Environment and Social Psychology (2024) Volume 9 Issue 8
doi: 10.59429/esp.v9i8.2761

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Investigating English language teachers' sentiments, attitudes, and concerns about inclusive education

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ABSTRACT

While general and special education teachers' sentiments, attitudes, and concerns about inclusive education have been extensively researched in recent years, little is known about English language teachers' views on inclusive education. This is a critical research gap, as students with disabilities can face many unique barriers to learning a foreign language compared to other subject areas, and teachers' views on inclusive education impact their ability to teach inclusively. However, many English language teachers have reported feeling unprepared to teach students with disabilities. Using postsecondary English language teachers in Japan as a case, the present research employed a modified version of the Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised Scale (SACIE-R; N = 239). Respondents had a generally positive view of including students with disabilities in their instruction but were concerned about lacking knowledge and skills to teach inclusively and giving appropriate attention to all students in an inclusive classroom. Predictive factors included previous interactions with people with disabilities and inclusive practices self-efficacy, though both were overshadowed by the relationship that participation in pre- and in-service training to teach students with disabilities had with teachers' views. The results have implications for how to best prepare English language teachers to teach inclusively, particularly as pertains to in-service training.

Keywords: EFL; higher education; inclusive education; teacher training; TESOL

1. Introduction

Equitable and inclusive education is a human right[1]. In an effort to safeguard this right worldwide, the United Nations included Sustainable Development Goal 4 in its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, though there remains a need to properly train teachers to teach inclusively[2]. In the fields of general and special education, a number of studies have shown that teachers' views on inclusive education and students with disabilities (SWDs) impact their ability to teach inclusively. Furthermore, these views can be influenced by a variety of factors from gender to policy awareness and teacher training[3-5]. However, there have been no large-scale investigations into the preparedness of English language teachers (ELTs) to teach inclusively. This is an important research gap to fill for several reasons.

Firstly, language learning presents many unique barriers to SWDs, especially those with specific learning difficulties (SLDs). Language learners with SLDs can have difficulties with cognitive aspects of language

ARTICLE INFO
Received: 16 April 2024 | Accepted: 30 May 2024 | Available online: 26 August 2024

CITATION
Young D. Investigating English language teachers' sentiments, attitudes, and concerns about inclusive education. *Environment and Social Psychology* 2024; 9(8): 2761. doi: 10.59429/esp.v9i8.2761

learning like working memory, phonological retention, automatization of language forms, processing written and/or spoken input, and producing written and/or spoken output[6]. There is also evidence demonstrating that these cognitive factors interact with affective factors of language learning, particularly anxiety, for students with SLDs[6-11]. Anxiety can then further influence learning of and performance in a foreign language[12-13]. This interplay between cognitive and affective factors in language learning can create a vicious cycle for students with SLDs, spiraling to negatively affect language learning motivation, acquisition, and achievement[6-7]. The relationship between anxiety and achievement in language learning can also take the form of a feedback loop in which anxiety and achievement negatively reinforce each other[8,14]. Students' self-worth or self-esteem may also be negatively impacted, and this can extend beyond the language learning classroom[6,15]. Despite these barriers, many if not most ELTs lack training in special education or inclusive practices and sizable percentages of them have reported feeling unprepared to teach SWDs[16-25], though little is known about how ELTs as a group view such students or their inclusion in English language learning environments.

Teacher education and involvement are vital components of the success of inclusive education in any given context. There is a wide body of research spanning decades that has shown how important teachers' views on inclusive education are to their perceived and actual ability to implement inclusive practices, and that these views can be influenced by a variety of factors such as training in special or inclusive education and inclusive practices self-efficacy[26-28]. The Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised Scale (SACIE-R)[4] is a commonly used instrument for measuring the three psychometric constructs listed in its name. These constructs are "central to the rationale underlying a teacher's beliefs and support for and engagement with inclusive practices"[4] (p. 59). The first factor, sentiments, is defined by Forlin et al. as "sentiments about engaging with people with disabilities"[4] (p. 59). The attitudes subscale captures "acceptance of learners with different support needs"[4] (p. 59). Concerns are defined simply as "concerns about inclusive education"[4] (p. 59).

Several factors have been identified as having correlative and/or predictive relationships with these three constructs in previous administrations of the SACIE-R among general educators. Teachers who report a higher degree of confidence teaching SWDs, for instance, also have more positive views of inclusive education as measured by the SACIE-R[29-37], as do teachers with more experience teaching SWDs[5,32,37-39], more previous interactions with people with disabilities[5,31,33-35,40], higher inclusive practices self-efficacy[5,41-42], and knowledge of local legislation[30,33-35,37]. Several studies using the SACIE-R among general education teachers have also noted the effect that pre- and in-service teacher training in inclusive practices have on improving respondents' views of inclusive education[4-5,33-34,37,39-40,43-45].

As with teachers in general education, ELTs' views on inclusive education have some relationship with their ability and self-efficacy to teach inclusively[25,46-48], and inclusive practices self-efficacy has been associated with ELTs' readiness to teach SWDs[25,49]. However, no large-scale survey of such teachers' views of inclusive education and the factors which may influence them has been conducted. In order to help gain such an understanding, the present research inquiry was undertaken in an attempt to answer the following research question: what are ELTs' sentiments, attitudes, and concerns about inclusive education, and what factors may influence them?

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Instrument

The SACIE-R was selected for the present research for a number of reasons. Firstly, it has an established reliability across multiple languages and cultural environments. The SACIE-R has been widely used in general

and special education, and translated versions have been validated in a number of different languages[4-5,29-30,32-37,39-40,42-45,50-57]. However, the SACIE-R has been used to a far lesser extent in postsecondary education[38,41,55], and no studies using the SACIE-R for language education specifically could be located. Secondly, Ewing et al.[3] found in a review of nine questionnaires designed to capture primary teachers' views on inclusion that the SACIE-R was one of only two such instruments that adequately addressed the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of teachers' attitudes. Navarro-Mateu et al.[39] also assert that the SACIE-R has the highest degree of academic support among the various instruments used around the world for assessing teachers' views of inclusive education. Finally, the neutral nature of the three psychometric constructs—sentiments, attitudes, and concerns—means that meaningful results for one subscale can be considered so long as it has an acceptable degree of inter-item reliability regardless of the reliability of the other two subscales. This was an essential consideration in selecting the SACIE-R for the present research purposes because the items related to the attitudes factor required modification owing to several differences between general L1 education, for which the original SACIE-R was created, and postsecondary language learning environments. These revisions are captured below in **Table 1**, which precedes a rationale for the revisions. All items on both versions of the SACIE-R are answered on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. There are fifteen items total with five items per factor.

Table 1. Comparison of attitudes factor items in the original and revised SACIE-R.

Item number	Original SACIE-R	Revised SACIE-R
1	Students who have difficulty expressing their thoughts verbally should be in regular classes.	Students who have excessive difficulty comprehending English-language input should receive accommodations in their English-language classes.
2	Students who frequently fail exams should be in regular classes.	Students who have excessive difficulty producing English-language output should receive accommodations in their English-language classes.
3	Students who are inattentive should be in regular classes.	Students who are inattentive should receive accommodations in their English-language classes.
4	Students who need an individualized academic program should be in regular classes.	Students who disclose a disability to their school should receive accommodations in their English language classes.
5	Students who require communicative technologies (for example Braille and sign language) should be in regular classes.	Students who require communicative technologies (e.g. Braille and sign language) should receive accommodations in their English-language classes.

The term "regular classes" in the SACIE-R is problematic for higher educational contexts because there are no segregated, special education classes in higher education as there are in primary and secondary education. Rather, SWDs either receive accommodations or do not based on whether or not they have self-identified to their institution and requested them. In addition, the term "regular classes" could be interpreted by language teachers to mean content classes (i.e., classes that do not aim to improve proficiency in a second or foreign language). Therefore, the term "should be in regular classes" from the SACIE-R was replaced with "should receive accommodations in their English-language classes" for all five items comprising the attitudes subscale. The term "accommodations" was selected because it evokes relevant local and international policy language, specifically Japan's Act on the Elimination of Disability Discrimination and the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In addition, language teachers are often unable to determine whether low language proficiency is related to an SLD owing in part to the array of cognitive and affective factors that complicate language learning for students with SLDs[6,58]. As language learners universally experience difficulty expressing their thoughts verbally in the target language at one time or another, the phrasing of attitudes item 1 on the SACIE-R was deemed unfit for use in the present research context. Regarding attitudes item 2, language teachers may interpret "exams" as placement tests, proficiency tests, or summative assessments, and this ambiguity would reduce the item's validity by allowing respondents to answer differently depending on how they interpreted the term. Attitudes item 4 was revised because individual education plans are rare in Japanese higher education, whereas "reasonable accommodations" for self-identified SWDs are common and can encompass individual education plans.

2.2. Case context

Legal requirements for service provision to SWDs vary from country to country and by level of education, and awareness of these requirements has been shown to correlate with or predict teachers' sentiments, attitudes, and concerns about inclusive education in previous administrations of the SACIE-R[30,32-37,42,54]. Additionally, it has been proposed that differences in educational systems across countries can impact results of the SACIE-R[56]. To control for the influence of local and international policy, postsecondary education in Japan, which has different policy guidance compared to compulsory education, was selected as a case for this research inquiry.

Based on World Bank benchmarks for equity policies in higher education, Japan is considered to still be developing[59]. There is also evidence to suggest that institutional policy, which should in theory comply with national legal requirements, is not always clearly communicated to ELTs[25,60]. The rights of postsecondary SWDs in Japan are protected by the Act for Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (AEDPD), which has been in effect since April 1, 2016. The AEDPD primarily covers discrimination in business and government, though there are some provisions covering higher education institutions. However, the original wording of the AEDPD is rather insufficient in its guidance, stating only that SWDs be provided with "reasonable accommodations," a term borrowed from the international policy guidance but not clearly defined in the AEDPD itself[61]. Until the AEDPD, higher education institutions had no legal obligation to provide education or support to SWDs in any way[62]. Universities in Japan also have a policy of *selective inclusion* wherein SWDs only receive support if they officially disclose their disability to the school and request accommodations[63]. For the 2022 academic year, the Japan Student Services Organization reported the highest ever number of self-disclosed SWDs: 49,672, or 1.53% of the total postsecondary student population nationwide[64].

2.3. Data collection and analysis

For reasons detailed above, ELTs working in this case context were recruited using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling by contacting local chapters and special interest groups of the Japan Association for Language Teaching and 61 postsecondary English language programs for which contact information could be located, as well as by posting to two relevant Facebook groups for ELTs in Japan. All respondents gave informed consent. The final number of eligible respondents was 239, exceeding the recommended range of 100-200 respondents for narrowly defined scales of 20 items or fewer, as well as the recommended response-to-item ratio of between five and ten to one for such scales[65].

A data treatment plan was devised in advance, beginning with generating descriptive statistics of background information and SACIE-R results, followed by checking internal reliability of the SACIE-R. It is important to note that concerns items 4 and 5 were removed during confirmatory factor analysis in the current

administration of the SACIE-R due to their low factor loadings and to improve goodness of fit. Cronbach's alphas of the final version were .675 for sentiments, .816 for attitudes, .667 for concerns, and .785 for the total scale. These values are at the midpoint of reported alphas for both the total scale and the subscales of sentiments and concerns compared to other identified studies that used the SACIE-R[4-5,29-45,50-56]. The alpha for the revised attitudes subscale is higher than average. This administration of the SACIE-R was therefore deemed to have sufficient inter-item reliability and goodness of fit for the present data set.

Confirmatory factor analysis was to then be performed to check the factor loadings of the modified attitudes items and goodness of fit. Additional descriptive statistical analysis to generate mean scores and standard deviations for the revised SACIE-R and its subscales would then be conducted. Spearman's correlations were then to be calculated to gain a better overall view of the data and determine the strength and significance of relationships between all ordinal background variables, the latent factors for inclusive practices self-efficacy, and sentiments, attitudes, and concerns. Spearman's rho was selected over Pearson's in advance because the background items on the 5-point Likert scale 4-point items on the SACIE-R should all be treated as ordinal and not continuous due to their small number and the possible disparity in respondents' variation in interpreting these values.

Individual one-way ANOVAs between the categorical responses on gender, age by group, and nationality and the respondents' sentiments, attitudes, and concerns were to be calculated to determine if there was a significant difference on these subscales by the groups contained within these categories. Similarly, t-tests were to be used to determine if there were significant differences in mean scores for sentiments, attitudes, and concerns according to what qualifications, pre-service training, and in-service training respondents had received. Welch's t-tests were ultimately selected owing to the disproportionality between the sizes across groups.

Finally, and if its assumptions had not been violated, multiple linear regression analysis (MLR) was to be performed to determine if and to what extent the ordinal background variables and inclusive practices self-efficacy could predict sentiments, attitudes, and concerns. Most of these background variables were included due to their correlational or predictive value as independent variables on teachers' sentiments, attitudes, and concerns in previous administrations of the SACIE-R. These included respondents' degree of interactions with people with disabilities, knowledge of local legislation and policy for teaching SWDs, confidence teaching SWDs, and experience teaching SWDs based on a review of the relevant literature. Knowledge of global policy was included on the basis that such policy guides postsecondary policy in Japan, and with consideration for the international representation among respondents. Additionally, the latent factor of inclusive practices self-efficacy was included on the basis that, in several other studies using the SACIE-R, self-efficacy implementing inclusive practices was shown to correlate with[5,41,43] or predict[42] teachers' views on inclusive education. This factor combined three background items on respondents' self-reported knowledge of, confidence using, and experience using inclusive practices.

It should be noted that the MLR treated these background items as continuous scale items rather than ordinal. However, the decision to conduct the MLR was made in order to compare the current results with a selection of other studies using this approach with the SACIE-R, specifically Agavelyan et al.[29], Tahsein and Ahsan[36], and Poon et al.[34], and to a lesser extent Li and Cheung[43], who used a hierarchical linear regression in their data treatment. Additionally, the derivation of the three factors of sentiments, attitudes, and concerns through principle component analysis abstracted responses from the original ordinal scale represented by the survey items on the SACIE-R, thus precluding ordinal logistic regression.

The assumptions of an MLR were first checked by conducting scatterplot analysis within Stata to confirm the linear relationship between each independent variable with each of the dependent variables. This also suggested good homoscedasticity overall. Additional testing for heteroskedasticity after a regular MLR revealed high homoscedasticity for sentiments and questionable levels of heteroskedasticity for attitudes and concerns. As the Spearman's correlation matrix between these variables showed no correlation coefficients with a magnitude above .8, however, the sample had sufficiently low multicollinearity to justify the MLR. A robust MLR was run to compensate for the presence of outliers and correct for nonnormality.

3. Results

3.1. Background information

Of the 239 eligible respondents, 94 (39.3%) were female, 136 (56.9%) were male, three (1.3%) were nonbinary, and five (2.1%) preferred not to say; four (1.7%) were aged 20-29, 60 (25.1%) were aged 30-39, 70 (29.3%) were aged 40-49, 74 (30.1%) were aged 50-59, and 40 (16.7%) were 60 or older. The respondents also represented a wide diversity of nationalities, with the greatest representation coming from the United States (n = 102, 42.7%). There were also 49 respondents from the United Kingdom (20.5%), 26 from Japan (10.9%), 18 from Canada (7.5%), 15 from Australia (6.3%), eight from New Zealand (3.3%), six from Ireland (2.5%). Eighteen other countries were also represented by three or fewer respondents each, and fifteen respondents reported dual- or multi-citizenship.

The most common listed qualification held was an MA in TESOL, Applied Linguistics, or similar (n = 129, 54%), followed by TEFL/TESL certification or diploma (e.g. CELTA, DELTA, DipTESOL (n = 81, 33.9%), other MA (n = 48, 20.1%), MA in education or similar (n = 35, 14.6%), PhD/EdD in TESOL, Applied Linguistics, or similar (n = 35, 14.6%), other PhD (n = 18, 7.5%), PhD/EdD in education or similar (n = 17, 7.1%), or none of those listed (n = 9, 3.8%). A total of 203 (84.9%) of respondents reported no training to teach SWDs when receiving any of their listed qualifications, while 108 (45.2%) reported never participating in in-service professional development to teach SWDs. The most commonly reported form of such training was doing independent reading or research (n = 76, 31.2%), followed by training conducted within the workplace (n = 52, 21.8%), attending conference presentations, workshops, or talks (n = 49, 20.5%), and engaging in a community of practice such as a special interest group dedicated to serving SWDs (n = 17, 7.1%).

3.2. Descriptive analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to generate mean scores and standard deviations for each item on the revised SACIE-R. These are displayed in **Table 2**. As reverse coding was performed on all observed variables for the constructs of sentiments and concerns, all subscales became positively geared. Therefore, any mean score above 2.5 can be viewed as positive in terms of the sample's views on inclusive education for SWDs. The mean score of the total SACIE-R was 2.98 (SD = 0.98). For the subscales, the mean was 3.23 (SD = 0.92) for sentiments, 3.24 (SD = 0.84) for attitudes, and 2.59 (SD = 0.92) for concerns. It can be said, then, that the respondents in the data set had positive sentiments towards persons with disabilities, as well as positive views about their inclusion in English language education. However, they were more neutral regarding their concerns about inclusive education.

Table 2. Mean scores of individual items on the SACIE-R.

Factor and item number	Item (5-point Likert scale; an asterisk indicates the item was reverse coded)	*M*	*SD*
Sentiments item 1	I find it difficult to overcome my initial shock when meeting people with severe physical disabilities.*	3.55	0.65
Sentiments item 2	I am afraid to look a person with a disability straight in the face.*	3.74	0.55
Sentiments item 3	I tend to make contacts with people with disabilities brief and I finish them as quickly as possible.*	3.46	0.7
Sentiments item 4	I would feel terrible if I had a disability.*	2.67	0.97
Sentiments item 5	I dread the thought that I could eventually end up with a disability.*	2.72	1.02
Attitudes item 1	Students who have excessive difficulty comprehending English-language input should receive accommodations in their English-language classes.	3.13	0.86
Attitudes item 2	Students who have excessive difficulty producing English-language output should receive accommodations in their English-language classes.	3.38	0.73
Attitudes item 3	Students who are inattentive should receive accommodations in their English-language classes.	2.61	0.85
Attitudes item 4	Students who require communicative technologies (e.g. Braille and sign language) should receive accommodations in their English-language classes.	3.63	0.64
Attitudes item 5	Students who disclose a disability to their school should receive accommodations in their English language classes.	3.47	0.68
Concerns item 1	I am concerned that my workload will increase if I have students with disabilities in my class.*	2.57	0.94
Concerns item 2	I am concerned that it will be difficult to give appropriate attention to all students in an inclusive classroom.*	2.27	0.91
Concerns item 3	I am concerned that I will be more stressed if I have students with disabilities in my class.*	2.92	0.92
Concerns item 4	I am concerned that students with disabilities will not be accepted by the rest of the class.*	2.56	0.96
Concerns item 5	I am concerned that I do not have knowledge and skills required to teach students with disabilities.*	2.11	0.91

3.3. Correlation analysis

Spearman's correlations were calculated to gain a better overall view of the data and determine the strength and significance of relationships between all ordinal background variables and respondents' sentiments, attitudes, and concerns (see **Table 3**). Cronbach's alpha for inclusive practices self-efficacy was 0.94, $p < .001$.

Table 3. Spearman's correlations (r = 237) of ordinal variables and latent factors.

Previous interactions with people with disabilities (1)	Knowledge of local laws (2)	Knowledge of global policy (3)	Confidence teaching SWDs (4)	Experience teaching SWDs (5)	Inclusive practices self-efficacy (6)	Sentiments (7)	Attitudes (8)	Concerns (9)
1.0000								
.27*** .000	1.000							
.272*** .000	.563*** .000	1.000						
.376*** .000	.386*** .000	.394*** .000	1.000					
.541*** .000	.335*** .000	.35*** .000	.558*** .000	1.000				
.444*** .000	.407*** .000	.532*** .000	.566*** .000	.527*** .000	1.000			
.285*** .000	.11 .09	.221*** .001	.178** .006	.228*** .000	.294*** .000	1.000		
.084 .195	.089 .173	.07 .283	.14* .03	.125 .054	.144* .026	.242*** .000	1.000	
.137* .035	.217** .001	.225*** .000	.225*** .001	.179** .006	.258*** .000	.398*** .000	.145* .025	1.000

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, and ***p < .001.

3.4. Factor analysis

The following groups had more positive sentiments about engaging with people with disabilities:

- Respondents who reported previous interactions with people with disabilities, R2 = .04, F(2, 236) = .000, p = .003
- Respondents with higher inclusive practices self-efficacy, R2 = .08, F(6, 232) = .001, p = .018
- Respondents who received training to teach SWDs while receiving an MA in TESOL, Applied Linguistics, or similar (n = 13), t(22.1) = 3.31, p = .003
- Respondents who received training to teach SWDs while receiving a PhD/EdD in Education or similar (n = 2), t(14.8) = 3.69, p = .002
- Respondents who received training to teach SWDs by attending conference presentations, workshops, or talks (n = 77), t(217.8) = 4.99, p < .001
- Respondents who received training to teach SWDs by engaging in a community of practice (n = 37), t(88.6) = 4.3, p < .001
- Respondents who received training to teach SWDs by doing independent reading or research (n = 85), t(216.4) = 3.5, p = .001

The following groups had more positive attitudes about accepting learners with different support needs:

- Respondents who held an MA in TESOL, Applied Linguistics, or similar (n = 129), t(193.7) = 1.99, p = .048

- Respondents who received training to teach SWDs while receiving an MA in TESOL, Applied Linguistics, or similar (n = 15), t(35) = 3.18, p = .003
- Respondents who received training to teach SWDs while receiving a PhD/EdD in TESOL, Applied Linguistics, or similar (n = 10), t(25.4) = 2.41, p = .023
- Respondents who received training to teach SWDs by attending conference presentations, workshops, or talks (n = 77), t(178.9) = 2.59, p = .01
- Respondents who received training to teach SWDs by doing independent reading or research (n = 85), t(206.1) = 3.4, p = .001

The following groups had more positive concerns (i.e., smaller actual concern) about implementing inclusive education:

- Respondents who received training to teach SWDs while receiving an MA in TESOL, Applied Linguistics, or similar (n = 13), t(13.8) = 2.34, p = .035
- Respondents who received training to teach SWDs while receiving a PhD/EdD in TESOL, Applied Linguistics, or similar (n = 10), t(19.5) = 2.21, p = .039
- Respondents who received training to teach SWDs while receiving a PhD/EdD in Education or similar (n = 2), t(15.9) = 4.08, p = .001
- Those who received training to teach SWDs in any of the listed qualifications (n = 36), t(46.3) = 2.97, p = .005
- Those who received training to teach SWDs by attending conference presentations, workshops, or talks (n = 77), t(150.2) = 3.15, p = .002
- Those who received training to teach SWDs by engaging in a community of practice (n = 37), t(52.4) = 2.06, p = .045
- Those who received training to teach SWDs by doing independent reading or research (n = 85), t(176.5) = 2.83, p = .005

One group, respondents who held an MA in TESOL, Applied Linguistics, or similar had more negative, actual concern about implementing inclusive education, (n = 129), t(226.4) = 2.03, p = .044.

4. Discussion

The present research inquiry set out to determine ELTs' sentiments, attitudes, and concerns about inclusive education, as well as what factors might influence them. The descriptive analysis reveals that the respondents in the data set had positive sentiments towards people with disabilities, as well as positive attitudes about accepting learners with different support needs in English language education. However, they were more neutral regarding their concerns about implementing inclusive education. The only two survey items with a mean score below the midpoint were concerns item 2 ("I am concerned that it will be difficult to give appropriate attention to all students in an inclusive classroom", M = 2.27, SD = 0.91) and concerns item 5 ("I am concerned that I do not have knowledge and skills required to teach students with disabilities", M = 2.11, SD = 0.91), and so bearing in mind that the concerns subscale was reverse coded, these are obvious concerns among the data set regarding including SWDs in their instruction. The concern about lacking inclusive knowledge and skills parallels several previous studies in which ELTs reported feeling unprepared to teach students with disabilities[16-25], and accords with at least two other studies using the SACIE-R in general

education that showed a lack of inclusive teaching skills to be respondents' biggest concern[31,51]. It should be remembered, however, that concerns items 4 and 5 were removed from the model in the present study due to their low factor loading and to improve goodness of fit. Respondents were somewhat neutral regarding their concerns about an increasing workload and additional stress if they were to teach SWDs, while they were least concerned about such students being accepted by their peers.

Respondents overall also had positive attitudes about SWDs' inclusion in English language education, here defined as "acceptance of learners with different support needs"[4] (p. 59). The mean score (M = 3.24, SD = 0.84) for the modified attitudes subscale was higher than all but one[57] previous administration of the SACIE-R which reported subscale means, though this should be largely discounted considering that every item on the attitudes subscale for the present administration was revised to suit the current research context. Still, ELTs may be more accommodating of students with SLDs in particular because the struggles that those students may have often resemble common difficulties learning a foreign language, and/or because of an increased sensitivity to linguistic diversity[66], two factors which might help account for the very positive attitudes towards including learners with different support needs reported here. It is interesting to note, however, that attitudes item 3 ("Students who are inattentive should receive accommodations in their English-language classes", (M = 2.61, SD = 0.85) had a mean score only slightly above the midpoint. This might be because teachers in the sample data set do not associate inattentiveness with a disability, because they generally believe that a student's attention in class is their own responsibility or results from low motivation, some unknown reason or reasons, or a combination therein. Regardless, the descriptive analysis shows that the current pool of respondents has a generally positive view of including students with different support needs in their English language instruction.

The Spearman's correlation analysis suggests the importance of confidence teaching SWDs, experience teaching SWDs, and inclusive practices self-efficacy in relation to ELTs' sentiments, attitudes, and concerns. Additionally, previous interactions with people with disabilities and knowledge of both local and global policy had statistically significant correlations with sentiments and concerns, but not the modified attitudes subscale. While most of the background variables that correlated with the subscales in the present study were not found to be predictive through the robust MLR, previous interactions with people with disabilities and inclusive practices self-efficacy did predict sentiments. Several previous studies using the SACIE-R found the same correlative or predictive power for the importance of confidence teaching SWDs[29-37], experience teaching SWDs[5,32,37-39], inclusive practices self-efficacy[5,41-42], previous interactions with people with disabilities[5,31,33-35,40], and knowledge of local legislation[30,33-35,37], but not knowledge of global policy.

Several previous administrations of the SACIE-R among general education teachers have noted the importance of both pre-[4-5,33-34,37,39-40,43-45] and in-service teacher training[5,33-34,39,44]. The current findings have important implications for both forms of teacher training.

First of all, holders of an MA in TESOL, Applied Linguistics, or similar had more positive attitudes and negative concerns. However, such MA holders who did receive training to teach SWDs while earning their degree had more positive sentiments and concerns, meaning fewer actual concerns. There was no such divergence observed for any other form of pre-service teaching qualification in the current administration of the SACIE-R. Teachers who received training to teach SWDs while completing either a PhD in TESOL or Education had higher sentiments and attitudes and lower concerns, though these findings are likely because receiving such training at the doctoral level suggests a high degree of specialization in special or inclusive education. The discrepancy between holders of an MA in TESOL, Applied Linguistics, or similar and other respondents, as well as between those MA holders who received training to teach SWDs while earning their

degree and those who did not, underscores the need for MA TESOL and TESOL-related programs to better prepare their teacher trainees to effectively teach SWDs.

With regard for in-service training, Welch's t-tests found statistically significant relationships between almost all forms of in-service training to teach SWDs and at least one subscale. Two forms of in-service training—attending conference presentations, workshops, or talks and doing independent reading or research—had such relationships with sentiments, attitudes, and concerns. Receiving relevant training conducted within the workplace, however, did not have a significant relationship with any of the subscales. Viewed in total, these findings highlight the importance of teacher agency in participating in in-service training on teaching SWDs.

5. Conclusion

As this was the first modification of the SACIE-R for use among postsecondary ELTs, and because the respondents in the current sample represented such an international body, replication is needed. This need is made more acute through the consideration that differences in findings using the SACIE-R have been attributed to differences in educational systems and teacher training from country to country[56], and so repeat administrations with other groups of postsecondary ELTs, including in countries other than Japan, would further validate this modified version of the scale and add confidence to the findings reported here. As concerns items 4 and 5 were removed from the initial model to improve goodness of fit, alternative items capturing more common concerns among ELTs about implementing inclusive education could also be added during replication. In addition, future studies could investigate teachers' sentiments, attitudes, and concerns in relation to other constructs, most notably self-efficacy, for example using the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices Scale, as knowledge of inclusive education and self-perceived preparedness to implement inclusive practices has been shown to have a positive effect on the efficacy of inclusive practices in several mainstream teaching contexts[4,67-69].

There were also several limitations to the current study. Convenience sampling allowed for sampling bias, selection bias, and positivity bias, and so the findings may not be generalizable. The sample size and reduction of observable variables in the concerns subscale during the confirmatory factor analysis may have also resulted in overfitting the model. Finally, and crucially, the reliability of self-reporting on the SACIE-R has been questioned before, as some teachers may be unwilling to report beliefs that could be considered negative[54]. The results of the present study should be interpreted with these limitations in mind until further studies can corroborate or refute them.

Nevertheless, the findings discussed above demonstrate that the ELTs in the current data set have generally positive views about including SWDs, and also that training to teach such students plays a critical role in forming these views. As such, these findings can be added to a growing chorus of similar studies that have similarly called for more awareness-raising of the barriers that SWDs face in language learning, as well as more robust training in inclusive education and practices for ELTs worldwide. Graduate programs in TESOL and Applied Linguistics should provide more comprehensive training to teach English to students with a variety of support needs, and in-service ELTs should both seek out and demand more professional development opportunities related to inclusive teaching. It is hoped that the findings reported above will help future practitioners in English language education, especially teacher trainers and those in leadership positions, to make better informed decisions about preparing both pre- and in-service ELTs to implement inclusive education in their courses and classrooms.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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