COHERENT AND PARADOXICAL PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES OF A TAIWANESE ENGLISH TEACHER IN JAPAN

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ABSTRACT

This self-study research aims to report and reflect on the practitioner-researcher's experience as an English teacher in a Japanese university. The study also aims to explore the dynamics of teacher identity construction. The theoretical perspective of this study is based on global Englishes and social constructivist theories, which discuss autonomy, affect, and identity factors in an English-language classroom. Qualitative data are collected from the reflective journal of the English teacher as well as from the written accounts of the students who completed the first semester of the compulsory English communication course. These data (15 teacher reflective journal entries and 50 student written accounts) are examined through content analysis to answer the following three research questions: What are the professional identities of the Taiwanese English teacher? How do the teacher's classroom practices reflect her professional identities? How are these identities constructed throughout the research period? The results indicate that the differences in the teacher's experiences have led to paradoxical identities and that the teacher and her students have a coherent positive perception of the teacher as a caring partner and acculturator. The implications of this research are expected to yield suggestions for teacher professional development and the researcher's personal growth.

Key Words: teacher professional identity, self-study, TESOL

INTRODUCTION

"One needs to stand in one's own vulnerability in order for it to become a strength" (Schulte, 2005, p. 41). My education and career path before becoming an English teacher in Japan was not unusual until it took an unexpected turn in 2018. At a game-facilitated reflection workshop, I chose the following cards to tell a story about my career transition upon

the instructions of the facilitator.

I had eight years of experience in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at the secondary level in Taiwan prior to beginning my teaching career in Japan in the spring of 2018. I had developed self-confidence as a teacher of English in the Taiwanese context due to my educational and professional experience as well as supervisor recognition. I saw myself as a daring explorer, as illustrated in the left-most card in Fig. 1, equipped with the qualities needed to overcome difficulties in my professional role. I was willing to experiment with pedagogical strategies and challenge established approaches to teaching. However, when I decided to pursue a career overseas and eventually received an offer from a Japanese university, I was not only excited but also anxious about the unknown (see the center-left card of Fig. 1). Since the inception of my new job, I have grown to feel like a black sheep because of the culture and language barriers with which I have been confronted (see the center-right card of Fig. 1). My current institute is an international learning center in a Japanese university. I am required to teach English communication skills to first-year undergraduate students and provide after-class speaking practice. My students' English proficiency is at the lower levels (A1–A2) of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and they are more accustomed to didactic approaches to learning and teaching. Furthermore, I am the only Taiwanese among the local and so-called "native English-speaking" teachers. I feel a responsibility to represent my professional and cultural background well and pressure to earn recognition from my students and colleagues. As portrayed in the right-most card in Fig. 1, I have chosen to mask my own uncertainties, and thus I have temporarily suppressed the awareness of my teacher identity.

Contrary to Farrell's (2011) observation that experienced teachers are at ease with adopting and creating identity positions, I have experienced a discontinuity in my professional trajectory, which has resulted in a struggle with the limits of my knowledge, beliefs, and expectations. However, according to Werbińska (2016, p. 155), such rupture and difference between my previous and current experiences can be a "springboard" for transformation, because it fosters the teacher's "noticing of what works and what does not, why something has happened and how it is related to the decisions a teacher has made or is about to make." My study is inspired by the intent to raise awareness of my role as teacher through examining "not just how [I am] shaped by the forces

(social, cultural, political) within the contexts of [my] work […], but also [my own role] in shaping the context" (Reeves, 2018, p. 4).

This study considers teacher professional identity to be complex, contradictory, dynamic, and multifaceted, as well as subject to change across time and space (Morgan, 2004; Norton, 1997, 2010). Teacher professional identity cannot be readily understood because it is not only an individual and psychological matter but also a social matter. On the one hand, it refers to teachers' beliefs, values, and assumptions about who they are. On the other hand, it is socially mediated and discursive. Teacher professional identity is formed, shaped, and situated within a social, cultural, and political context (Reeves, 2018; Tsui, 2007; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005; Werbińska, 2016). Furthermore, the push and pull force of teachers' personal agency and external pressure may cause disequilibrium. These complexities and contradictions are crucial to the construction and negotiation of teacher professional identity (Menard-Warwick, 2008; Reeves, 2018). Additionally, the multifaceted nature of teacher professional identity is highlighted in the research of T. S. Farrell. Farrell (2011) has taxonomized a total of sixteen facets of identity, divided into three main clusters: the teacher as a manager, the teacher as an acculturator, and the teacher as a professional. The answers to whether, why, how, or under what circumstances teachers take up a certain identity position fall along the continuum between received expectations and individual negotiation (Farrell, 2011). Finally, Pillen, Den Brok, and Beijaard (2013) have concluded that teacher professional identity is not a stable entity, but rather a continually changing, active, and on-going process.

In line with the sociocultural constructivist approach to teacher professional identity, scholars have argued that teacher identity can be observed and examined through the decisions made by teachers during instructional practice and interaction with their students (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Madden & Wiebe, 2013; Taylor, 2017). It is often questioned whether teachers practice what they preach (Freese, 2005); therefore, incorporating a perspective other than that of the teacher is necessary. Adoption of the student perspective is thus appropriate for balancing "the distance between individual interpretation and actual underlying belief" (Madden & Wiebe, 2013, p. 2574). This consideration has informed my research method, which is described in the next section.

Based on the literature, this study delves into both my current teacher identity and my possibilities for the future. The framework used in my

examination of identity is grounded in the work of Werbińska (2016). Her Three-A Teacher Identity Framework (3ATIF) comprises three parts—affiliation, attachment, and autonomy—asking teachers to consider who they are, how they teach, and what their educational choices are. In accordance with this framework, teacher professional identity is viewed in terms of "categorization (affiliation), stance taking (attachment), and agentive powers (autonomy)" (Werbińska, 2016, p. 137). Compared with the taxonomy of Farrell (2011), while the affiliation and attachment components of the 3ATIF are inextricably intertwined with the ready-made roles and received expectations of teachers, I expect that through self-reflection I will become able not only to make autonomous pedagogical decisions but also to map continuing professional development plans. Fig. 2 illustrates the theoretical perspectives guiding this study.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

I employed self-study to examine my identity work as an English teacher at the tertiary level. The rationale for adopting this methodology is twofold. First, it is congruent with the nature and aim of my research because of its "personal-constructivist-collaborative" characteristics (Beck, Freese, & Kosnik, 2004, p. 1260). A self-study approach allowed me to be both the research subject and object (Larsen, 2007). The methodology builds on the personal processes of reflection and inquiry into practice and experience in a local context, providing me with a greater sense of ownership and agency over the research (Beck et al., 2004; Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Samaras & Freese, 2009). Although the term self-study suggests that the research is about the individual, it should not be limited by my sole perspective. In fact, the methodology necessitates the involvement of others. Numerous examples in self-study scholarship emphasize the importance of checking data and interpretations with peers, so as to avoid self-justification and to enhance research reliability and validity (Beck et al., 2004; Faikhamta & Clarke, 2013; Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Samaras & Freese, 2009). Due to its respect for autonomy and demand for interpersonal mediation, self-study was an appropriate vehicle through which my teacher professional identity could be explored as well as "be continually constructed and negotiated" (Larsen, 2007, p. 186).

The second reason for choosing a self-study approach was more

intimate and personal. Since my doctorate, I have been working towards a more humane pedagogy. Through teaching practice and research, I have come to recognize that openness to emotional tension and uncertainty is conducive to reciprocal relationships. It is not "wrong" to portray a vulnerable image of the teacher, which is less perfect and less powerful (Lin, Rattray, & Walker-Gleaves, 2018). Self-study researchers, such as Beck et al. (2004), Larsen (2007), and Misirhiralall (2016), also contend that as self-study illuminates teachers' turmoil and ambivalence, a genuinely communal environment can be developed, which in turn improves personal/professional practice. Teachers make themselves vulnerable when they share their experience with their colleagues (Misirhiralall, 2016). Through such self-exposure, teachers become more transparent not only to themselves but also to those with whom they work. The collaborative component of self-study enhances affective, emotional, and intellectual interdependence. This mechanism enables individuals to commit more fully to their communities (Beck at al., 2004; Larsen, 2007). Throughout the exploration of the construction and negotiation of my teacher professional identity, uncovering fears, anxieties, tensions, and uncertainties was inevitable. Although the process may seem messy, the opportunity for self-improvement due to self-study should not be overlooked.

The data for this study were drawn from two sources: a self-reflective journal about my experiences and observations and a self-reported open-ended questionnaire on my students' interactions with me. In the questionnaire, the students described one or more memorable interactions with me. Additionally, they were asked to recall their feelings during the interactions and the personal meanings of the interactions. The data collected from the questionnaire were used to reveal how my classroom practices reflect my professional identities and to offer an interpretation of teacher identity other than my own. The 3ATIF provided a basis for me to organize and analyze my personal experience. I began analyzing the data by separating the content of my reflective journal into several descriptive categories. Then, I confirmed or modified these categories by referring to my students' responses to the questionnaire and comparing the categories with the responses. After analysis and interpretation, I sent a draft of this paper to my colleagues for their comments and feedback in order to enhance the validity and reliability of my findings. Table 1 summarizes my personal descriptors according to the 3ATIF categories.

This study was conducted in the context of a compulsory English

communication course for first-year undergraduate students in a Japanese university, none of whom were English majors. The objective of the course was to develop the students' ability to carry out conversations on day-to-day topics, including family, leisure, education, and so on. The course activities included in-class listening and speaking practice (1.5 hours per session, twice a week) and after-class self-access learning.

I took the researcher and the researched role in this study. I taught the aforementioned English communication course to a total of 98 students from seven different departments during the first semester of 2018. Before starting my professional career in higher education in Japan, I had eight years of experience in TESOL at the secondary school level in Taiwan. Prior to that, I worked in TESOL material publishing for two years. My education background brought me to teaching English in the first place. I received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, a Master of Education degree in Educational Technology as well as a TESOL certificate from the Taiwan Ministry of Education after a year-long practicum. As a beginning teacher, I soon became increasingly dissatisfied with my teaching, and thus I started the work of doctoral research. The primary objective of my doctoral research was to develop my students' metalearning capacity—reflection on their learning—but its action research nature also empowered me to challenge my established perceptions and approaches to teaching. I became committed to reflective practice and a more humane approach to learning and teaching, which has led me to this self-study of my teaching experience in Japan.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF NARRATIVES

Categorizing the reflective statements in my journal entries according to the 3ATIF, I found that some identity categories were congruent among the three aspects—affiliation, attachment, and autonomy—while others were contradictory. The following two subsections present and discuss my narratives, which are then juxtaposed with my students' written accounts.

Coherent Identities

The only identity categories that were consistent within the 3ATIF were the teacher as a caring partner and the teacher as an acculturator. This consistency indicated that I actually acted on and had autonomy in making decisions corresponding to these identities.

The teacher as a caring partner was a recurring theme in my journal entries. Some keywords and phrases extracted from my journal included: acceptance, authenticity, learning partnership, and friendliness and approachability (e.g., April 25, May 11, June 10, and July 15). I identified with the late Rita Pierson when she maintained that students hardly learn from people they don't like (Pierson, 2013). Therefore, I aspired to bond with my students in order to increase their willingness to learn. With my rudimentary Japanese, the language barrier did initially impede these efforts. For example, on April 25 I wrote in my journal:

> Some students nodded off when transcribing their speaking tasks. I could only give them a pat to wake them up because I could not express myself in Japanese, while in Taiwan I would give my students a lecture in Mandarin when something like this happened.

However, my students ultimately perceived my efforts, which included using more comprehensible strategies (body language, tautology, slower speech, and so on), seizing the initiative to approach my students, and listening to them attentively. These practices could be affiliated with the concept of caring, where Noddings (1986) argued for the importance of teachers being totally and nonselectively present to each student and stepping out of their own frame of reference and into that of their students. Embodying such a concept, teachers would develop with their students a rapport characterized by respect, approachability, honest communication, mutual openness, interest, trust, and so on (Granitz, Koernig, & Harich, 2008). These affective attributes are increasingly recognized as equally if not more important than cognitive factors in scaffolding students through the zone of proximal development (Goldstein, 1999).

A content analysis of the 50 written accounts in which my students described and reflected on illustrative interactions between us showed that my students appreciated our relational connections and the effort I expended in communication and understanding. In more than half of the accounts—26 in all—my students wrote about our teacher-student relationship. They described my character as friendly, kind, gentle, and humorous; and our interactions as personal, pleasant, and genuine. Accounts illustrating our relational connections include—"It is easy to talk with my teacher because she takes the initiative to talk with me" (S4); "My teacher remembers my name" (S6); "She interacted with us as intimately as a parent" (S9); "She often saw things about the students. She

noticed quickly when I did not understand something and gave me an easy-to-understand answer" (S13); "When I talked to my English teacher about my hobbies, she responded in a casual manner" (S29); "When I had trouble understanding English, my teacher taught me clearly in easily understood English" (S42)—to list a small selection. Our relationships were not limited to the classroom but continued in after-class activities and out-of-class encounters. Researchers (Goldstein, 1999; Motta & Bennett, 2018; Monzó & Rueda, 2001) have highlighted that the affective and embodied relationships between teachers and their students are resources of pedagogical practices that lead to greater engagement and learning. According to Goldstein (1999), "Looking at the zone of proximal development as a locus of connection and relationship offers a new perspective on the intriguing questions of motivation" (p. 665). My students expressed that they became less hesitant about and had less dislike of using English because of my efforts to understand them. Furthermore, they became eager to attend English classes and started to set learning goals, such as to be able to conduct daily conversations in English and to improve their listening and reading skills.

I felt empowered when my students gave me feedback by asking me questions, chatting with me outside of class, giving me a friendly nickname, and inviting me to social events. The fact that I developed proximity with my students both in class and outside of class coincides with Farrell's (2011) notion of teachers' role as acculturators. Despite the similarity in teacher practices, where I was coming from differed from the teachers in Farrell's research. The participants in his study were three native English-speaking ESL university teachers who intended to help their students become accustomed to the local (Canadian) culture. My identity as neither a native English-speaker nor a local Japanese limited what I could do in this sense (further discussed in the next subsection). However, I acted upon a humane spirit that I aspired to share with my students through life-on-life interaction, bearing in mind a broad sense of socialization—developing a full human being in all respects, including but not limited to language and culture. The following student account exemplifies this point:

> Whether I progressed or lagged behind in a task, my English teacher gave me directions promptly. She didn't keep an eye on only me but also on everyone else. That was new to me. My high school teacher had told me that I should become good at everything and give timely

help. My English teacher was doing exactly this. (S50)

In addition, my connections with my students were characterized by reciprocity despite our hierarchical difference. I was rewarded and stimulated as my students shared personal or cultural experiences with me. As I became involved with extra activities and social events such as the welcome party and Tanabata (Japanese Star Festival) party with my students, I acquired more information about them as individuals and their local contexts. Instead of a unidirectional transmission of knowledge and values from a teacher to students, my students and I reciprocally played the role of mediator and informant (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). This sociocultural co-construction process not only encouraged me to step out of my own established and taken-for-granted frame of reference for both professional practice and cultural values, but it also inspired me to consider alternative approaches that could benefit students' use of English as a means to participate in and interact with a global society. I agree with Goldstein (1999) that this dynamic teaching-learning reciprocity has been "both intellectually rewarding and emotionally satisfying" (p. 665). This experience has both reaffirmed my choice of a humane pedagogical position and formulated a direction for my future and professional growth, as discussed in the subsection "paradoxical identities."

Paradoxical Identities

In contrast to the coherent identity categories, identified within the 3ATIF and described in section 3.1, some categories of my professional identity were paradoxical among my own assumptions of myself as an English teacher, my practices, and the positioning that was expected of me. These paradoxical identity categories included role model, nonnative English speaker, critical reflective practitioner, and submissive follower.

First, the identity I assumed of role model in learning English was jeopardized by my self-perceived inadequacy as a nonnative English speaker. At the outset, I expected that because I had also studied English in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context and faced similar problems and challenges learning English, I could share successful strategies with my students. For example, I demonstrated to my students that it requires constant practice to become proficient at a language—"I still listen to the BBC World Service Podcast every day on my way to work" (May 11). In addition, I felt a sense of achievement when a student

said to another teacher, "I want to be like my English teacher, being able to speak more than one languages (sic)" (June 21). Despite this self-expectation to model effective learning for my students, at times I felt like an "impostor" (Bernat, 2008), presumably because of another category of my identity: nonnative English speaker. "As an English teacher, I also identify myself as a learner of English as a foreign language" (April 14). I occasionally felt inferior to my native-English-speaking colleagues and experienced self-doubt about my own language proficiency (e.g., journal entries May 8, May 11, and May 30).

Throughout my education and career, I have tried to live up to a standardized norm and been engaged in a life-long learning pursuit of an ideal (Huang, 2018). In the university TESOL community, I strived for legitimate participation by portraying myself as a "faithful imitator" (Gao, 2014), but ironically it added to a sense of disadvantage. In my early twenties, I earned a BA degree in English, meeting the baseline requirements of the compulsory courses, such as Listening Comprehension and Oral Communication, Grammar and Rhetoric, and Essay Writing, all of which were held to near-native English standards. Afterward at work, both in publishing and teaching, there were always native English speakers on site as language experts, proofreading and answering questions. Yet, when I compared myself to my native English-speaking colleagues, I experienced feelings of inadequacy, inauthenticity, self-doubt, low agency, and anxiety in the role of a language teacher of my nonnative tongue (Bernat, 2008). I have, for instance, a vivid memory of a conversation with one of my colleagues. He said to me, "You sound native-like. Are you not confident about your English ability?" (April 14) Owing to the extensive pronunciation practice during my study in the English diploma program, I was able to acquire a near-native accent. However, due to "learned inferiority," I felt self-conscious about whether I had adequate linguistic command to be a proficient English teacher.

Consequently, I attempted a second entry into my present community of practice—taking up administrative duty on the exam committee. When I taught in Taiwan, I was able to circumvent my sense of inferiority with pedagogical and curricular knowledge. Besides teaching, I was involved in material and assessment development. I asserted legitimate agency through more comprehensive participation in the TESOL community in Taiwan. Therefore, when my current supervisor in the Japanese university sent around an email calling for volunteers to write entrance exam questions, I thought it was an opportunity to recover autonomy and

influence in the new circumstances. However, in fact, I felt doubly marginalized. I hardly shared the students' first language or their lived experiences and culture as the local teachers did; nor did I understand the Japanese institutional mechanisms (Mahboob & Lin, 2016, 2018; Lin, 2015; Tatar & Yildiz, 2010). The bold sense of self that I had held as a result of years of academic and professional experience was supplanted by self-perceived powerlessness.

Despite my self-marginalization as neither a native-speaking teacher nor a local, nonnative speaking teacher, only four out of my students' 50 written accounts mentioned my "foreignness." They wrote:

Actually I was able to speak in English with a foreign teacher. I wanted to make use of English when I go abroad. (S5)

I could actually talk with a foreign teacher. English is difficult. However, as I tried, I was, unexpectedly, able to communicate. It made me very happy. (S7)

In the beginning, when I entered university, I felt it was difficult to speak in English with a foreign teacher who cannot speak Japanese well. […] I was glad that I could speak English and it remained in my memory. (S30)

My teacher helped me develop confidence in speaking English. I felt happy because the atmosphere in the classroom was always fun and the topics were very close to life. It helped me become confident about speaking English with foreigners. (S44)

From these excerpts, I inferred that my students did not segregate me from my native-English-speaking colleagues. Although one of them did point out my low proficiency in Japanese, the student did not see it as a disadvantage but a drive that pushed him/her to use English, our common language. This concurred with the finding of Kristy Liang's master's research (Braine, 2005) that students appreciated their teachers' level of professionalism over their ethnic and language background.

Besides the paradox between the empowered "role model" and the marginalized "nonnative speaker," I was caught in another identity paradox, between my pedagogical outlook and teaching practices. The aforementioned feelings of inferiority, self-consciousness, and

powerlessness regrettably caused me to become submissive and adopt more technical and managerial approaches to learning and teaching. My conformity to the language norms led to passive compliance in meeting prescriptive curriculum agendas. My present institute undertakes a precise curriculum so that the students may develop the ability to carry out conversations on day-to-day topics. In addition, pre-programmed online course content requires the students to internalize and automatize language patterns. I can still recall an incident from the beginning of the semester when I asked my students to do pronunciation practice by speaking to a speech recognition system. Every student but one practiced according to my request. I advised this student, "If you don't want to talk to a computer, you may practice with me" and "This is a communication class, you must say something." I assumed her refusal to follow my directions was on account of a lack of understanding English, so I even asked another student to translate for her. Upon reflection, I was dissatisfied with how little critical thought I had given to this incident. What was the rationale for such pronunciation practice? What latent reasons could explain the student's resistance to practice? What alternatives could ensure an equal opportunity to practice for each student? Despite the self-identification and expectations of myself as a reflective practitioner, I had narrowed my pedagogical approach to routinized and technicized practices without questioning their purposes (Britzman, 2003; Oda & Toh, 2018). My students' written accounts contained nine occurrences discussing the effects of my pedagogical exercise. In four of these accounts, the students recounted how technology and media were utilized. In the other five, they wrote about how I taught, explained, and corrected their pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence structures. These nine accounts indicated that I had relied on ready-made materials and had not used higher-order activities other than language form practice in my teaching. Although I agreed with the critique of limiting pedagogical methods to techniques and tactics for improving technical skills in English (Oda & Toh, 2018), I presented no alternatives sufficiently critical or reflective of the institutionalized teaching approaches.

Let me conclude this section, by tying back to the introduction, that my teacher identity was unveiled through the analysis and interpretation of narratives. By synthesizing the aforementioned paradoxical elements and issues, I came to consider how I could take professional responsibility and accountability instead of indulging myself in the victimhood of being

the black sheep in the community (Rivers, 2018). In my case, I recognized "communication tool," "functional," and "cultural competence" as keywords that appeared numerous times in my journals (e.g., April 14, April 19, and June 21). In an entry written on May 25, I reflected that I hoped my cultural and educational background would serve as a resource to share with my students what was necessary to achieve intercultural communication. These discoveries led me to the threshold of becoming a "dialogical communicator" (Gao, 2014, p. 68) who expects to transcend dichotomies by means of reflectiveness and inter-respect. I expect to step over the threshold by integrating my coherent and paradoxical identity categories. As mentioned in the last paragraph of the subsection "coherent identities," my social-constructivist-oriented pedagogical position acknowledged the importance of student-teacher reciprocity, which encourages teachers to foster authentic dialogue with students and take time to understand students' lived experiences (Linares, 2017). This also resonated closely with the notion of "cultural belief" (Holliday, 2013, p. 21), challenging the myth of nativeness and capitalizing on the diverse resources offered by both teachers and students to enrich the experience in the learning and use of English. Considering the translation of my awareness into alternative classroom praxis, I became determined to equip my students with not only adequate language skills but also communication strategies in intercultural interactions to avoid confusion and misunderstanding (Fang, 2018; Matsumoto, 2018; Manara, 2018). Furthermore, I was driven to create a space in my class where my students and I could together explore the co-construction of meaning in English by speakers from various language backgrounds (Aneja, 2018; Jenkins, 2015).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This self-study paper focuses on what my professional identities were as I moved from the familiar to the unknown and how my classroom practices reflected these professional identities. The analysis findings indicate that the identities I brought with me from previous education and professional experiences were influenced by changes in the contextual and interactional factors throughout the research period. Although my students and I had a coherent positive perception of the teacher as a caring partner and as an acculturator, the rupture and difference between experiences resulted in my professional identity paradox, including role model,

nonnative English speaker, critical reflective practitioner, and submissive follower. The implications of these findings are twofold. On a personal level, this research allowed me to answer the following question: Are there any connections between my present professional identities and those I had as a teacher in Taiwan or in my expectations for professional development in coming to Japan? The result of this research is a reaffirmation of my pedagogical position of cultivating reciprocal connections with my students. I based this position largely on a social constructivist approach to learning and on my earlier teaching and research experience. My class constituted a shared community for my students and me to engage in conversations on a more even footing, negotiate meaning and sense together, and co-construct learning experience (Vygotsky, 1986; Freire, 2000). On the other hand, the research result has directed me toward professional growth in terms of global Englishes and English as a lingua franca (Jenkins, 2015). Instead of self-doubting my identity as a nonnative speaker English teacher and claiming a relatively passive role in contributing to pedagogical and curricular transformation, this study has encouraged me to value the richness of my students' linguistic, cultural, and lived experiences as well as my own (Holliday, 2013). In fact, I have taken action to participate in a special interest group on English as a lingua franca (ELF) and to conduct an empirical inquiry into ELF-informed classroom pedagogy.

In addition to the personal significance, the implications of this study also call for reconsideration of threshold competencies in TESOL. The self-reflective data in this study highlight the gap between professional development and practical needs. Although the potential helpful effects of the inter-relational dimensions of the zone of proximal development are evident, training and development are often reduced to an improvement in techniques and tactics of teaching (Goldstein, 1999; Velasquez, West, Graham, & Osguthope, 2013). This study reveals an urge for increased attention on the humane aspects of teaching. Moreover, despite the rising awareness of English as a lingua franca, there remains a tendency to prioritize an ideal model of English and a stereotypical image of English teachers (Matsumoto, 2018; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Professional development and training are supposed to help teachers construct legitimate teacher identity, emphasizing their diverse study, work, and life backgrounds, which are expected to have an educational effect on their students.

Finally, there exist limitations in the methodology used in this self-

study paper, including the limited focused subjects and small data size. In addition to the teacher's self-reflections and students' perception data, teacher professional identity construction may also be uncovered from collegial perspectives responding to questions such as "What are some induction processes to acculturate teachers into a community of practice?" and "What are the conflicts and complementarities among various teacher backgrounds and identities?" Despite the limitations, this small-scale self-study project may serve as a cornerstone for further investigation into teacher professional identity development, humane pedagogy, and intercultural communicative competence.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Categories of My Personal Descriptors.

Identity Category	Who I am	How I teach	What my educational choices are
Personal Descriptors	· autonomous · a caring partner · an acculturator · a foreigner · a nonnative speaker of English · a role model · a critical reflective practitioner · a submissive follower	· pedagogic care · reciprocity · (lack of) cultural competence · faithful imitation · legitimate participation · routinized and technicized practices · lack of higher order activities	· humane pedagogical position · native-speakerism · global Englishes · professionalism

Figure 1. Cards illustrating my identity trajectory.

Figure 2. Theoretical perspectives of this study.