

Teaching Environment and Professional Lives of EFL Instructors

Saturday 2 September 2023 14:20 (40 minutes)

The academic backgrounds of EFL instructors in Japanese higher education institutions (HEI) are diverse, unlike those in earlier formal educational institutions. In addition, not all Japanese HEI instructors have started their English teaching careers because of their interests or aspirations. This session will explore the professional lives of three Japanese EFL instructors (including the presenter) who became involved in English language teaching (ELT) without a TESOL qualification, such as a graduate degree or the completion of a relevant certificate programme, or some form of training in English language teaching. In so doing, I will first introduce two concepts that shape this study: 'Apprenticeship of Observation' (Lortie, 1975, 2002) and 'Community of Practice' (Wenger, 1998). This will then be followed by the narratives shared by the participants, collected through in-person semi-structured interviews. The three participants not only differ in the ways and reasons for how they chose or "ended up" in ELT but also in the path they took after their involvement. The focus will extend beyond the participants' personal journeys to their practices in the classrooms, experiences within the programme that they teach, their expectations, and the challenges they encountered. The discussion will also extend to how the difficulties they faced could be mitigated not just for them but could also apply to a wider population of EFL instructors, such as those with little experience teaching in institutional ELT programmes, albeit with relevant qualifications or training. This exploration will provide insights into the overall improvement in ELT in Japanese HEIs.

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Track Classification: Main