

WESTERN EFL UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' CONSTRUCTION OF A SENSE OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AT A UNIVERSITY IN JAPAN

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Introduction:

Instructors in EFL from non-collectivist countries teaching in higher education in Japan have pedagogic and professional expectations shaped by their own personal, social and educational experiences (Clandinin & Connelly 2000). When negotiating new professional identities and adapting to foreign institutions the process of adaptation is determined by unique factors relevant to the institution and country in which they teach, e.g., classroom management, teaching context, student expectations (Coldren & Smith 1999; Connelly & Clandinin 1999; Beijjaard et al. 2004; Watson 2006). Given the importance of these factors this research paper explores how willing EFL instructors are to adopt practices (either pedagogic or conductivity related) which they perceive as divergent from established practices based on their beliefs and/or experience. Examining this process of adaptation, the research paper highlights the actualization of a reconstructed sense of professionalism through semi-structured interviews conducted with 18 western EFL instructors at a private university in Japan. Meeting not only student but also the institution's expectations, both in terms of professionalism within and outside of the classroom is what Archer (2008) refers to as 'playing the game'; in that one's role is focused on satisfying the criteria to allow oneself to be evaluated positively. Questions inquired about the following areas; motivation for becoming an EFL instructor, perceptions towards professionalism, involvement in professional development activities, and beliefs about pedagogic practice and what it means to be an EFL instructor in Japan (see Appendix).

English Instruction in Japanese Higher Education

The present research first offers an overview of the positions many western EFL instructors are employed in at Japanese universities. Working conditions and professional responsibilities will be generalized to offer context to their status and role in higher education. Also examined are less perceivable sociocultural influences which similarly (although without explicit stipulation)

impact on not only education institutions', but also students' perception of teaching performance and overall impression of teacher professionalism.

Regardless of major, all Japanese university students are required to take English language class (taught by a native English speaker) until the end of the first semester of the second year. This marks the completion of their eight-year language education for those who choose not to enrol in subsequent elective classes. The justification, according to the Ministry of Education (official name: The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) is for all young adults 'to acquire the *necessary* English skills (author's emphasis) required in a global economy'. The move to improve English proficiency has culminated in the Government's *Top Global University Project* which endeavours to increase the international ranking and attractiveness of universities to international students. The extra funding (from the original more limited *Global 30* program) has resulted in increased establishment of university language centres (henceforth LC) with the aim of developing students' practical language skills, in addition to encouraging research on foreign language teaching, and ultimately increase the number of Japanese students attending overseas universities. Most of the language-related courses are administered through these newly established LCs, a semi-autonomous body independent from established faculties within universities.

As newcomers to Japan, western instructors employed in LCs would expect legitimate peripheral participants' status (Lave & Wenger 1991) and an increasing level of participation, yet the reality places severe limitations on their involvement in university affairs. They are not required to undertake roles or expected to assume responsibilities permanent Japanese faculty members are required to engage in. All EFL instructors within the author's LC possess master degrees, and approximately 40% are currently conducting research at doctorate level. The academic backgrounds and research achievements differ little from lecturers of similar age and experience in other faculties at the University. Half of them are employed on non-renewable,

five-year contracts that require them to teach ten 90-minute classes per week. The remainder enjoy more job security as they are employed on annually, non-fixed term, renewable contracts that can potentially be renewed indefinitely upon mutual agreement. In theory, promotion to the non-fixed term contracts (although still a contract) could enable access to join the inside trajectory to a higher status within the university only in exceptional circumstances. This contrasts to Japanese faculty with equal experience and qualifications who are offered the prospect of tenure after an initial three-year probationary period. In addition, the marginalised status (independent of any faculty) of the LC means that instructors are required to attend meetings that are restricted to curriculum design, material development, grading procedures, and administration directly affecting the LC. Furthermore, the physicality of the LC distinguishes it, as does the instructors official employment title of 'special instructor of language', a title reserved exclusively for EFL non-Japanese instructors. Even the layout of LC's partitioned open-plan office, as opposed to one's own private office, serves to marginalise them and reinforce a lack of recognition within the community of peers. It can lead to confusion of their actual status within the institution and contributes to an image of temporariness and replaceability that serves to undervalue them professionally as foreign colleagues.

Data Collection Procedures

A qualitative research design employed semi-structured interviews to collect and analyse responses of 18 fellow instructors at a large private university in Japan. Informal, semi-structured interviews, also known as non-standardised or qualitative interviews (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009), are hybrid types of interview incorporating features of both structured and unstructured interviews. They allow a list of predetermined themes and questions (the structured interview) to be addressed, while employing flexibility to facilitate in-depth exploration of any topic raised. To maintain consistency throughout the interviews, the author prepared core questions to ensure similarity of areas covered with each participant. The purpose was to obtain qualitative descriptions with respect to interpretation of meaning (Kvale 1996) and yield direct quotations regarding experiences, opinions and feelings of issues relating to professional identity. Interviews offered the most

efficient means of gathering the required information from all participants. Although questionnaires would have been logistically more simple, the potential for irrelevant and generalised details meant they were rejected as a research tool.

Data was analysed and interpreted using an inductive approach to identify emergent themes, patterns, and 'objects' used to negotiate and manage professional identity (Beijaard, et al. 2004). Labels and codes were assigned to categories and common themes or chunks of data (Creswell 2013) in the preliminary interpretation of instructors' responses. This is followed by the categorisation and organisation of data in search of patterns, critical themes and meanings; the goal being the creation of descriptive, multi-dimensional categories that provide a preliminary framework for analysis. The essence of the participants' experiences was constructed through 'seeking all possible meanings and divergent perspectives, varying the frames of reference about the phenomenon, and constructing a description of how the phenomenon was experienced' (Creswell 1998: 149).

All respondents were EFL teachers working in contracted positions who voluntarily accepted to take part in the research interviews that addressed the context of professionalism, teaching (including teaching experience, second language teaching approach) and being an instructor of English in Japan. In addition, construction of professional identity was clarified with particular focus on the willingness in adopting pedagogical approaches which may contradict expectations based on previous learning and teaching experiences. The data will inform how instructors 'form sense of themselves as identities in relation to ways of inhabiting roles, positions, and cultural imaginaries that matter to them' (Holland & Lachicotte 2007: 103). Interviews were scheduled for 15-20 minutes per instructor and were recorded digitally over a one-month period (October to November 2016) in an interview room adjacent to the communal instructors' room. Table 1. and Table 2. present the details, status and experience of the 18 participants.

Table 1. Participants in the research

Participants' details	
1. Gender	12 men 6 women
2. Position	10 special instructors (five-year fixed contract) 8 associate lecturer (one-year rolling contract)
3. Field of EFL	12 TESOL 6 EFL
4. Qualifications	15 Masters 3 PhD
5. Nationality	5 American 4 British 5 Canadian 4 Australians

N.B.: the names of the fields (TESOL, EFL) reflect naming between universities in the UK and USA.

All instructors who were invited to take part elected to participate, although some more willingly than others. This is reflected in the length of the interviews which lasted from 12 minutes to 27 minutes (average 23 minutes). Consciously aware the teachers were participating during free lessons or after finishing lessons, the author attempted to limit the opportunities for

digression. All contacts with the participants involved a detailed outline of the research area as well as an explanation that the paper constituted credits towards the author's Ph.D. at the University of Sheffield. A general outline of the interview sheet (see Appendix) was also provided to allow a level of familiarisation and preparation of responses.

Table 2. Teaching experience of the participants

Participants	Status	Experience
Instructor A (male)	Full-time	TEFL 14 years (11 years in Japan)
Instructor B (male)*	Full-time	TESOL 7 years (5 years in Japan)
Instructor C (female)*	Full-time	TEFL 4 years (4 years in Japan)
Instructor D (male)	Full-time	TEFL 7 years (6 years in Japan)
Instructor E (male)	Full-time	TESOL 13 years (13 years in Japan)
Instructor F (female)	Full-time	TESOL 4 years (2 years in Japan)
Instructor G (male)	Full-time	TEFL 17 years (14 years in Japan)
Instructor H (male)*	Full-time	TESOL 6 years (5 years in Japan)
Instructor I (male)	Full-time	TEFL 8 years (7 years in Japan)
Instructor J (male)	Full-time	TEFL 2 years (2 years in Japan)
Instructor K (male)	Full-time	TESOL 11 years (9 years in Japan)
Instructor L (male)*	Full-time	TESOL 5 years (5 years in Japan)
Instructor M (female)*	Full-time	TESOL 9 years (7 years in Japan)
Instructor N (female)	Full-time	TESOL 15 years (11 years in Japan)
Instructor O (female)*	Full-time	TESOL 3 years (3 years in Japan)
Instructor P (male)	Full-time	TESOL 8 years (8 years in Japan)
Instructor Q (male)*	Full-time	TESOL 4 years (4 years in Japan)
Instructor R (female)	Full-time	TESOL 11 years (9 years in Japan)

N.B.: *denotes PhD candidate/student

Discussion

The marketization of higher education and a neoliberal competitive paradigm has impacted on working conditions at higher education in the UK (Archer 2008), and the increase in limited-contracted, adjunct positions has significant implications for the quality and professionalism of courses and faculty. Within Japan, the fixed nature of similar contracts for non-Japanese

instructors means there is limited possibility of tenured positions, regardless of performance or academic achievements. The revolving door mentality influences not only how faculty and administration staff treat instructors, but also what expectations are made of them as an educator, researcher, and member of staff. Within this

environment does the perception affect how foreign teachers embrace the concept of professionalism?

After addressing the most salient factors highlighted during the interviews (see below), the context and their significance will be explored in clarifying any ambiguity in terms of professional conflict for non-Japanese instructors from foreign professional environments. How well they can adapt will be determined by their understanding of what is expected of their role as educators and employees in Japan. Without specific and explicit instruction of this gap (often lacking at Japanese institutions) the potential for misunderstanding and resistance is a realistic possibility. Factors which were coded more than others and expressed as significant in potentially affecting instructor professionalism and redefining professional identity can be grouped into the following:

1. Expected learning environment and pedagogical approach
2. Construction of professional identity
3. Student expectations
4. The clown factor
5. University contact
6. Socio-cultural factors

Expected Learning Environment and Pedagogical Approach

The adoption and implementation of 'western' pedagogies over traditional, established practices can lead to 'one community, two systems' at foreign universities (Liu & Fisher 2010: 180). Within collectivist countries like Japan, for example, this has manifested itself in efforts to decentralise power within the classroom to facilitate a more autonomous, inclusive language learning environment. Principles that underlie the imported pedagogy, however, impinge on the local culture of learning, particularly with reference to the perception of roles and power-sharing. The context therefore does not allow for simply the adoption of models and practices to address perceived pedagogic-related deficiencies (Evans 2011).

Contextualized within an educational institution and reflecting society's constructs and authority relations, instructors are subject to the pervading conventions and dynamics. Adapting to language classrooms and their pedagogical culture leads western EFL instructors to reflect on their own personal beliefs as both language educators

and as language learners themselves. The potential for conflict exists between individual beliefs and goals on the one hand, and institutional policies and practices on the other. Teaching philosophies and practices have established one's own cognitions about learning from personal and learning experience that may be resistant to change even in the face of contradictory evidence (Nisbett & Ross 1980). These core pedagogic principles extend, conceptually and methodologically, to our understandings of the relationships between language instructors' cognitions and practices. This sentiment was reflected in a majority of the participants whose ambition was to foster independent, autonomous language learners, yet consciously aware that the goals and intentions have to be continually reinforced to Japanese learners. A resignation resonated in the feedback that Japanese learners do not fully utilise such provisions which can lead to the prominent use of the L1 or disengagement within the classroom. The sentiment is reflected in teacher Ds reply:

The idealised view, from our point of view, of students willfully engaged in activities that are independent from the teacher is a concept many of us have as a utopia-type classroom environment. The reality is far from that.

For collectivist countries, an instructor-centred transmission view of teaching and learning places the teacher at the centre of the learning environment. In combination with contextual constraints (e.g., class size, student expectation) they represent significant factors; a constant 'tug pulling' between what the instructor is expected to do and what they want to do (Archer 2008). As a result, instructors' knowledge of the subject and their knowledge of how to teach (i.e., pedagogic knowledge) can often be in constant friction.

Construction of Professional Identity

Our conception of self as language instructors, involving reference to an identified group (Lauriala & Kukkonen 2003) is reinforced at university through status or position of the LC or department. The social role we adopt confirms a set of expectations of how, as a member of a community we as instructors are expected to perform. Individual beliefs likewise reinforce expectations derived from status or performance expectations; i.e., how we expect and are expected to perform our responsibilities. A sense of professional identity is based on our identity as non-Japanese instructors in a foreign country and all the implications that impact on one's sense of identity. This is examined by Tsui (2007) and the complexity of identity formation within a

relationship of place, space and time. She highlights the need to reconstruct identity to cope with new challenges, involving 'institutional construction' and 'personal reconstruction' of identities (Tsui, 2007: 658). Instructors' identity therefore needs to be understood within a holistic view that reflects the dynamic interaction between wider socio-political contexts and individual selves.

In relation to the author's university, the majority of the 18 teachers were not qualified language instructors before coming to Japan. Many of them freely acknowledged that it was their status as native English speakers that initially ensured a teaching position over qualifications or experience at the beginning of their career. The majority gained their master's degree (all possessed bachelor degrees) either while living in Japan or after returning to their home country to complete their studies. Despite the lack of background in education, a common sentiment was the commitment and dedication to teaching and helping students develop not only the language but also a more broadened perspective on learning and cultural awareness. This can be seen in the following comment:

I think if students can learn outside of the very fact-based curriculum that they must remember, this will be beneficial and informative to them as young people. It doesn't have to be about language learning, but they should be offered alternative versions of what they are taught. (Instructor L)

Instructors realize that limited second-language exposure and prominent socio-cultural influences will mean many students unable to make significant progress proficiency-wise, but exposure to variation in teaching approaches will assist their overall learning experience. This opinion was reflected in mixed sentiment of acknowledging the realities of teaching in Japan, yet striving to maintain high standards of instruction as a positive influence on learner motivation. It should be acknowledged that almost 25% of respondents confessed to a pragmatic approach as they view universities in Japan as places where graduation is almost guaranteed regardless of academic performance. This links to the question of whether they perceive themselves as language instructors or teachers of the language in English. The fact that an ambiguity exists between theory and practice and how this can be reconciled is not always consistently clarified.

Student Expectations

The disconnect of western, dynamic teaching-learning through extensive interaction can be

hindered by students' ability to participate due to being linguistically unprepared and accustomed to a more passive, non-verbal learning style. Also taciturn and an avoidance of uncertainty are features often cited as prevalent in the Japanese language classroom (Burrows 2000). The inevitable conclusion must be acknowledgement that a dissonance is evident in our roles as educators and the practical purpose as provided by our institution. Uncertainty may be compounded by our perceived roles as *just* 'English teachers' in the pejorative sense of the meaning. The potential exists for the feeling to be exacerbated without clear statement of what are the actual goals for students are. What should students be able to achieve after completing the semester-long course? If they are unable to reach these how should they be penalized? This difficulty in finding meaning and identity as an EFL instructor at Japanese universities is a struggle of conflicting expectations between students, institution, society, and oneself. The feeling seemed to be prevalent among respondents who attempted to introduce more content into class discussion and expose students to issues and current affairs which western counterparts undertake. However, pedagogical decisions depend on student perceptions in relationship to themselves, their instructor, and individual beliefs concerning their learning goals (Nagatomo 2012). This shift can expose instructors to accusations of cultural imperialism and cultural arrogance in attempting to introduce issues not perceived as relevant or appropriate for non-western learners. Teacher A summarizes the dilemma affecting many of the instructors:

We have to realize that most of the students are first year non-English majors. We can't expect them to have the language skills or knowledge to be able to discuss current affair issues. We have to deal with the here and now - concepts the students know and can relate to.

How willing are instructors to meet student expectations of what they assume regarding second language education classes conducted by non-Japanese faculty? If the 'non-' were to be deleted, expectations of rigid, instructor-centred instruction would undoubtedly be common. For EFL instructors, the entertainer factor was a prevalent feature in the feedback and an aspect many were eager to counter. This must be accepted as a real aspiration if you consider the majority of students in class have not elected English language as part of their major. Conversely, the requirement of student class evaluations was cited as justification for

expectations to be met when devising, not pedagogic goals but a suitable teaching approach. This may in fact contradict the instructors' stated professional opinion of a meaningful lesson or pedagogically robust teaching approach. It also contributes to a lack of earnest academic endeavour and perpetuates the sideshow aspect of compulsory language classes. Over two-thirds of respondents acknowledged that they strive to achieve a balance between more academically challenging class content, and activities whose pedagogical orientation is less rigorous. Several were honest enough to concede that if learning takes place from culturally-centered activities then students will have achieved a deeper understanding that is contributive to a broader knowledge acquirement rather than more direct teaching methods. This justification was even extended to several who acknowledged to occasionally showing movies or US comedies.

The Clown factor

An image many instructors wanted to distance themselves from was that of the 'blue-eyed, blonde-haired foreigner' whose primary qualification is his mother tongue. The image derives from the Government's Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme that employs native English-speaking teaching assistants although often lacking in teaching qualifications and formal teaching experience. Their role is to expose secondary school students to not only the English language, but more prominently develop and deepen cultural and international awareness. They are employed not as language teachers but as cultural ambassadors to assist Japanese language teachers. The misconception that those who speak a language are automatically qualified to teach it leads to the depreciation of language teaching and those who teach it. The university instructors view themselves as professional, but realise the perception exists of less professional teachers who help to perpetuate the 'backpacker' image of unqualified teachers of English. In order to distinguish themselves many of the instructors are studying for higher degrees and active publishing and presenting within the various professional teaching bodies both within Japan and Asia. From the interviews it seems that the paradox can never be resolved; teachers want to be recognized as an important element of students' education, yet compulsory language classes undermine this position and the subject being taught. A common sentiment is provided by instructor B.

I think students have been conditioned to assume that all foreign teachers are this wacky, joking person who is there to make them laugh. Unfortunately, students would often prefer these teachers regardless of pedagogic value to their instruction.

From a pedagogic perspective the adoption of a less intellectually demanding approach could lead to positive student evaluations (legally required twice a year) and satisfy the insidious, incursive 'fun' factor requirement increasing prevalent in prospectuses for Japanese universities. An increasing tendency to advertise language learning in these terms directs student expectations from a more traditional study-orientated pedagogic approach to one where learning takes place through a less studious approach.

University Contact

Monthly meetings at the LC take place among all the non-Japanese, English-related instructors. Korean and Chinese instructors likewise hold their own meetings related to those particular courses. In addition to all full-time instructors a member of the administration staff also participates. The items discussed primarily relate to administrative and classroom issues rather than teaching approaches or goal assessment. In regards to curriculum, a degree of freedom is afforded instructors in the exact content of their classes. Suggestions related to teaching approaches and grading criteria can be made to an English committee composed of full-time professors and senior administration members. One instructor (the coordinator) is allowed to attend this committee to act as a liaison with LC instructors.

In terms of working environment, all instructors reported a cordial and professional relationship with other LC instructors and administrative staff. A feeling does exist, however, that they exist at the end of a convoluted process of committees and decision-making processes:

Ideas and opinions that would benefit not only students but the university as a whole are not acted upon as you would expect. No consultation takes place, edicts fall from the sky and compliance is expected regardless. (Instructor M)

Instructors expressed minimal ability to voice opinions and affect the implementation and goals of integrated course design. Despite being extended autonomy in terms of curriculum design, entry requirements and grading criteria, lack of meaningful input reinforces a sense that their voice carries little weight and that their role is restricted to the classroom and implementing procedures devised by less qualified, non-language teaching faculty. A common grievance was that

recommendations that they feel would be beneficial to the pedagogy of courses within the institution are resisted or reduced due to extenuating circumstances. The most frequent example related to student academic performance in order to motivate (i.e., compel) more active and constructive participation among students within the classroom.

Socio-cultural Factors

A complete absence of external auditing of grading was cited as a contributing factor that serves to undermine a sense of professionalism and accountability. It allows for any department to allow students who deserve to be failed an extra opportunity through the provision of a supplementary assignment. Completion of the assignment will allow the student to attain the minimum 60% required for credit. It connects to the cultural phenomenon of requiring students to attend classes to pass course without the academic expectation or requirement for them to meet academic standards. Instructors cite this example as not only undermining their position as standard bearers of academic standards, but also of challenging the integrity of the institution. It directly affects teacher motivation, and more crucially that of students who are aware an extra opportunity exists for them to display the required knowledge. It relates to a university's perception and their selling point of 90%+ graduation rates, and even more significantly their overall employment rate for graduates. Together, they comprise the most significant factors students consider when deciding where to study. It is for these reasons that universities are so flexible in allowing make-up exams and additional homework opportunities for failing students. Teacher O reflects most instructors' opinion in this matter:

Failing non-performing students would be the single most effective means of improving the standard of the class and the university as a whole. Why should you be allowed to get credit for purely attending class?

Another unique aspect relates to the nature of instructor evaluation. As with any higher education institution, both formal and informal evaluations are conducted in regards to professional conduct, academic activity, and class content. Class evaluations are required by law in Japan, but students spend only a few seconds and comments are quite cursory and unreflective. For students, how and what they base their evaluation on may not always align with the pedagogic goals or the focus of the class. The fact that without the compulsory classes many of the teachers would

not be employed was something many were compelled to articulate. They sense an awareness of the insecurity that they are required to teach students who have not expressed a desire or proficiency in language learning.

Finally, it must also be recognised that the majority of students have little interest in learning a foreign language after eight years of intensive, test-oriented English education. Their expectation is to attend classes yet without the cognitive demands of actually acquiring the knowledge. For many western instructors who have experienced graduation in their home country there is puzzlement at why such mediocrity and lack of application is tolerated in a country that claims such lofty language goals (see Ministry of Education, 2003).

Summary

The status of a profession reflects its identification due to its expertise and knowledge within an organisation that enjoys a collegial relationship among peers (Ambrosie & Harley, 1988). For reasons stated above, the perception of western English language teachers as quasi-professionals is still prevalent among Japanese faculty. The marginalized nature limits interactions with faculty members from different departments and shapes one's identity and placement in the workplace (Wenger, 1998). An important aspect of belonging to a community is having one's ideas accepted and adopted within that community (ibid.). A lack of alignment with other faculty can foster feelings of frustration and a sense of resentment at not being allowed this interaction with one's peers and senior members of faculty due to invisible barriers.

'Good teacher syndrome' is the compromise that instructors are prepared to make in order to meet Japanese student expectations of what constitutes a constructive, enjoyable class. Universities are increasingly selling these 'fun' learning experiences based on no accepted pedagogic theory. In order to satisfy the requirement, movies, music, games are utilized that although less academically rigorous can certainly guarantee positive class evaluations by students. It leads to the question of what an effective language lesson is. As there is minimal collaboration between teachers within the LC, opinions varied from active participation among students, to student involvement in the learning process. Meeting the university goals (however one assesses this) and providing an environment for learning to take place were two further examples given during the interviews.

The precarious nature of EFL positions is a conscious consideration EFL instructors must reconcile with. Ultimately, it is their experience and research qualifications which determine future employment, however, the fact that current performance (both research and professional) are irrelevant to their current position is a source of bewilderment and frustration. Half of the instructors will be expected to leave once their five-year fixed contract expires. The positions for the more permanent, annually renewed positions are usually filled by them, so if positions are available there is a possibility of continuing at the University. Despite the contractual limitation, several instructors expressed a sense of duty or ethical professionalism to undertake supplementary activities or events aimed at fostering student language learning or simply allowing for interaction outside of the classroom. This spirit of professionalism allows them to build a rapport to allow for more incisive knowledge or cultural awareness transfer.

Finally, it must be highlighted that perceptible contradictions existed between the internal expectations of professionalism and the external failure to support these expectations in their professional identity (Johnston 2001). There is recognition among EFL instructors that they are not viewed by fellow faculty as equal in status (their assigned identity) rather than their claimed identity (Barcelos 2001) of professional, qualified, language instructors. Assigned identity can be viewed as encoded by socio-political contexts (i.e., fixed-term contracts, lack of committee participation) which mirrors Hargreaves' description of '...a category of lower-paid and less-skilled educational personnel who would carry out the less complex tasks of teaching' (Goodson and Hargreaves 1996: 19).

Conclusion

EFL instructors are hired due to their expertise in teaching active language skills (mainly speaking and writing) while Japanese English teachers focus on the receptive skills of listening and reading. Our nationality is a considerable factor in this role and also it feeds into the Japanese stereotypical image of a western English teacher. However, subjects that require western instructors are not considered intellectually challenging unlike more specialised university subjects. This has led to an isolated position that remains unbridged due to language and cultural barriers, in addition to the internal factors that exist within universities. As a result, western language instructors including the those at the author's university have had to

construct an altered professional identity partially according to Wenger's three modes of belonging: engagement, imagination, and alignment. By aligning with the practices of a community allows members to direct their energies toward common goals (community of practice) which is a key factor in the formation of academic identity. For the reasons stated above, engagement has been reduced and limited in opportunity; likewise, alignment which by the position of the LC within the University has afforded minimal opportunity to foster and utilise peers and colleagues alike.

The study mapped the multidimensional process of negotiating professional identity through identification of six factors which influence significantly the process. Evident from the interviews was an obvious ambivalence or 'ethical dilemmas' (Lunt, 2008) that the instructors would prefer the security and acceptance that is afforded faculty status, yet surprisingly they were more than willing to accept reduced responsibilities, longer holidays, less requirements from them to participate in university events. For some the marginalized position meant less commitment to extra duties and the added responsibility it entails. This represented a very individualist perspective of 'why should I..?', without a willingness to accept that regardless of contract their responsibilities are not confined to the classroom. Given their contract situation, this does allow them the freedom to pursue academic endeavours to gain the qualifications that will determine their next position.

A dichotomy of personal versus institution expectations emerged that are not always reconciled with our own beliefs of professionalism. Also to emerge from the discussion was a sense of clear, specific parameters of what exactly instructors' role entail, and how compliant we are to develop a reconstructed sense of professional identity. On a more individual level, although teachers could express what it means to be professional (in terms of punctuality, attendance at meetings, class preparation, publishing etc.) several of them were dressed in jeans, unshaved, and carrying drinks in and out of class (unheard of for Japanese faculty).

One final factor which has not been covered in depth relates to language proficiency. I was reluctant to ask about the level of Japanese ability, but from casual observation it seemed the majority of instructors possessed only rudimentary speaking ability. This was despite the fact several have been teaching in Japan for over ten years. The lack of interaction with colleagues meant fewer opportunities to engage in Japanese and the

resulting effect on speaking ability. This has resulted in many instructors only conducting conversations in English, even with members of the administration staff. The assumption being that the Japanese should be made to speak in English, rather than the more logical and practical request that all/some conversations be conducted in Japanese.

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Appendix

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview to ask your opinions and experiences regarding professionalism and your concept of professional identity. The research particularly addresses the concept of adjustment to new environments and how easy / difficult it is to make the required adjustments (both professionally and pedagogically).

In order to familiarize yourself with the concept to be covered, an outline of the topics I will ask about are provided below:

1. Your ideas about what constitutes professionalism.
2. Your willingness to develop a sense of professionalism.
3. EFL instructors and professionalization within Japan.
4. Your goals as a professional.
5. Your reasons for becoming an educator.

As stated in previous emails, the research is part of the PhD program through the University of Sheffield, UK. No name will be revealed and all participants will be coded from A to R. The information provided will not be used for any other purpose than to offer insight into professionalism among EFL instructors in the language centre.

Thank you again and I look forward to hearing your views in the interviews.

Kind regards

Name deleted