enacting those beliefs in classroom design. The questionnaire offered initial orientation and informed the interview guide. The interviews then elaborated how participants said their beliefs related to their day-to-day practices.

Across interviews, teachers reported four broad propositions: (1) SE is more likely to develop when structured guidance is balanced with carefully extended autonomy; (2) sequenced, low-stakes practice that learners perceive as attainable supports engagement; (3) positive affect can enable efficacy, with encouragement, reframed difficulty, and strong teacher–student relationships described as lowering stress and normalising error; and (4) character learning was reported as a persistent constraint on SE, with early script use and the active disruption of negative self-talk believed to mitigate its impact. Participants commonly endorsed incremental, multimodal support and a holistic view of SE that draws on all four sources rather than treating them in isolation.

In describing their practice, teachers indicated that these beliefs were reflected—sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly—in mastery-led structuring, bounded autonomy with scaffolding to minimise overload; and affect-regulating routines intended to convert anxiety into small, believable wins. They reported leveraging vicarious experience in authentic situations while managing models to protect lower-SE learners from discouraging comparisons. Persuasion was described as targeting common misconceptions by framing difficulty as expected and solvable, failure as neural growth, and Japanese as cumulative and effort-responsive, with peer feedback in mixed-ability groups sometimes perceived to amplify these messages. Notably, teachers did not uniformly present their beliefs as direct determinants of practice; in several accounts, connections between beliefs and strategies remained implicit rather than explicitly reasoned.

Looking ahead to Chapter 5, the analysis considers why reported strategy profiles varied across classrooms. It examines how teacher personality and prior experience were said to influence strategy choice; how the autonomy–scaffolding tension was negotiated to limit overload while preserving opportunities for credible mastery; and how the mastery–affect balance was managed so that challenge remained productive without escalating stress. This traces how broadly shared, reported beliefs are realised through differing teacher practices.

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Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter discusses the key findings of the study and interprets them in relation to existing literature on self-efficacy (SE) in SLA. The discussion is structured around the two research questions, examining teachers' beliefs about how learner SE develops in Japanese language classrooms (RQ1), and the strategies they report using to support this development in practice (RQ2). Discussion points are organised into three thematic sections: the role of teacher personality and experience in shaping pedagogical choices; the embedding of autonomy within scaffolded learning structures; and the optimisation of mastery experiences and positive affect in classroom contexts.

5.1 Teachers' Beliefs and Experiences as Foundations for Self-Efficacy Enhancing Practice

Teachers' beliefs about how learner SE develops, and the strategies they report using to support them, are deeply shaped by their personalities, identities, and accumulated experiences as both learners and teachers. Teaching styles emerge as highly personal, with SE-enhancing strategies often mirroring teachers' own learning histories—ranging from structured, grammar-focused approaches shaped by formal curricula to pragmatic, relational methods informed by immersive or experiential learning. The decision to teach is often a journey of self-discovery and reflection, thus shaping beliefs and informing strategies as teachers draw on their own personalities and learning experiences to create approaches that build perceived efficacy and reduce learner anxiety (Ambler et al., 2024; Brown, 2009).

Many reported beliefs and strategy choices drew from teachers' experiences as Japanese learners. Teachers who had lived or studied in Japan frequently drew on their own encounters with linguistic and cultural challenge to design empathetic learning environments and to reassure students that discomfort and error are normal parts of the learning process. Such modelling of persistence, emotional regulation, and realistic goal setting functioned as indirect mastery and vicarious experiences for learners, extending Bandura's framework beyond learner performance alone. This finding adds nuance to SE theory by illustrating how mastery experiences may be mediated through

teacher narratives, modelling, and credibility, rather than being limited to students' direct task success (Pajares, 2002; Klassen & Usher, 2010). Teachers understood Japanese as a high-distance language requiring protective scaffolding, sequencing tasks carefully, and pre-teaching vocabulary and core patterns prior to receptive and productive tasks. These pedagogical choices stem from their own learning and teaching habits, and decisions to be more communicative or self-directed focus were a result from learning Japanese in less conventional pathways. Research on teacher belief formation supports this pattern, showing that teachers' instructional decisions are grounded in belief systems shaped by prior experience and their interpretations of that experience, rather than by procedural knowledge alone (Li & Ma, 2025). These belief–strategy linkages indicate that classroom practices were not ad hoc but were driven by coherent pedagogical understandings of how SE develops in Japanese language learning.

While interrelated with prior learning experiences, teacher personality—inferred through consistently articulated beliefs, affective orientations, and patterned responses to learner difficulty—is a significant factor in beliefs and choice of SE-improving strategies. These underlying dispositions were manifested not through self-description, but through stable belief patterns regarding learner fragility, acceptable risk, and the emotional conditions required for confidence to emerge. More academic-minded and anxiety-focused teachers leaned on safe, structured, scaffolded learning, while others demonstrating greater tolerance for ambiguity and learner variability were more willing to give students control over their learning. Decisions to create learning environments where low stress and positive beliefs were cultivated consistently reflected teachers' affective orientations and dispositional sensitivities, rather than discrete pedagogical techniques. Reframing language learning as a "puzzle," ensuring the classroom was a safe space for those who are different from most students, and more adventurous, communicative-aligned learning environments can be understood as enactments of underlying personality dispositions, rather than solely as outcomes of accumulated experience. This analysis adds nuance to Bandura's framework by showing that teachers' strategy choices and beliefs

about supporting learner confidence are shaped not only by prior experience but by stable personality-linked dispositions, including values, affective orientations, and coping styles. Research across SE, teacher belief formation, and personality-driven instructional behaviour supports this interpretation (Barni et al., 2019; Li & Ma, 2025; Samfira & Paloş, 2021).

5.1.1 Summary

This study demonstrates that teachers' beliefs about learner SE are closely intertwined with their identities and experiences, and that these beliefs directly inform the strategies they report using in Japanese language classrooms. By foregrounding the role of teacher experience in shaping SE-enhancing practice, this section contributes to the literature by highlighting how teachers in low-exposure contexts compensate for limited natural input through modelling, emotional support, and calibrated challenge. The findings also show that emotional and cognitive supports are inseparable, with teachers' own learning histories informing practices that reduce anxiety, normalise difficulty, and encourage resilience. In extending this, research indicates that teachers' dispositional tendencies influence *how* they interpret their experiences and, in turn, how belief systems about effective support develop, highlighting the interpretive—not just experiential—nature of SE-related pedagogy (Barni et al., 2019; Li & Ma, 2025; Samfira & Paloş, 2021). These insights extend existing SE research by demonstrating how belief-driven pedagogy operates in high-distance language contexts such as Japanese.

5.2 Calibrated Autonomy within Scaffolded Learning Structure

Autonomy within a protective scaffolding was consistently reported by teachers as essential for supporting progress toward SE and mastery in Japanese. Teachers' beliefs about how confidence is lost or sustained in high-distance language learning shaped the degree of autonomy they permitted at different instructional stages. Given Japanese's linguistic complexity and the limited opportunities for natural exposure in New Zealand classrooms, teachers prioritised approaches they believed would protect learners from early failure while gradually enabling greater ownership of learning. The view

that SE should be stabilised before independence emerges—rather than expecting immediate self-direction—was commonly used to justify scaffolded autonomy (Anderson, 2022; Allagui, 2024; Ma & Chen, 2025).

Teachers described a perceived tension between guiding learning and fostering autonomy, though this did not lead them to dismiss autonomy outright. Instead, they regulated it strategically: sequencing tasks, controlling pacing, and narrowing task demands in early phases to secure manageable mastery experiences. They expressed concern that premature autonomy could overwhelm learners yet also recognised that prolonged control might hinder longer-term development by limiting ownership and self-regulation. Although autonomy-enhancing practices such as goal setting were valued, teachers generally retained responsibility for constructing objectives, believing many learners lacked the metacognitive skills to define meaningful goals independently. This stance aligns with research suggesting that learners with lower autonomy readiness benefit from externally guided strategies before progressing toward self-determined regulation (Duchatelet & Donche, 2019; Guo et al., 2023).

Rather than treating autonomy and scaffolding as oppositional, teachers conceptualised autonomy as emerging through carefully structured support. This understanding aligns with Anderson's (2022) argument that scaffolded autonomy is not contradictory—some forms of autonomy require substantial guidance. Viewed through a sociocultural lens, this can also be understood as resonating with Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, where learning progresses through a calibrated interplay between assistance and independence. In practice, teachers described using planned task sequencing, pre-teaching of vocabulary and scripts, and guided rehearsal in early stages, followed by incrementally increased learner choice as confidence grew. Framed this way, autonomy and structure operated together: targeted challenge generated mastery, and guided practice consolidated learner readiness for expanding independence. Assor's (2012) distinction between

avoiding coercion and developing an “inner compass” further supports this coexistence of structure and meaningful choice.

Across accounts, teachers emphasised that mastery recalibrates SE only when challenge remains manageable. They described calibrating difficulty just beyond current competence and expanding choice gradually—through variation in task demands, pacing, or mode of engagement—once learners demonstrated sufficient readiness. These practices aligned with multiple SE sources: mastery-focused structuring, bounded autonomy to prevent overload, and affect-regulating routines that transformed anxiety into manageable challenge. Although teachers did not always explicitly articulate these mechanisms, their descriptions suggest that Japanese language teaching practices are implicitly grounded in a shared commitment to structured guidance that leads toward gradual, SE-supported autonomy.

5.2.1 Summary

Taken together, these findings show that teachers reported viewing autonomy and scaffolding as interdependent elements that jointly support the development of learner SE in Japanese. The section clarifies how established theories of SE and guided learning are operationalised in practice in a linguistically distant, low-exposure context, with calibrated support used to sustain confidence while gradually fostering self-regulation. By showing how teachers in a linguistically distant, low-exposure context explicitly utilise protective scaffolding as a prerequisite to self-directed learning, this section contributes to the literature by bringing to the forefront discussions of autonomy-readiness and optimising mastery experience producing teacher-led structure and student-led self-regulation and autonomy. By framing autonomy as a developmentally scaffolded practice, and by detailing classroom strategies informed by ZPD, SE, and autonomy theory, the section offers a context-specific account of how meaningful choice can be both consequential and manageable for beginner learners of Japanese.

5.3 Balancing Mastery and Positive Affect

Balancing mastery experiences with positive affect emerged as a central concern in teachers' reported beliefs and classroom practices. Mastery and emotional regulation were presented as inseparable, particularly given the target language's distance and script complexity, and learners' limited exposure to it. Teachers believed that SE develops not through challenge alone nor emotional safety alone, but through the deliberate pairing of incremental mastery with affective support. In practice, this balance was described as enacted through scaffolding, reframing, praise, gamification, and cultural engagement, with the goal of sustaining engagement and persistence by calibrating cognitive challenge and emotional readiness.

Teachers reported intentionally reducing anxiety and cultivating positive emotional states while still ensuring access to authentic mastery opportunities. Praise, minimal critique, and low-stakes practice were reported as strategic means of persuading students to persist when progress felt slow or effortful. Positive arousal was reframed as a normal feature of learning and a signal to solve and explore more deeply, encouraging risk-taking and continued practice. Teachers' accounts often reflected an underlying belief that affective conditions must be optimised for mastery to occur at all, rather than treated as secondary or incidental to learning.

At the same time, teachers acknowledged that avoiding negative emotion entirely may limit SE development. They reported encouraging learners to accept tolerable levels of discomfort—especially in speaking and interactional tasks—so that authentic attempts could transform unease into SE-building mastery. Several teachers described inviting students to act before feeling ready, normalising error and reframing setbacks as part of growth. This stance was consistent with accounts in which SE develops through successful risk taking rather than waiting for full preparedness, alongside the idea that appropriately bounded challenge catalyses development. Teachers' descriptions suggest that affect regulation and mastery were co-managed, with emotional safety supporting attempts at successful Japanese use and staged challenge helping to convert anxiety into small, believable wins.

Teachers also broadened the concept of mastery to regulate affect and expand access to SE development. This should be understood as an interpretation of these teachers' reported practice rather than a statement of the New Zealand curriculum, which co-promotes cultural and language knowledge (Ministry of Education, 2007; 2023), and it describes how attainable success was pursued for particular cohorts. While linguistic mastery was often perceived as "real mastery," teachers frequently used cultural participation and engagement to provide accessible success experiences, especially for learners who struggled with formal academic tasks. This was framed as lowering stress, raising enjoyment, and offering alternative entry points into confidence building—fitting a context where cultural and linguistic competence are both valued. Also, conversation was a particularly salient site where mastery and affect intersected. Teachers reported difficulties teaching conversation within traditional academic frames, leading many to reframe early limited conversational mastery as successful communication rather than accuracy alone. Demonstrating comprehensibility, maintaining interaction, and being understood by native speakers were treated as valid mastery indicators, even when grammatical control was limited. Scaffolding, relational support, and reframed success criteria were reported to be used to move students through anxiety into authentic interaction, providing potent SE enhancing mastery, vicarious experience, and positive affect.

5.3.1 Summary

Teachers reported operationalising mastery experiences and affective regulation as integrated pedagogical practices rather than separate psychological processes. It clarifies how, in a linguistically distant, low exposure context, teachers consciously balance challenge and emotional readiness, extend what "counts" as mastery to include cultural participation and conversational success, and treat authenticity as a lever for SE-relevant wins. The contribution of this research lies in practice-based detail: it specifies how Bandura's account of SE sources, control–value perspectives on emotion in learning, and sociocultural views of interaction and participation are enacted holistically in beginner

Japanese language classrooms, helping to explain how confidence and persistence are sustained under high cognitive and emotional demand.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine New Zealand secondary school Japanese language teachers' self-reported beliefs and strategies for enhancing learner self-efficacy (SE). It addressed two research questions:

- (RQ1) What are teachers' self-reported beliefs about improving learner SE with regards to teaching practice in secondary school Japanese language classrooms?
- (RQ2) What strategies do teachers report as being effective in improving their learners' SE in secondary school Japanese language classrooms?

These questions were formulated in response to the confidence and persistence challenges described in Chapter One.

In response to RQ1, this study found that teachers believe learner SE in Japanese develops through a calibrated balance of structured scaffolding and gradually increased autonomy, alongside deliberate reframing of challenge to make success feel attainable. Teachers also emphasised the importance of positive affect and relational support as enabling conditions for mastery, particularly given the structural divergence of Japanese and the scarcity of target-language input in New Zealand.

In response to RQ2, teachers reported using a range of strategies designed to generate frequent, achievable mastery experiences while reducing anxiety. These included explicit sequencing of learning objectives, pre-teaching vocabulary and core patterns, early and routine engagement with Japanese scripts, tiered speaking and writing tasks, praise with minimal critique, humour and gamified practice, low-stakes repetition (including exam rehearsal), and authentic cultural and communicative interactions. Collectively, these strategies were reported to support learner confidence by broadening what counts as success and sustaining engagement in a challenging language.

These reported practices directly address the persistence and confidence challenges outlined in Chapter One, where perceived difficulty and limited exposure risk eroding learners' belief that progress

is attainable. Taken together, the findings show a strong alignment between teachers' beliefs and their reported practices. Teachers draw heavily on their own learning and teaching experiences to make context-sensitive decisions about how to balance structure, autonomy, mastery, and emotional support. In a setting where learners have limited exposure to Japanese beyond the classroom, teachers play a central role in shaping how SE is experienced and developed. In this sense, the findings clarify how teachers mitigate perceptions of impossibility and sustain learner SE and confidence in a linguistically distant language.

The contribution of this small-scale qualitative study lies in its practice-based account of how established SE principles are enacted by Japanese language teachers in a New Zealand secondary school context. By documenting teachers' beliefs and strategies in detail, the study provides insight into how SE is fostered in a linguistically distant language under conditions of limited exposure, while remaining appropriately bounded by its scope and methodology. In doing so, the study delivers on its stated aim to clarify teacher beliefs and strategies that shore up learner persistence and perceived efficacy appraisals under conditions of high perceived difficulty.

6.1 Recommendations

This section outlines tentative and context-specific recommendations arising from the findings of this small-scale qualitative study. These recommendations are not intended to be prescriptive or generalisable, but rather to indicate possible avenues for future research and professional practice that are grounded in the reported beliefs and strategies of the participating teachers.

6.1.1 Further Investigative Research into Self-Efficacy Source Balancing

Most research into SE sources tends to examine each source independently, with comparatively less attention given to how these sources may interact in specific learning contexts (Irie, 2021). While the four sources of self-efficacy—mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological or emotional states—are well established (Bandura, 1997), their relative salience and interaction may vary depending on linguistic distance, exposure, and instructional context.

In high-distance languages such as Japanese, SE appears particularly important for persistence and engagement (Irie, 2021). Findings from this study suggest that teachers perceive mastery and affective experiences as closely linked, especially in contexts where learners have limited exposure beyond the classroom. Further research could explore how cultural activities, authentic conversation, and broadened definitions of mastery contribute to SE development, as these areas remain underexplored within SLA research (Irie, 2021; Kutuk et al., 2023).

Additionally, future studies may examine how mastery is differently interpreted by learners with varied academic profiles, including neurodiverse learners, and how this shapes SE development. Longitudinal and mixed-methods research, incorporating both qualitative data and quantitative measures, could provide deeper insight into how SE develops over time in Japanese language learning contexts. Alongside general instruments such as the Generalised Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) (Schwarzer, & Jerusalem, 1995), researchers could employ domain-specific measures specifically designed to capture SE beliefs related to Japanese language learning such as the Japanese as a Foreign Language Self-Efficacy Scale (JFL/SES) mentioned in section 2.3. Using a scale tailored to the linguistic and pedagogical features of JFL contexts would enable more precise tracking of learners' SE trajectories over time. Research across different national and educational settings may also help clarify the extent to which these findings are context-dependent.

6.1.2 Incorporating Teaching and Learning Reflections

Teachers' accounts in this study highlight how their beliefs and strategies are shaped by their own learning histories and professional experiences. This suggests that teacher SE and reflective practice may play an important role in shaping SE-enhancing instructional choices. Teachers' personal practical knowledge (PPK), understood as experiential and reflective knowledge developed through lived practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987), appears to influence how teachers interpret learner challenge, success, and emotional readiness. Professional development opportunities that incorporate guided reflection on teachers' own language learning experiences may support more intentional and consistent

SE-enhancing practice. Such reflection may assist teachers in recognising how their own experiences inform beliefs about autonomy, self-regulation, mastery, and affect, and how these beliefs translate into classroom strategies.

6.1.3 Integrating Structured Scaffolding to Support Self-Directed Learner Growth

Teachers in this study reported prioritising structured learning while cautiously introducing opportunities for autonomy. Reframing success toward effort, risk-taking, and progress may help sustain learner SE during autonomy-oriented tasks. As a recommendation, professional support should focus on helping teachers integrate self-directed learning within existing scaffolded frameworks, rather than replacing structure. Instead of large-scale curriculum reform, shared resources, practical exemplars, and professional learning conversations could model how exploratory speaking, communicative writing, and freer practice can be introduced without overwhelming learners. Contemporary teaching practice frequently involves the use of informal digital networks, where teachers engage in the peer-to-peer exchange of resources and strategies via email lists and social media groups. Building on these existing practices through targeted PD may offer a more feasible approach. PD could include classroom demonstrations, examples of balanced structure-and-exploration tasks, and guided opportunities for teachers to trial and reflect on autonomy-supportive activities within secure, scaffolded conditions. Additionally, additional exploration could investigate how different forms of scaffolded autonomy are enacted across Japanese language classrooms and how teachers negotiate this balance at various year levels and proficiency stages.

6.1.4 Developing Blended Mastery-Positive Affect Strategies

Teachers described the challenge of balancing learners/ cognitive demands with emotional readiness, particularly in a context of limited exposure and high linguistic distance. The findings suggest that strategies which simultaneously support skill development and emotional regulation may be especially valuable for sustaining learner engagement and SE. Professional learning that shares practical

approaches such as reframing tasks, gamified practice, low-stakes repetition, and confidence-building examination preparation may therefore be especially beneficial. Although many of these strategies are already exchanged informally through social-media groups and email lists, the development of mastery–affective practices would be strengthened through dedicated, in-person PD that provides structured modelling, guided experimentation, and opportunities for shared reflection.

While teachers may connect online, many remain professionally isolated in their schools, and in-person PD or collaborative planning sessions can help reduce this isolation by enabling teachers to collectively refine approaches to balancing mastery and affective support. Further investigation is also recommended to examine how SE is co-developed in Japanese language teaching, including how mastery, affect, and task design interact in high-distance language contexts. Such research could help inform evidence-based tools and practices that teachers can confidently adopt to support SE development.

6.2 Limitations

This study was limited by its small sample size, with only five interview participants, restricting the generalisability of the findings. A self-selection bias may also have been present, as participants volunteered via a follow-up questionnaire option, potentially attracting teachers with stronger beliefs or confidence in their strategies. The study relied entirely on self-reported data, which is susceptible to memory error and social desirability influences. Although the questionnaire informed interview design, it was not analysed systematically, meaning perspectives from the wider respondent group were not fully represented. The decision to employ Bandura's four sources of SE as the primary analytic framework may have constrained interpretation by foregrounding particular mechanisms over others. Finally, because the categorisation of mixed-sourced beliefs and strategies required interpretive judgement, some classifications may reflect researcher bias, especially given the limited dataset and the complexity of tracing how teachers integrate experience, identity, and belief into practice.

6.3 Final Thoughts

This study began from a practical concern—how to sustain learner belief in the face of a linguistically distant language—and it shows that teachers report organising mastery experiences and emotional framing to keep progress perceptible and credible. The findings highlight the importance of broad and inclusive interpretations of mastery, including cultural engagement and authentic communicative experiences, in supporting learner confidence and engagement. Such approaches broaden what counts as success, allowing more learners to experience progress as attainable within Japanese language classrooms.

Rather than proposing new theoretical models, this study offers a contextualised account of how established SE principles are enacted in practice by Japanese language teachers in New Zealand secondary schools. By foregrounding teachers' lived experiences and reported classroom strategies, the research provides insight into how SE is fostered in settings characterised by linguistic distance and limited exposure.

While the findings are necessarily bounded by the study's small scale and qualitative design, they underscore the value of reflective, experience-informed teaching practices in supporting learner SE. Future research may build on these insights by further examining how beliefs, strategies, and contextual constraints interact to shape SE development in Japanese language learning.

In closing, this study returns to its original aim of clarifying how teachers understand and support learner SE in Japanese language classrooms, offering a grounded contribution to practice-focused research in SLA and Japanese language education.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Questionnaire

Shaun Glasier's Masters Thesis Questionnaire

Welcome to my research thesis questionnaire! I am investigating teachers' reported beliefs about improving students beliefs regarding their ability to learn and continue to learn Japanese.

- Please answer as honestly as possible.
- A summary of all participants answers will be included in the final thesis
- You will not be able to be identified from any reported information.
- No information will be shared with anyone else without your permission.
- Completion of this questionnaire is an indication of consent.

Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire - I really do appreciate it!

1. To what age groups have you taught Japanese language?
(may select more than 1 option)

- [ ] Preschool years (below 5 years old)
- [ ] Junior level Primary school (Kindergarten and Grade/Year 1 or NZ Year 1 - 2)
- [ ] Senior level Primary school (Grade/Year 2 – 5 or NZ Year 3 - 6)
- [ ] Intermediate school (Grade/Year 6 – 7)
- [ ] Junior level high school (Grade/Year 8 – 9 or NZ Year 9 - 10)
- [ ] Senior level high school (Grade/Year 10 – 12 or NZ Year 11 - 13)
- [ ] University students studying Japanese language
- [ ] Adult learners

2. What other subjects have you taught/are you teaching?
(may select more than 1 option)

- [ ] English (ESL, TESOL)
- [ ] English literature
- [ ] Language(s)
- [ ] Social Sciences (history, geography etc)
- [ ] Mathematics
- [ ] Fine arts
- [ ] Technology
- [ ] Other (please specify)

3. What do you believe are some unique challenges in learning Japanese language compared to other teaching areas?
(may select more than 1 option)

- [ ] Necessity to learn new character scripts/alphabets
- [ ] Getting students to understand unique cultural ideas considerably different to our own.
- [ ] Getting students to understand unique language features, expressions and words not found in English
- [ ] Other (please specify)

4. Tick the top 3 items that you as an educator find challenging to teach Japanese to students:

- [ ] Reading comprehension
- [ ] Cultural understanding and etiquette
- [ ] Listening comprehension
- [ ] Formal speaking
- [ ] Formal writing
- [ ] Other (please specify)

5. In your opinion, what are the main reasons students continue to learn Japanese? (Tick up to 3)

- [ ] Desire to go on the school trip to Japan
- [ ] Intentions to continue studying overseas or at tertiary level
- [ ] Students want to stay in class with friends (who have decided to continue)
- [ ] Intrinsic enjoyment in learning the language
- [ ] Parents pressure students to continue
- [ ] Foreseeable opportunity to visit Japan in the future.
- [ ] Interest in Japanese pop culture
- [ ] Interest in traditional Japanese culture and history
- [ ] Other (please specify)

6. Tick the top 3 areas which students find easiest to gain a sense they can achieve success in Japanese:

- [ ] Reading comprehension
- [ ] Cultural understanding and etiquette
- [ ] Listening comprehension
- [ ] Formal speaking
- [ ] Formal writing
- [ ] Other (please specify)

7. In your opinion, what are the main reasons students quit learning Japanese?

- [ ] Prioritise other subjects over language learning
- [ ] Japanese language is perceived as too difficult
- [ ] Timetabling issues and issues relating to accessibility to learning the language
- [ ] Parental and family pressures to quit or prioritise other subjects
- [ ] Don't see Japanese helping in your future career
- [ ] No foreseeable opportunity to visit Japan
- [ ] Friends quit first – peer pressure
- [ ] Other (please specify)

8. List at least 3 strategies you use or have used which you believe enhance students self-belief in their ability to succeed in Japanese language:

- [ ] Clear learning and study objectives
- [ ] Supportive and constructive feedback
- [ ] Realistic role play using learnt language
- [ ] Self-regulatory learning strategies
- [ ] Other (please specify)

9. Would you be interested in taking part in a research interview about student self-belief improvement strategies in Japanese language?

- [ ] No
- [ ] Yes (please enter email address)

Appendix Two: Interview Guide Questions

JOURNEY	*1 Teaching journey* - *Prompt learn, lead teaching*	**Could you tell me about your journey to becoming a Japanese teacher? What prompted you to start learning Japanese (English)? How did you get to teaching Japanese from there?**
	2 Beliefs about confidence and importance	**I happen to think that having confidence in ourselves when we are learning a language, in other words believing that we CAN learn, is very important.** **What are your thoughts about that?**
	3 Had confidence as learner - *Areas excel* - *Areas struggle*	**Would you say you had that confidence when you were learning English/Japanese? In what areas did you excel or struggle?**
	4 Aha moment when self-belief improved - *Strategy, area* - *What changed*	**Was there an 'aha' moment where you found a strategy or there was a moment you really noticed your belief that you can learn Japanese improve? What happened?**
	5 How reflections inform teaching	**How do your reflections about the challenges and successes you faced with regards to improved self-belief inform your teaching today?**
LESSON AND STRATEGIES	*6 Typical lesson* - *Tasks, routines*	**Take me through a typical lesson for you. What does it look like?**
	7 Students' confidence - *Areas, example, impression*	**What would you say is students' overall confidence in using Japanese in a typical lesson? What gives you that impression?**

	*8 **How strategies implemented* - *Example* - *Others?*	**You specifically mention X, Y and Z as strategies for improving self-belief. I'd be interested to know how you implement these in your classroom. Are there any others?**
CHALLENGES	*9** Challenges and unique challenges, exactly makes difficult* - *Past experiences of teaching*	***You mention some things you find challenging about teaching. What exactly is it that makes it difficult to teach?***
	10 Challenges affect beliefs - *Examples, how*	***How would you say these challenges effect students' beliefs? Can you give me some examples?***
	11 Strategies to combat challenges - *Successes?* - *How improved beliefs? Examples*	***What strategies have you used to combat these challenges? Have you had any successes, and how have they improved the students' self-belief?***
QUITTING	*12 ** Sense when quitting* - *What do?*	You mention some reasons students quit Japanese. Do you sense when someone is going to quit? What do you do when you do?
	13 Successfully dissuade - *What look like?* - *Doesn't work?*	Have you successfully dissuaded anyone? What did that look like? What doesn't work?
	14 Underlying reason cannot see being able to - *Thoughts?* - *Experience?*	I believe that an underlying reason for quitting Japanese for many students is that they cannot see themselves being able to learn it, whether its conversation, writing, listening – could be anything. Do you agree, and what does your experience tell you?
	15 How improve belief to stop quitting - *Successes?*	I'm interested in hearing how you improve students' belief to keep them from quitting? What successes have you had?

OTHER SUBJECTS	*16 Other subjects informed*	You mention that you teach/have taught subjects other than Japanese. In what ways have they informed your Japanese teaching?
	17 Strategies adapted - *What are they?*	Are there any specific strategies that you use/used while teaching other subjects that you also use or have adapted for teaching Japanese? What are they?
	18 Improved confidence using strategies	Have you seen an improved confidence in students after using these strategies? Tell me a bit about that.
APPEALING ASPECTS	*19 ** aspects appeal motivate* - *Consciously integrate* - *How?*	I see you believe there are some aspects of learning Japanese that tend to appeal to the students and that help keeping them motivated to study, such as X, Y and Z. Do you consciously try to integrate some of these elements and if so, how?
	20 How affect self-belief - ***Example?*** - ***Impression?***	How does implementing these effect students' self-belief and confidence? What gives you that impression?

MASTERY EXPERIENCES	*21 Experience of mastering a skill belief improves* - ***Thoughts?***	I believe that if you can give students an experience of mastering a task or skill their belief that they can learn Japanese improves. What are your thoughts about that?
	22 How students experience success - *Time or strategy?*	I'm interested in how you get students to experience success in Japanese. Could you tell me about a time or strategy where students were able to master a task?
AUTONOMY	*23 take control of learning* - *Thoughts about giving autonomy to students*	I'm a big believer in getting students to take control of their own learning in Japanese. I get students to record themselves questions and answers so they can practise responding to questions without hesitation, for example. What are your thoughts on self-regulation? What does that look like in your teaching?
	24 Give students' opportunity to influence learning - *Decide topics?*	I'm interested in what opportunities you give students to decide what or how they learn. Do they get to choose what order topics are taught, or how they can present their projects, for example?
	25 Take ownership of learning improve self-belief - ***Thoughts?***	Do you agree that students who take ownership of their learning tend to have greater self-belief when learning Japanese? What are your thoughts?
	26 improvement giving autonomy	Have you seen improvements in self-belief when giving students more autonomy? What strategies have worked? What doesn't?
WORDS AND FEEDBACK	***27 right people right word, feedback or encouragement*** - ***Thoughts?*** - ***Experiences?***	I have found that when the right people say the right words, my self-belief increases, and the opposite is also true. Tell me about your experiences with getting the right or wrong words from people with regards to learning Japanese?
	28 Informed teaching	In what ways have these experiences informed your teaching of Japanese?

	29 Feedback style - ***Examples***	How would describe your feedback style? What are some examples of what you say to the students?
	30 Opportunities to receive feedback from peers - ***Example, strategies*** - ***What form?***	Do your students get opportunities to receive feedback from their peers? If so, in what form?
	31 Feedback and encouragement cultivate student confidence - *How so?* - *Experience* - *Impression*	Do you think feedback and encouragement in general are useful when it comes to cultivate your students' confidence in their abilities? How so?
MODELS	*32 Learning journey, role model* - *Effect self-belief*	In your language learning journey, who has been a real role model for you? In what ways have showed you how to learn languages and made you feel you can actually do this?
	33 Impacted teaching - *What ways?*	Has this impacted how you teach Japanese? In what ways?
	34 Model students – utilise consciously	Tell me about your model students – students who demonstrate how to do tasks well. Do you utilise them? How?
	35 Students build confidence or make feel can't do	Do you feel that these students help other build confidence in other students by showing them how to do it? How so?
ASSESSMENT	*36 Assessment stressful lack belief* - *Experiences, informed*	Assessment time is very stressful and often students lack self-belief that they can do well.
	37 What works success possible	What have you found works to see that success is possible?
GOAL SETTING	*38 Goal setting impact self-belief*	In your opinion, how does goal setting impact self-belief in your teaching and learning experience.
	39 Goal setting look like - *Students set own goals*	I'm interested in what goal setting looks like in your teaching. Do the students set their own goals?
EVENTS	*38 School trips, events competitions* - *School calendar*	Tell me about school trips, events, competitions for Japanese language

	- *Experiences inform*	in your teaching experience. What is your school calendar like?
	39 Impact on self-belief - *Seen a change in students* - *Impression?* - *Examples?*	How do they influence students' self-belief? Have you used these events to highlight that students CAN learn Japanese? What specifically?
	40 Consciously highlight successes - *Examples* - *Impact on self-belief*	Do you consciously highlight students' successes after these events? Can you give me some examples? How does that impact their self-belief?
CLASS ATMOSPHERE	*41 Atmosphere affects self-belief by setting a positive or negative mood* - *Thoughts?* - *Experiences?*	I believe that the atmosphere of the classroom effects students' beliefs in themselves because they can relax or be overwhelmed depending on the atmosphere? What do you believe?
	42 Words students say classroom environment - *Students support another?* - *Examples?*	Tell me about your classroom environment. Would you say that the students support one another? How do these influence students' mood?
	43 Relationship with students - *Words?*	I'm interested in hearing about your relationships with your students. What words would students use to describe you as a teacher?
	44 What ways relationship impact self-belief - *Examples?*	In what ways would you say your relationship impacts their self-belief? Could you give me some examples?
	45 Change classroom, students, layout - *Impact on self-belief*	Tell me about when you changed classrooms or the layout such as desks or posters – perhaps you changed schools or were taught a different class. Was there a change in students' confidence in learning? What happened?

Appendix Three: Ethics Approval

TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA | MASSEY UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

19/06/2024

Dear: Shaun Glasier

Re: Low Risk Notification - 4000029230 - Exploring teacher beliefs and strategies for improved self-efficacy in Japanese language learners.

Thank you for submitting a low risk notification for your research/teaching/evaluation.

This email is to acknowledge receipt of the low risk notification and to inform you that the details of your project have been recorded in our database for inclusion in the annual reports to the Health Research Council Ethics Committee (HRCEC) and the Massey University Research Committee (URC).

You may proceed with your research, though it is advisable to provide a couple of weeks before commencing, as all low risk notifications are checked for completeness and clarity by a Research Ethics Advisor. You may be contacted if your application is incomplete and/or further clarification is required.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis.

If a sponsoring organisation, funding authority (e.g., the Health Research Council) or a journal require evidence of ethical approval from a Human Ethics Committee (with an approval number), you need to complete a full Massey University Human Ethics application to be reviewed and approved by one of our Human Ethics Committees. Applications must be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of the research.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Research Ethics Office, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz. "

Please include the following statement on all public documents (e.g., information sheet, consent form) related to your project:

> ***This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.***
>
> ***If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Massey University Human Ethics by email: humanethics@massey.ac.nz.***

I wish you all the best in your research, teaching or evaluation activities and appreciate your thoughtful consideration of ethics principles and practices.

Ngā mihi nui,

Professor Tracy Riley
Acting Chair, Research Ethics Chair's Committee

Research Ethics, Graduate Research School and Ethics
Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz; animalethics@massey.ac.nz
www.massey.ac.nz/research/ethics

Appendix Four: Interviewee Information Form and Consent Form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

Exploring teacher beliefs and strategies for improved self-efficacy in Japanese language learners

INFORMATION SHEET

Who am I?
Kia ora. I am Shaun Glasier, a Hawke's Bay Japanese teacher currently studying for my Master's degree in Applied Linguistics. I am conducting research to investigate the beliefs and strategies of teachers of Japanese in effectively improving the self-beliefs of their students. In other words, I'm interested in the experiences of Japanese language teachers in helping students develop a 'can-do' attitude to any of the many elements of learning Japanese.

Why are you reading this?
As someone who has indicated that they would like to be involved in further stages of the projects, I am contacting you to ask you to take part in a face-to-face interview to discuss some of your experiences with improved can-do beliefs and strategies as a teacher of Japanese. For this stage of the project we are interviewing 5 participants, who, like you, have are current or former secondary teachers of Japanese.

What if you say yes?
If you accept the invitation to take part in the interview, I will be in touch via email to set a date/time/place to suit you. The interview should not take longer than 45 minutes to 1 hour. If you wish to break this up into two 20 to 30 minute interviews, this can be arranged. Questions will cover your own experience in improving self-efficacy – belief that one can complete a task – in teaching, learning and in your own personal life.

With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed by myself. All data will be managed and stored securely and anonymously. In the case of wishing to interview via Zoom, the interview will be video and audio-recorded. All information you offer will be anonymized to protect your privacy, and may be used in academic publications (journals, books, etc.) It will be stored for a maximum of 5 years, and then it will be destroyed.

What are your rights?
You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question
- withdraw from the study (up until the day before the interview)
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

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What if I still have questions?

If you have any questions you'd like to discuss before, during or after your involvement in this project, please do not hesitate to contact us:

Shaun Glasier
Post Graduate student for MAppLing
shaun.glasier@[redacted]
[redacted]@massey.ac.nz

Human Ethics Approval

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Massey University Human Ethics by email: humanethics@massey.ac.nz

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TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read, or have had read to me, and I understand the Information Sheet. I have had the details of the study explained to me, any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

1. I agree to the interview being sound recorded (or video and sound recorded if via Zoom)
2. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Declaration by Participant:

I,_____ hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____