Age and Professional Identity: EFL Teachers at Tertiary Institutions in Japan

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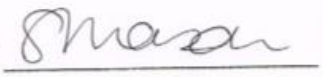
Contents

Abstract

This qualitative study, which uses a narrative inquiry approach, presents data from in-depth interviews with seven participants working in EFL at tertiary institutions throughout Japan. This thesis contributes to the field of language teacher identity by expanding it to include a focus on the construct of age as a key component of identity. It was found that the participants' age identities were co-constructive of their professional development; that they constructed their age contextually, relative to the ages of their students and other teachers; the participants' age identities were chronologically framed by their institutions and used to manage their professional opportunities.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed)  Date 23 Sept. 2018

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Chapter 1: Age in Academia

A Vignette

Excerpt from a conversation overheard between two faculty members, one of whom had spent the morning perusing resumes from various candidates for an EFL position at a tertiary institution in Japan:

Faculty member:	Any good ones (applicants)?
Senior Faculty member:	Well… (pointing to a resume) … not him. He's reached his use by date.

The above conversation took place shortly after I had obtained my first full-time EFL teaching position at a university in Japan. I was 46 and had finished my Master's degree (Coursework) one year prior. I was uneasy about the thought of a human having a 'use-by date' in the same way that groceries for sale in a store might have one. I wondered, what was the shelf life of an English teacher? As I considered thesis topics for the Master's degree (Research) I wanted to embark on for the next stage of my educational journey, *age* struck me as highly salient to my own life. After 17 years in Japan, working in conversation schools and then raising a family, I thought about my own identity as a researcher and as an English teacher working in the higher education sector. Looking back at my early days in Japan, I remembered occasionally feeling weak and disrespected, yearning to be just a little older, just a little higher up the age hierarchy. Now I pondered, is there any good age to be? And if there is, have I missed it?

The purpose of this thesis is to explore two questions pertaining to age and teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) at tertiary institutions in Japan. First, this thesis seeks to explore how teachers' age identities affect their professional development from the point of view of English teachers. Second, it explores the individual and contextual construction of age identity in the workplace. To this end, the following research questions were framed:

1. How does age construct the narratives found in the life stories of TESOL teachers working at tertiary institutions in Japan?

2. How is age socially constructed in the case of TESOL teachers working at tertiary institutions in Japan and what implications does this construction have for their teacher identities?

Although age has heretofore not been the focus of research in the field of TESOL, there has been sustained interest in language teacher identity (LTI) over the last two decades (Cheung, Said, & Park, 2014; Varghese, Motha, Park, Reeves, & Trent, 2016). The conceptualisation of LTI used in this study draws on ongoing discussion and research into identity in the social sciences. Gee (2000, p. 99) defined identity as, "Being recognized as a certain 'kind of person', in a given context". This definition has been referred to in various LTI studies (McGriff, 2015; Nagatomo, 2016; Nguyen, 2016; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Gee's definition of LTI is applied in this study, but has been extended thus; "Being recognised as a certain kind of person in the context of working as a language teacher". This definition encapsulates the significance of identity in this study of the workplace identity of language teachers. The following is a list and definitions of other key terminology used throughout this study:

Key Terminology

Age category: Division of the life span into categories based on 'age category discourse'; for example, 'childhood', 'adolescence' and 'middle age'.

Ageism: "… negative attitudes or behaviours toward an individual solely based on that person's age" (Greenberg, Schimel, & Mertens, 2002, p. 27).

Biological age: Age determined using bio-molecular techniques. It refers to physical indicators (at the cellular and chromosomal level) of age and is distinct from chronological age (Moreira, 2016).

Chronological age: Age conceptualised as a measure of the passage of time. When a person describes their age as 18 or 50 for example, they are reporting their chronological age.

Life course: (sometimes written as one word 'lifecourse') refers to institutionally and normatively embedded *action* (Mayer, 2009). It implies movement through various stages of life, from birth to death. This perspective divides the life course into age categories; for example, childhood and adolescence. Additionally, it divides the life course into various stages of family membership; for example, "being single, independent and working, being a parent of young children, or being an 'empty nester' (those whose children have recently left home)" (AUCD, downloaded 31 January, 2018). This perspective presents family membership roles and the life course as co-constitutive. Life course stages are a type of socially constructed age (Bytheway, 2011, p. 31).

Socially constructed age: "A discursive process whereby people give meaning to the experience of aging and create their age identity through their interaction with each other" (Andrew, 2012, p. 44).

Overview

This thesis is comprised of seven chapters. Following this introduction is Chapter 2, Literature Review. This chapter reviews the social sciences literature which establishes age as a social construct and contextualises the lives of academics working in the tertiary education sector in Japan to assist reader understanding. The gap in the literature pertaining to age as a dimension of LTI is also established. Chapter 3, Methodology introduces the seven participants, the means of data collection and the how the data was analysed. It also presents the theoretical framework used to guide the data analysis. A discussion of this researcher's positionality and its relevance to this study is also provided. Chapters 4 and 5 provide the findings of this study. In the first instance, these are narrative constructions of the participants' lives, and in the second instance are

thematic summaries of data. Chapter 6, Discussion, is the analytical portion of this thesis. Chapter 7 concludes this thesis by summarising the themes explored in chapters 4-6, highlighting the study limitations, and by proposing suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of the literature associated with the main areas of interest in this study; namely, age (2.1), LTI and narrative (2.2), and the Japanese context (2.3).

2.1. Age

Age as a social construct is under researched when compared with gender, class, and race or ethnicity (Andrew, 2012). Yet, age is a significant dimension of identity. Like gender and race, age is one of the first things we notice about another person, (Fiske, 1998; Kite, Deaux, & Miele, 1991). Moreover, the perception of another's age drives the manner of our interactions with them, determining how we address them, how loudly we speak, the rate of speech, and what we infer about them concerning social and cognitive competencies, political and religious beliefs and physical abilities (Cuddy & Fiske, 2002). Age also determines the level of respect shown to a conversation partner and whether communication is engaged in or avoided (McCann et al., 2005).

There is scant literature in the field of LTI that focuses directly on age, and what little there is tends to focus on the issue of ageism and professional development. In a position paper, Templer (2003) has called for research to address ageism in TESOL employment practices globally. Morgan (2009) also reported in a research project undertaken by a group of his students in Canada that age discrimination takes place on a global level in TESOL industry employment practices. Porcaro (2016) recently discussed his experience of institutionalised ageism while working in the higher education sector in Japan, documenting the effects of regulations concerning mandatory retirement on his career. Writing just after he had been mandatorily retired from his university English teaching position, Porcaro (2016) discusses the, "affronting, asinine assumption that older teachers lack the energy, motivation, and innovation of younger teachers and thus must be replaced in their positions by those presumed to be better because they are younger" (p. 135). These three studies all deal with ageism directed at English teachers in the latter part of their careers. Although ageism is most commonly used to refer to discriminatory attitudes and practices directed at the

middle-aged and elderly, it is also possible for younger people to be victims of ageism if age is the criterion used to deny them fair treatment.

Various fields, including gerontology, psychology and sociology have investigated age as a social construct (Bytheway, 2011; Gullette, 2004, 2011, 2017; Higo, 2010, 2013; Sokolovsky, 2008). Due to the sparse nature of research and theorisation on age in linguistics and TESOL however, this dissertation also draws on the work from these other social science fields.

Age can be viewed from a variety of different perspectives. For instance, chronological age – age expressed numerically as a measure of the passage of time since birth – can be contrasted with other methods of age reporting such as categorical age reporting. Categorical age reporting involves the division of one's life span into categories, and may involve the use of specific terminology such as 'pre-teens', 'thirty-somethings' and 'seniors'. Prior to industrialisation, many societies relied on categorical age reporting (Makoni, 1997). In western societies generally, use of chronological age increased in the twentieth century and is linked to the certainty requirements of modern bureaucracies (Moreira, 2015).

Chronological age is not necessarily connected to an individual's physical condition. The inadequacy of chronological age as a measure of human physical condition, long recognised by the medical and scientific community, has led to the more widespread use of bio-molecular techniques for measuring and researching age in the field of bio-gerontology (Vincent, 2006). Nonetheless, chronological age has an important role in "supporting the institutional structures and processes that organise the lifecourse" (Moreira, 2015, p. 1408). Examples of this role include the use of chronological age in determining the point of entry into formal education, laws relating to marriage, and rules concerning mandatory retirement.

The age perspective used most frequently in the social sciences is chronological age. Eckert observes, "to the Western social scientist, chronological age *is* age" (1998, Section 3. Approaches to Age, para. 1). In applied linguistics and in TESOL,

age has generally been studied from an empiricist rather than a constructionist standpoint, in terms of learners and language acquisition. Specifically, the critical period hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967), which argues there is a neurobiologically-based critical period for normal acquisition of an L1 in early childhood, has been extensively researched in the field of second language (L2) acquisition.

This empiricist standpoint has been accompanied by an under theorisation of age. When characterising the theorisation of age in sociolinguistics, Coupland (2014) states; "It has usually been assumed that adult-hood (implying young and mid-adulthood) is the empty stage upon which the social dramas of gender, class and ethnicity are played out in their various contexts" (p. 185). The field of linguistics has rarely taken a critical approach to age.

The constructivist stance can be contrasted to the empiricist stance. Eckert (1998) outlined this alternative view of age by comparing our understanding of age with our understanding of gender. Like gender, age can be viewed as a biological status and as a social construction. According to Coupland (1997), people discursively construct themselves and their speaking partners in terms of age. Coupland criticised earlier use of age categories in linguistics research as 'descriptive empiricism', claiming it ignores the age-constitutive character of routine conversational talk.

Andrew (2012) adopted a post-structuralist position in her research into the age experience of learners. She defined social constructionism as a perspective on reality; "Simply put, reality is seen as constructed through discursive interaction" (Andrew, 2012, p. 27). She continued to state that it is a perspective that has numerous themes including relational focus, language and discourse, dialogue, identity and narration. She then reviewed how three social constructs (i.e., gender, race and class) have been constructed in recent sociolinguistic research. Andrew concluded that age can be constructed socially.

The position taken on the social construction of age is most easily understood by comparing it to well-known developments in our understanding of sex and

gender. In the late twentieth century the post-structuralist Butler (1990), distinguished sex from gender, arguing that sex is a biological category; whereas gender is socially constructed. In this sense, gender identity is not so much a state of being as it is a performance or an achievement. Similarly, 'age' can be conceptualised as a performance, achieved through such matters as choice of clothing, behaviour and discourse, references to one's own age or another's age in conversation, and so on.

Age category discourses and cohort membership discourses also contribute to the social construction of age. The terminology to describe population cohorts such as "baby boomers" or "digital natives" rely on an understanding of shared experiences and characteristics presumed to be held by people grouped together by chronological age. Andrew (2012) observed that age category divisions of the life span are arbitrary, and different cultures possess different divisions. Nonetheless, categorical age references and cohort references, to one's self or one's conversation partner, contribute to the discursive construction of age identity.

2.2 LTI and narrative ways of knowing

The study of teacher identity is important because "a teacher's identity is closely linked to the professional choices they make, and their construction of identity is integral their process of professional learning" (Goh, 2014, p. xii). Second, it can be justified on the basis that an understanding of teacher identity illuminates the professional lives of teachers. It is therefore valuable because it can indicate where both injustice and difficulties may exist, which is a necessary precursor to addressing such issues. It is this second point that is most generalisable beyond the language learning and teaching contexts.

The present study draws on Varghese, Morgan, Johnston and Johnsons' (2005) seminal paper which theorises on language teacher identity. The authors summarise three central notions in the LTI construct. First, they characterise LTI as multidimensional, dynamic, contradictory and conflicting. This first point highlights the inconsistency and transitory nature of identity and furthermore,

the importance of teacher agency. Moreover, it is in opposition to earlier conceptualisations of identity that held it as fixed, stable, unitary and coherent. Second, LTI is related to the social, cultural and political context in which teachers are working. This second point highlights the significance of the particularities of the context in which teachers work. Third, LTI is built and maintained through language and discourse, a point consistent with poststructuralist theory.

Based on these three central notions, studies conducted on teacher identity in general education, and in TESOL more specifically, tend to be generally language or discourse-driven and richly contextualised. This is "in order to facilitate the more complex observation of the teacher and allow for the inclusion of contradiction and conflict" (Yesilbursa, 2012, p. 469). The post structuralist view of identity held by Varghese et al. (2005) and summarised above has replaced the structural determinism of a Marxist approach with a flexible, open approach that recognises the power of context (e.g., institutional context, political context, and social context).

Such poststructuralist approaches have not been without their critics. Varghese et al. (2005) observed that post-structural approaches which argue identity is constructed and maintained through discourse may be subject to the usual criticisms of poststructural approaches; namely, "power is seen to reside too exclusively in language and not enough in the material world" (p38-39). They then go on to counter this argument by citing the assertion from Weedon (1999, p. 107; cited in Varghese et al., 2005) that "meanings of the material world are produced within discourse" (p. 39).

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century there has been a surge in narrative studies of personal experience in the social sciences (Watson, 2007). Such studies have argued for a direct connection between identity and narrative. Articulating this stance, Hinchman and Hinchman (2001) claimed, "identity is that which emerges in and through narrative" (p. xviii). The perspective that narrative can be construed as the ontological basis of identity was put forth by

Bruner (1986) and has been adopted in numerous narrative studies (Gill & Goodson, 2011; Goodson, 2003; Nagatomo, 2012; Watson, 2007).

Narrative and age identity are closely linked. Narratives construct identity, including age identity. The life story form of narrative is particularly powerful as a means of creating age identity. According to Andrew (2012); "The life-story narrative is inevitably a story of aging for it articulates and gives meaning to the human experience of change over time by highlighting and interpreting the significant happenings in our lives" (p. 64). Gullette (2004) has argued that life story narratives in the west are binary, in that they are either narratives of progress or decline, with decline inevitably following progress.

2.3 LTI Studies

Although LTI can be considered a stand-alone construct, it has largely been viewed as a composite of various other constructs such as race, gender, native speaker status, religion, sexuality and class. These constructs have been explored by many empirical researchers who have each taken different stances regarding the emphasis placed on constructs in their research. Liu and Xu (2011) provided a historical account of LTI research since the start of the century and observed that there are three prominent foci of research in TESOL teacher identity research: linguistic identities; the implementation of pedagogical reforms; and the effect of social identities on professional identities.

The first strand of research focuses on the relationship between language teachers' linguistic identities and their professional identities. Specifically, this research explored the construction of English language teacher identity in terms of a dichotomy: either native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) or non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) and is a field of pertinence to LTI. Much of this research has focused on the construction of NNEST identities as deficient in contrast to NEST identities (Aneja, 2016). This research has been significant for two decades and the issues continue to be probed with recent innovations in theoretical approaches (see Braine, 1999; Canagarajah, 2012; Aneja, 2016; Ellis,

2016). The concept of linguistic identity has also been closely allied with racial identities (Lin et al., 2004).

Another strand of research focuses on the experience of language teachers implementing western pedagogical approaches during periods of educational reform. These studies have been primarily conducted in developing countries. Tsui's (2007) longitudinal narrative inquiry explored the identity formation of an EFL teacher working at a university in China. It demonstrated the interaction between the institutional construction of teacher identity and the personal reconstruction of identity by the teacher. Clarke (2008), in a discourse-based study of 75 pre-service English teachers in the UAE, looked at the construction of teacher identity during a period of educational reform. Similarly, Liu and Xu (2011) conducted a narrative inquiry study that explored one EFL teacher's adjustment to the implementation of a new pedagogical approach at a university in China. Moreover, using a narrative inquiry life history approach, Mirzaee and Aliakbari (2017) presented insights on the identity construction processes of an Iranian EFL teacher in Iran under a new pedagogical regime. Like the participant in the Tsui study (2007), Mirzaee and Aliakbari's participant eventually capitulated to the requirements of administrative policy. Collectively, these studies have provided nuanced pictures of LTI development through submission and resistance to institutionally condoned pedagogical practices, and demonstrate LTI is constructed both personally and institutionally.

A third strand of research; namely, those studies that posit a connection between teachers' social identities and their professional identities, has been an enduring theme in LTI research (Lin, et. al. 2004; Park, 2009; Simon-Maeda, 2004). These studies broadly argue that conflicts arising from social identities such as gender, race, sexuality and class, as well as from cultural stereotypes, constitute the socially marginalised realities of teachers' lives both within and without classrooms.

The literature contains studies of English language teacher sexual identity (Kupfer, 2000; Lander, 2018; Nelson, 1991), and also descriptions of the use of

narratives of queer teacher lives as a pedagogical resource within the EFL classroom (O'Mochain, 2009). These studies are united in arguing that when teachers enter classrooms they bring with them all aspects of their identity and that this necessarily impacts student learning.

Race is also a theme addressed in LTI literature. Seven female TESOL professionals of colour working at various tertiary institutions, globally (Lin, et. al., 2004) have theorised that "discursive practices of gender, class, and race must be connected to histories of conquest, slavery, and colonialism" (p. 488). The experience of white privilege was also explored by Motha (2006) in a study of high school ESL teachers conducted in America. Both papers highlight the need to challenge institutional cultures that support the supremacy of 'whiteness'. The findings of these studies show that social constructs such as race can negatively influence professional development and are also inseparable from other social identities such as gender and class.

Although gender has been under researched in the field of TESOL (Varghese, Motha, Park, Reeves, & Trent, 2016), it continues to expand. Key studies with a gender focus include Park (2009), and Simon Maeda (2004). In a narrative study, Park (2009) analysed a female Korean English teacher's professional and identity development. The study illustrated a case of a gender role being internalised, and where transitions in a husband's career determine how a woman continues her educational and professional life. Park (2009) observed that this supportive spousal identity is legitimated through powerful societal discourses. A key finding of the study is that the participant's "mother" and "spouse" identities determined her professional aspirations, as did her identity experience working as a NNEST in America.

Simon-Maeda (2004) reported the life history narratives of nine female EFL teachers working in tertiary institutions in Japan. The findings highlighted advancing age as a liability for foreign non-tenured English teachers, placing them at a disadvantage in securing employment.

The Simon Maeda (2004) study is one of a larger group of LTI studies to address gender in Japan (see also Appleby, 2013, 2014; Hicks, 2013; Nagatomo, 2012, 2015, 2016; Yoshihara, 2017). Recent studies by Nagatomo (2012, 2015, 2016) used narrative analysis and life history, an approach that illustrates an understanding of the participants' life course position as integrally connected to professional identity. Nagatomo (2015), a narrative inquiry with one female participant, reported damage to professional identity as a result of motherhood. Nagatomo (2016) investigated the personal and professional lives of 10 foreign female English teachers in Japan. Appleby's (2013, 2014) studies of NEST male participants analysed gender identity as it intersects with racial and professional identity. Appleby's (2013) discourse-based study, chronicles the movement of white, male, NESTs into university employment in Japan, and their discursive construction of marriage and university employment as life course developments signifying mature masculinity. Homosocial networks have been implicated in the marginalised experience of female TESOL teachers working in Japan (Hicks, 2013). The most recent of these Japan-based gender studies by Yoshihara (2017) applied Weedon's poststructuralist feminist theory of subjectivity gender to conduct a narrative study of eight female English teachers working at universities in Japan. These studies are all informed by a poststructuralist approach, and their findings substantiate the significance of gender as a dimension of LTI that can be constructed to male advantage and female disadvantage in the Japanese context.

Context is frequently discussed in LTI literature. Barkhuizen (2008) proposed the need to look beyond the immediate context of classroom interactions to the wider context of school and society as a way of enriching the understandings gained through empirical research. Barkhuizen (2016) foregrounded the participant's class and ethnic status and conducted a life history narrative inquiry involving nine years of data collection. Likewise, Gu (2011) placed emphasis on context in a study of seven mainland Chinese pre-service teachers in Hong Kong. The study adopted a holistic view of identity formation by focusing not only on the world of the classroom but also on "pre-existing social relationships and realities" (p. 140). The study showed the pre-service teachers

negotiated their identities both in the immediate context of relationships with students and peers and discursively in the broader context of professional language teaching in Hong Kong. The study contextualised the participants in terms of their ethnicity and class status, and explored the implications of their social identity for their LTI. Studies such as Barkhuizen (2016) and Gu (2011) illustrate the need for rich contextualisation in narrative studies in order for social and professional identities to be fully understood.

Language teacher identity literature is rich in studies of student teachers and novice teachers (see Clarke, 2008; Gu, 2011, 2013; Yuan & Lee, 2016). By contrast, much less attention has been paid to more mature mid-career and senior teachers with considerable years of experience; a point made by Farrell (2011) and reiterated by Kostoulas and Mercer (2016). However, if identity is an "ongoing narrative project" throughout the lifespan (Giddens, 1991), studies of teachers at different ages could contribute to an understanding of LTI transformation as teachers move through the life course.

Those studies that have focussed on more mature teachers have generally not focussed on age as a construct, for example, Trent and Gao (2009). This discourse analysis study involved eight second-career teachers working in Hong Kong. The study reported that the teachers, generally aged in their thirties and forties, experienced marginalisation by their institutions, but nonetheless they could use their agency to enact their preferred LTIs. It should be noted however, this study did not address the age identity of the participants so much as prior work experience as an element of professional identity.

One developing area in LTI studies is metaphor analysis. Farrell (2011) conducted a study of the professional role identities of three experienced English language teachers working at a tertiary college in Canada. Qualitative analysis of group discussions helped Farrell identify 16 common role identities. Nguyen (2016) focused on primary school English teachers working in Vietnam. Using life history interviews, the author identified the multiple identities of English teachers in this context. Yesilbursa's (2012) questionnaire-based research

reported on the ways in which 35 Turkish university English language instructors perceived their professional role identities. Content analysis of the metaphors revealed nine overall themes. All the aforementioned metaphor-based studies reveal the multiplicity of LTI.

LTI studies are characterised by widespread use of discourse and narrative approaches, and a focus on context, linguistic identities, socially marginalised identities and the impact of policy and pedagogical reforms. However, as revealed in the previous review, little attention has been paid to age, a gap this thesis seeks to fill.

2.4 Japan

Japan is an aging society. The 2015 Japan Census Report showed that the number of elderly people in Japan has increased, with people aged 65 or older now accounting for 26.7 per cent of the 127.11 million population. The Census also reports that the average household has shrunk in size to only 2.39 members.

In Japan, different levels of participation in childrearing and household chores exist between men and women. Women do almost all the child rearing and household chores; whereas, their husbands are often absent, either working or participating in work-related socialising (Yu, 2012). However, recent media attention in Japan has focused on the increasing role played by some fathers in domestic matters such as childrearing. Such fathers are termed *ikumen* by the media, "a buzzword that describes fathers who are actively involved in childrearing" (Mizukoshi, Kohlbacher, & Schimkowsky, 2015, p. 212). So, while stereotypical ideas of the social roles played by men and women have guided the wage structures of standard employees for some time, there are indicators of a change in societal level discourses concerning gender in Japan.

One observation made in the fields of sociology and gerontology since the late 1980s is that there has been an increase in heterogeneity in life course trajectories. Moreira (2015) has argued that the cause of heterogeneity in transitions to adulthood and retirement are "the forces of globalisation, labour

market de-regulation, re-structuration of public services and (page break) individualisation processes" (pp. 1407-1408). In the case of Japan, there has been an increase in the number of part-time and contingent workers in Japan across both genders, as well as an increase in the diversity of, ages and types of employment undertaken by these workers (Kamuro, 2016, n.p.). Furthermore, a study of dispatch workers by Chae (2016) reported that female and older workers perceived there to be less organisational support from employers compared to the support for male and younger counterparts. The author concluded that there is an implication that employers do not support equally all the dispatched workers and this discrimination is based on gender and age.

The Japanese Constitution (1946) lists the fundamental human rights of the nation's citizens. Article 14, paragraph 1 guarantees equality under the law and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin. It does not however prohibit discrimination on the grounds of age, sexual orientation or disability. Despite the historical influence of Confucian philosophy on Japanese sociocultural structures, as well as the importance of filial piety as a concept in Japan (Jenike & Traphagan, 2008), the prevalence of age-based discriminatory treatment in employment practices remains an issue (Higo, 2010, 2013).

Japanese law allows the mandatory retirement age to be determined by the employer, with the current mandatory retirement age ranging, from 60 to 70 years of age (Arimoto, 2016, p. 275). The mandatory retirement provision is an integral part of the Japanese employment system in conjunction with the age/seniority wage alignment (Sakuraba, 2007) that results in wage increases for standard workers as they age. This approach to retirement can be contrasted with the approach taken in other countries such as the US, Australia, and Canada where mandatory retirement ages are largely prohibited due to concerns about age discrimination. This ageist legislation affects workers engaged in both standard and contingent forms of employment in Japan.

Employment in the conversation school industry in Japan requires few credentials, and little is required other than an undergraduate degree in any subject (Rimmer, 2011). Recruits are generally male and are mainly chosen on the basis of their physical appearance (Kubota, 2011), and they are also generally young (Bueno, 2003). Recruiting practices such as these may well be to appeal to the largely female student body of such schools, and advertising for this type of school often centres on young, attractive, male teachers photographed together will smitten students (Piller & Takahashi, 2006).

The hiring situation at Japanese universities is somewhat different from that of many conversation schools. Japan's aging population is affecting the composition of the workforce in Japanese universities. In 2005, the average age of faculty staff employed at Japanese universities was 48.1 years (Arimoto, 2015). This situation has brought about "a social problem of many jobless post-doctors, although most of them want to become academics" (Arimoto, 2016, p. 274). Furthermore, government policy is increasingly encouraging universities to hire candidates with doctorate degrees (Daizen & Yamanoi, 2008). Therefore, due to the higher credential requirement and the increasing scarcity of available positions, gaining an academic position in Japan is becoming increasingly difficult.

The academic workforce in tertiary institutions in Japan is largely homogenous in terms of ethnicity and gender. Roughly 80% of academics working at tertiary institutions in Japan are male (MEXT, 2018). Non-Japanese teachers represent only 3.8% of full time teaching staff at Japanese universities and colleges. Approximately 20% of non-Japanese teachers in full-time English teaching related positions are women (Appleby, 2013). In sum, the vast majority of academics working at universities in Japan are both Japanese and male.

There is a hierarchy amongst teachers and academics working in Japanese tertiary institutions that Nagatomo (2012) described as a four-tiered structure. Part-time teachers are at the first tier and have little job security – many of whom must renew their contracts annually – and receive relatively low pay. The

percentage of teachers working at universities on part-time contracts is increasing, with Arimoto (2015) reporting that since 2008 the number of part-time academics working at universities has exceeded the number of full-time academics. Assistant Professors are at the second tier of employment, many of whom are permanent employees. In 1997 however, the Ministry of Education introduced a type of full-time employment called '*ninkisei*'. This position has a full-time teacher's class load but reduced or no administrative responsibilities. *Ninkisei* employment involves fixed-term contracts which generally do not exceed five years and are not open to extension. Associate Professors are the third tier of employment comprises, with the fourth tier represented by (full) Professors.

The employment conditions of academics in Japan are determined by the laws and management practices of the country. Although job advertisements for positions in the tertiary sector do not indicate desirable age categories (JREC-IN, 2018), a general understanding of the accepted career trajectory can be gleaned from academic publications such as Arimoto (2015) who described an academic's typical life course as follows:

> The professional curriculum vitae would include doctoral studies leading to a PhD at around 30 years of age, a career path of appointments and promotions, through grades of assistant, lecturer, associate professor, and professor, and of structural mechanisms such as examination, probation, term-limited appointment, and tenure. (p. 2)

Age is also mentioned as a relevant factor in professional development by Nagatomo (2012) who stated; "Tenure is generally offered when a person in their 20s or 30s is hired as an assistant professor" (p.34). Following that, promotion to Associate Professor and Professor generally occurs over time without undue struggle (Poole, 2010). Notably, both Arimoto and Nagatomo specify chronological age as a feature of appropriacy for appointment

2.5 Summary

There have been numerous studies in the last two decades attesting to the diversity of elements that come into play as TESOL teachers construct their identities. Such studies demonstrate the multiple dimensions of identity and their interconnectedness. These dimensions include gender, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and class (Barkhuizen, 2016; Lin et al., 2004; Nagatomo, 2016; Nelson, 1999; Park, 2009; Simon-Maeda, 2004). In addition, studies have shown identity construction in response to institutional constraints, including authorised pedagogical approaches (Clarke, 2008; Gu & Benson, 2015; Liu & Xu, 2011; Tsui, 2007), and in the case of language teachers, native speaker status and alignment with cultures of the *periphery* or *centre* of the English-speaking world (Canagarajah, 2012; Varghese et. al., 2004).

What these studies have established is the multi-dimensionality of identity. What is missing from these studies however is a focus on age. The current dissertation seeks to further explore age as a dimension of LTI. The current literature provides a basis for conceptualising age as a social construct (Andrew, 2012; Eckert, 1998; Higo, 2010). Moreover, the literature discussed above has provided a focus for the research questions regarding age by articulating a socially constructed age perspective. Age is a social construct experienced and enacted by everyone, and its universality implies significance and warrants exploration.

In line with the poststructuralist research discussed above, this study adopts a dynamic and fluid conceptualisation of LTI. Following other scholarship which explores how, "individual teachers negotiate their own professional or personal identities and how this negotiation affects their professional development and pedagogical approaches" (Aneja, 2016, p. 575), this research also outlines a contextualised view of identity negotiation and professional development. In sum, this dissertation is aligned with research demonstrating that teacher identity influences both pedagogy and professional development. This dissertation seeks to contribute to that field of inquiry.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter begins with an overview of narrative inquiry, the qualitative approach employed in this present study. Following this is a description of the case study method, data collection process, and data analysis procedure applied in this research investigation, along with details of the integration of ethical issues into the research process. The chapter concludes with a summary of the design and methodological issues discussed throughout the chapter.

3.1 Narrative Approach

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) define narrative inquiry as, "the study of experience as story" (p. 477). Barkhuizen, Benson and Chik (2014) define narrative inquiry as, "an established umbrella term for research involving stories" (p. 3). Both definitions indicate that *story* is the key element in narrative inquiry, distinguishing it from other types of qualitative inquiry.

Polkinghorne (1995) outlines the epistemological basis for the study of narrative and by extrapolation its validity as a research goal. He writes, "Stories express a kind of knowledge that uniquely describes human experience in which actions and happenings contribute positively and negatively to attaining goals and fulfilling purposes" (1995, p. 8). This position justifies narrative inquiry as a valuable strand of qualitative research in the social sciences, one that creates a type of knowledge distinct from the more widely accepted scientific or "paradigmatic" knowledge widely generated through quantitative research. Narrative inquiry provides the reader with knowledge of the participant's understanding of her or his experience (Johnson & Golombek, 2011); it is therefore an ideal approach to use in a study where the research questions require an exploration of the construction of LTI from the teacher's perspective.

A variety of story types are used in academic research (Benson, 2014), ranging from the "grand narrative" of culture-wide ideologies seen in the work of Lyotard (1984) through to the "small stories" of everyday talk explored in the work of Watson (2007). The present study focuses on life history as a story type. In life history studies, the participant's life story is the starting point of the

exploration that is typically situated within an historical, social and cultural context (Gill & Goodson, 2011).

Narrative as a methodology has previously been used in studies of age; for example, Andrew (2012), Higo (2010) and Gubrium and Holstein (2006). Numerous studies in the field of LTI have also adopted the narrative methodology during the past 20 years. See for example, Aneja (2016), Barkhuizen (2016), Duff and Uchida (1997), Lee (2010), Nagatomo (2012, 2016), Park (2009), Simon-Maeda (2004), Tsui 2007, and Wolff and De Costa (2017).

3.2 Method and Data Collection

The method used in this research investigation is case study. Yin (2012) summarises three key features of case study as a method: it aims at an 'in-depth' exploration of one or a small number of cases; it provides a dynamic view of a case as it develops over time; and it provides significant contextualisation (Yin, 2012). The present study is comprised of seven participant "cases" (Table: The Participants).

The data in this study was primarily developed through semi-structured interviews (Appendix A Interview Questions), follow-up e-mail, a demographic questionnaire (Appendix B) and researcher memos. In addition, the participants drew pictorial representations of their careers to date, and provided hand written timelines of their lives including key dates for both personal and professional events.

In terms of participant recruitment, an invitation to participate was advertised on Facebook through the College and University Educators Facebook, which is a group associated with the Japan Association of Language Teachers (JALT). The call for participants outlined the aim of the research and the nature of the study. Eight people who met the specified criteria responded to the call, with seven ultimately participating in the study to its conclusion. One respondent left Japan, and the study, shortly after responding to the call for participants.

Participation in the study was based on informed consent and fulfilment of the requirements specified in the invitation to participate. To clarify, to be eligible the participants must be working at tertiary institutions in Japan and have work duties that included teaching English. Teachers of various ages, genders and nationalities were interviewed. The non-Japanese participants who appear in the study were coincidentally all Caucasian and from inner-circle Anglophone countries.

Table: The participants

Participant (pseudonyms)	Nationality	Age	Position	Highest Qualification
Yuta	Japan	28	Part-time at two institutions	MA*
Ren	Japan	34	Professor (Tenured)	PhD
Alexandra	North America	36	Professor (Untenured)	MA*
Anthony	Australia	45	Professor (Tenured)	PhD
Beth	North America	50	Part-time at various tertiary institutions	MA
Hina	Japan	56	Part-time at various institutions	MA
Shin	Japan	63	Professor (Tenured)	PhD

*Enrolled in a PhD program at the time of the study

Participant interviews were conducted face to face in coffee shops or at their workplaces. Most of the participants were interviewed once with follow up questions for clarification generally taking place via email. However, due to the proximity of their workplace to the researcher, two participants were interviewed face to face on two occasions. The interviews were audio recorded.

The total length of recorded interviews was 11 hours and 57 minutes, with an average time per interview of 90 minutes.

The interviews took place from February to August 2017. All correspondence and interviews were conducted in English. Although some participants could speak Japanese fluently, there was reluctance to suggest the interviews should be conducted in Japanese for two reasons. First, I judged the level of my Japanese language skills to be considerably less than the participants' English language skills; and second, because the participants may have taken offense at the suggestion.

The interviews began with a question designed to elicit a brief life history. The interview items then moved to focus more directly on the aspects of life experience, teaching practices and professional development most relevant to the research questions (Zhao et al, 2010). All interviews concluded with questions designed to elicit commentary from the participants on what they perceived to be the connection, or otherwise, between their age and their teaching experiences.

The interviews were initially transcribed by a third party professional transcription company. The transcripts were reviewed by this researcher while listening to the audio recordings, making alterations and corrections as necessary. In this study, transcription was not done with the detail usually associated with conversation analysis. Instead, the intent was to undertake narrative analysis and subsequently the transcription was completed with a focus on meaning (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). Therefore hesitations, some repetitions, and fillers were omitted from the transcript where it was deemed to facilitate comprehension. Standard punctuation was also used with this aim in mind. The participants were provided with copies of the transcript and offered the opportunity to comment or make amendments where they felt appropriate. In some instances, amendments and deletions were made in accordance with participant wishes.

Although interview as the primary method of data generation in qualitative style research has become ubiquitous in the last 30 years, it is not without it critics (Block, 2000; Talmy, 2010). Such critics argue that there has been a tendency for researchers to assign objective truth value to what participants say during interviews. An attempt has been made in the present study to overcome this issue by adopting the stance in which data are considered as "'accounts' of truths, facts, attitudes, beliefs, interior, mental states, etc.," and, the analytic focus is process-oriented rather than product-oriented (Talmy, 2010, p. 132).

This thesis posits that developing understanding of the research phenomenon is a co-construction process resulting from the interactions between the researcher and the participants, and that the researcher is an integral contributor to the outcome (Gill & Goodson, 2011; Talmy, 2010). Like the participants in this study, I work at a tertiary institution in Japan and have been living in Japan for 18 years. As such, my English 'native speaker' status, age, gender (female) and nationality (Australian) have influenced the data collected during the study.

The focus in qualitative research on subjective understanding means that credibility and trustworthiness, rather than rigor and data validity, are key issues (Cope, 2014). Reflexivity, or reflection by a researcher on the social process of their research, is important for the establishment of credibility and trustworthiness. Attempts by this researcher to achieve reflexivity included discussions of my role in the research process with participants, sharing personal experiences where appropriate, forming relationships with the participants, evaluations of how I tried to manage the sensitive topic of age, and consideration of how my personal interpretations shaped the analysis that took place.

The design of this research is inherently limited in scope. This study is only able to explore the influence of institutional and cultural affordances on LTI as they are *expressed in the interviews with the participants*. The size of the study did not allow, for example, classroom observations or interviews with administrative staff and students.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis method used in this study; namely, narrative analysis, was shaped by the research questions and the qualitative approach taken. Polkinghorne (1995) distinguishes analysis of narratives from narrative analysis. Analysis of narratives involves analysis of narrative data that is extant prior to the research taking place. In contrast, narrative analysis involves analysis of narrative data created through the research process. The present study adopts the second approach.

The following five steps were followed in the process of analysis:

First, reading and re-reading the transcripts using my understanding of the Japanese context. Some preliminary analytical memos were generated at this point concerning the main themes to emerge in the data. The memos were written on paper and filed with the participants' transcripts.

Second, the data were configured into brief, draft life history narrative storylines for each participant. The narratives included contextual data and highlighted aspects of teacher identity and the dimension of age relevant to the focus of this study. They were then forwarded to the participants for comment, and amendments were made where requested.

Third, the paper copies of the transcripts were re-read , and descriptive codes were noted in the margins (Saldana, 2009).

Fourth, the data were uploaded to NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, and subsequently coded. The initial codes used in this step were drawn from the initial analytic memos and readings of the transcripts. This process resulted in the further addition and refinement of the descriptive codes and themes used in the analysis.

Fifth, after the initial NVivo coding and analysis, the analysis was further developed. The life stories were viewed through the lens of the themes

developed through coding and through application of a social constructionist view of age.

3.4 Ethical Issues

Participant privacy and confidentiality were respected throughout the research process. All participants were assigned pseudonyms, as were their places of employment. Due to the small number of foreign female English teachers working in Japan, the specific nationality of Alexandra and Beth is glossed as 'north American' throughout the text. The research was conducted in accordance with Macquarie University's ethical guidelines and therefore signed consent was obtained from all participants.

3.5 Summary

The literature discussed at the start of this chapter established the guidelines for adopting appropriate methodology and design in qualitative research. Significant studies in LTI have used narrative inquiry and these studies establish a precedent and a theoretical basis for qualitative interview-based research in this field of inquiry. Moreover, the research design focused on answering the research questions concerning LTI construction from the point of view of language teachers themselves. A case study research design was implemented using interview-based data collection methods. Data credibility and trustworthiness were achieved through the adoption of researcher reflexivity and participant data verification. Finally, all efforts were made to ensure ethical principles and procedures were integrated into the research process.

Chapter 4 Findings: Life Histories

Chapter 4 includes a series of life stories produced by the participant throughout the research process (4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7). As discussed in Chapter 3, Polkinghorne (1995) distinguishes analysis of narratives from narrative analysis. Analysis of narratives involves analysis of narrative data that is extant prior to the research taking place; whereas, narrative analysis involves analysis of narrative data that is created through the research process. This chapter is what Polkinghorne (1995) views as narrative analysis. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings (4.8).

4.1 Yuta: A Tale of Triumph Over Adversity

Yuta spent most of his childhood and adolescence in Japan, except for one year in primary school when his family was transferred to a northern European country due to his father's work. After returning to Japan, Yuta's parents enrolled him in English language classes, a language somewhat like that of the country where he had spent his year abroad.

During his second year in junior high school, Yuta developed what he terms an 'inferiority complex' about English. This was based on comparisons he made between himself and returnees from English speaking countries. He yearned to be a "native speaker". This inferiority complex continued throughout high school and into university. At university, Yuta majored in second language acquisition and achieved his English teaching license.

The final year of undergraduate studies saw a major turnaround in Yuta's attitude towards English. One of his professors introduced him to an academic concept, '*interlanguage'*, developed by Professor Shinichi Izumi. Because of this exposure, Yuta started to think more positively of himself as an English speaker, judging himself as a capable 'language user' rather than as an inadequate 'non-native speaker'.

Yuta then enrolled in a Master of Arts (MA) degree, majoring in linguistics, and started to teach English part-time at two high schools. The students at the high

schools were only four years younger than himself, and Yuta reported that he found teaching the students was difficult at times. Some students behaved disrespectfully in his classes, thinking that he would not know how to deal with them due to his apparent youth and lack of experience. Conversely, other students confided their problems to him, perhaps feeling an emotional closeness with him due to the similarity in their ages.

Yuta perceived his youth to be an advantage compared to older teachers because of his knowledge of technology. When he first started teaching he would spend a great deal of time preparing for classes, and he was anxious about making mistakes while teaching. However, Yuta recalled that he received helpful advice from older more experienced teachers.

In the final year of his MA, Yuta was successful in applying for financial support, winning both a government fellowship and a scholarship to undertake PhD studies in linguistics. The year Yuta started his PhD was significant for him because it was also when he got married. Being married also motivates Yuta to complete his PhD as quickly as possible – for financial reasons – on the understanding that a PhD will lead to full-time employment.

At the start of his PhD studies, Yuta also transitioned from secondary school teaching to the tertiary sector, teaching both linguistics and EFL part time at two different universities. As with his experiences as a high school teacher, Yuta felt that his comparative youth was an asset when it came to him being a teacher. Looking to the future, Yuta mentioned that he would be interested in taking time away from teaching in the future to either go on sabbatical or on paternity leave.

4.2 Ren: A Tale of Progress

Ren was born and largely raised in Japan. He did however spend three years in America as a pre-schooler when his family was transferred there because of his father's employment.

Ren studied diligently and subsequently enrolled at a well-known liberal arts university, University A. He had one particularly enthusiastic professor of linguistics who, in Ren's second year, helped the students to form their own study groups. Ren joined one such study group and his interest in the field blossomed. It was also during this time that he met a professor from another university, University B, who agreed to be his mentor and later his supervisor during the completion of his MA.

After graduating from University A, Ren immediately began an MA in linguistics at University B. During the final year of his MA, he applied to various PhD programs at well-known universities in the United States (US). He was accepted by all of the universities and succeeded in obtaining a scholarship to finance his studies. Leaving his somewhat surprised mentor at University B, Ren arrived in the US again, this time in his mid-twenties, and began to study at University C, a high-ranking university.

While studying in the US, Ren met a very significant figure in the linguistics field who became an important mentor during his studies. Ren's PhD progressed well and he returned on schedule to Japan in his late twenties. He immediately commenced a three-year limited term contract as a researcher at yet another prestigious university, University D. Ren continued to publish while at University D and started to teach English part-time at the university.

In his final year at University D, Ren wanted employment as a linguistics teacher, along with job security. He decided to accept a tenured position at University E, which involved teaching English and not linguistics. Having secured a tenured position, Ren now felt confident in his ability to support a family and he subsequently proposed to his girlfriend. They married shortly thereafter.

Ren continued to search for his dream position in the field of linguistics. After being at University E for fewer than two years, he was offered a tenured position at University F as a linguistics professor. Ninety per cent of the classes he teaches now are linguistics, with the other ten per cent EFL classes. As a married man,

Ren now envisages taking time out from his career for paternity leave if it will help his wife to sustain her own career as an academic.

4.3 Alexandra: A Tale of Adversity

Alexandra was born in the US and grew up in a largely white and middle-class neighbourhood. She graduated from college with a Liberal Arts degree. Unsure about what to do with her life, Alexandra decided to join the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program as an assistant English teacher, to teach English in Japan for a year. Once in Japan, Alexandra quickly realised that teaching was what she wanted to do with her life. In her first year in Japan, she completed an online TESOL certificate and soon after that commenced a Master's degree program in TESOL, part time.

Alexandra stayed as a teacher at the high school for five years before she obtained a limited term full-time contract position with X University. She was now in her late twenties. The university had many staff in the English program who were in their twenties, and she fitted right in. Alexandra married her fiancé shortly after starting work at X University, and together with her husband, made concrete plans to stay in Japan permanently to build their careers. It was also during her time at X University that Alexandra realised her career was very important to her and based on this she decided not to have children.

While in her early thirties, after four years at X University, Alexandria came across a teaching position at Y University with the possibility of a permanent position at the end of five years.

Alexandra started to publish and present her work while enrolled in the Master's degree program. By the time she was in her fourth year at Y University she had more than 50 presentations listed on her resume along with numerous publications. She was a popular teacher who had plans to undertake a PhD. Not everything was positive, though. Unlike at X University, staff in Alexandra's faculty at Y University, were, on average, older. In Alexandra's department, all of the tenured faculty were male and within 10 or 15 years of retirement. Despite

the university's generally progressive image, Alexandra felt there were 'generational' problems between herself and the older faculty members, who might have perceived her as a threat.

When a tenured position became available, Alexandra applied and interviewed for it, believing she was a strong candidate. But quite soon after starting her PhD studies she was advised by the university that it had decided not to fill the position. She was told that the decision was based on the university policy of not offering tenure unless a teacher was in the last year of their contract. Alexandra's manager asked her to wait one more year and to reapply for the teaching position. Disappointed at the university's decision, and suspecting office politics, Alexandra decided to leave.

Alexandra subsequently accepted a teaching position at another university that offered the possibility of tenure, and which had a younger-aged faculty. At the time of our interview, Alexandra was packing up her office, preparing to start her new life, and wondering if she will achieve tenure at her next university.

4.4 Anthony: A Tale of Resurrection

Anthony was born in Australia and completed his primary and secondary education there. He did not achieve the results he wanted in his first attempt at Year 12 studies and subsequently repeated the year. Although he achieved excellent results at his second attempt he became mentally exhausted in the process. Due to his state of exhaustion, Anthony was expelled from two bachelor programs at two universities on academic grounds.

Now in his early twenties, Anthony took a trip to Japan to visit a sibling. The trip opened his eyes to a world of possibility and the value of education. He returned to Australia and soon convinced both universities to give him a second chance. He successfully completed both degrees in the 1990s, only two years after returning from his brief visit to Japan.

Anthony then moved to the countryside in Korea, first working as an assistant English teacher and later transitioning to a university teacher. In his late twenties, Anthony considered leaving the education sector to work in business but decided against it. He enjoyed teaching and he felt the education sector offered him greater flexibility to personally determine the country in which he worked. He decided to return to Australia where he completed a certificate in English language teaching to adults while working at a conversation school.

After two years in Australia, Anthony relocated to Japan where he worked in a variety of positions in the public and private sectors. While in Japan Anthony also completed a Graduate Diploma in teaching and learning. From the start of his teaching career to the finish of his Graduate Diploma, Anthony, now in his mid-thirties, experienced some appalling displays of bad behaviour by some younger students. However, because of his extensive academic study combined with his experiences in teaching in various classroom settings, the classroom management issues experienced earlier in his career were no longer present.

In his late thirties, and living as a married man in Japan, Anthony decided to consolidate his career in education there. He completed a Master's degree in Educational Research online from an Australian institution while continuing to live in Japan. He taught part-time at some universities, but eventually obtained a full-time limited term contract at G University. On the cusp of his forties, he commenced a PhD program part-time and began to publish his research. Anthony quickly obtained a tenure track position at G University. At the time of our interview, Anthony had already undertaken his PhD defence and his university had decided to undertake his review for tenure one year early.

4.5 Beth: A Tale of Success

Beth was born and raised in the US. Neither of her parents were college graduates, but she wanted to study design and happened to visit a university in her hometown with a friend. Beth applied to undertake a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree there and had the good fortune to be accepted.

Beth married her fiancé immediately after graduating with a BA in Fine Arts. However, with the break-up of her marriage when in her mid-twenties, Beth was seeking new challenges. She was recruited by a Japanese conversation school chain that promoted itself to potential foreign recruits using videos of teachers socialising with the students after class.

In her early thirties, Beth got married for the second time in Japan. She had entered a more mature phase of her life and the party atmosphere at the chain school was no longer a good fit. She moved with her husband to a different region of Japan and ended her employment at the chain school. Beth then held various jobs concurrently, teaching both English and Art. While in her mid-thirties, Beth and her husband had a baby and they made the joint decision to both work part-time so that they could share child-raising responsibilities.

A couple of years after having her baby Beth started to work at a low ranking university. A co-worker at one of her part-time jobs, who held a senior position at H University, helped her obtain part-time work there. The job was offered on the proviso that she enrolled in the Master's degree program. After two years part-time, she started a limited-term, full-time position at H University. During this time, Beth also joined the Japan Association of Language Teachers and became an active member.

In her mid-forties, Beth started job hunting because her contract could at H University not be renewed. At this time, Beth was the primary earner for her family as her husband was both working part-time and studying part-time. It was a stressful time as she searched for work. Despite starting the job hunt early, and applying for numerous jobs, Beth was not able to secure interviews for full-time work. She had been active in publishing her work and presenting at academic conferences in her field during her time at H University and had completed her MA. However, her publications were not in peer-reviewed journals. Beth decided not to pursue a PhD because she felt she may not be able to recoup the investment. Furthermore, with her son attending the local school

and with a mortgage on her house, she chose not to look for work outside of the large metropolitan area where she resided.

Ultimately, Beth sought and obtained part-time work. Now 50 years old, she works at four high-ranking universities. Moreover, she continues to teach English outside of the tertiary education sector in the English testing industry, by convening private art and conversation classes, and in the production of EFL education materials.

4.6 Hina: A Tale of Struggle

Hina grew up in Japan. Her parents did not want to pay for her, a daughter, to go to cram school during high school, a decision she feels resulted in her failing to enter a four-year university. Instead, Hina attended a two–year vocational college and majored in English.

Immediately after graduating from college, Hina commenced work at a trading company. Unfortunately, she found the administrative work she was doing was boring and left the company after four years. She then pursued a change in direction and worked for various companies on a temporary basis doing editorial, writer and co-ordinator work. At age 26, Hina started working full-time for a public relations agency, in a similar role.

Hina married at 29 and her husband was soon transferred to a country in northern Europe. Hina free-lanced as a journalist and she and her husband had her first baby. At age 34, Hina and her family returned to Japan where she and her husband had their second child. The family only stayed in Japan for three years, however, as Hina's husband was transferred to the US for work.

Moving to the US had Hina back at school, this time at community college to study English. With two children to take care of, Hina studied part-time, but was eventually persuaded by a friend at community college to transfer to a four-year BA degree in Psychology. After graduating with a degree in Psychology, Hina commenced a Master's degree in Psychology, however she found it particularly

difficult to complete the internship requirements of the program while taking care of her children. She decided to change her discipline to an MA in TESOL because the internship requirements were less demanding, and she would be able to use the qualification to get work easily in Japan. Upon graduating with a MA in TESOL, Hina commenced part-time work as an ESL teacher at the university where she had studied. She worked there for 18 months before her husband was transferred back to Japan for work.

Hina was 51 when she arrived back in Japan. Both her children are university students and she is juggling various part-time teaching jobs. She considered starting a PhD in TESOL, but the costs seemed prohibitive. She did however start to work in Japan an EFL teacher. She worked various part-time jobs including conversation school classes and business English classes held on company premises. The conversation school pressured her to accept a full-time position, but she felt that was untenable due to her family responsibilities. A few years later, Hina also commenced part-time work at J University.

At the time of our interview Hina was in her mid-fifties and had been working at J University for two years. The number of periods she teaches at the university has increased over time but the overall number of hours she works has decreased. This is because Hina now plays an important role caring for her parents who are unwell.

4.7 Shin: A Tale of Satisfaction

Shin was born in the early 1950s in Japan and spent all his childhood there. He started to learn English while in junior high school and struggled as a beginner language learner. During senior high school, however, he developed a stronger interest in learning English after discovering some light detective novels written in English at home and realising that he could understand most of what he read.

In the early 1970's, Shin attended university where he completed an English Literature major. This was a pragmatic decision based on the belief that studying English would provide more employment opportunities than majoring in

Japanese. After failing a particularly competitive entrance exam for the Master's degree program in the English department at his university, Shin took on a job teaching English at a cram school where he worked for nearly seven years. While in his late twenties, Shin left the cram school to enrol at a public research university in the US. He studies a variety of subjects in the fields of TESOL, linguistics and English literature.

Shin returned to Japan in his early thirties. He originally sought employment at universities, but the fact that he had not yet had his work published made it difficult to secure work. He did however secure employment as an English teacher at a junior college. The institution's vocational nature meant that the employment position did not provide Shin with the possibility to conduct research. However, he yearned to be a researcher and continued to seek employment at universities in Japan.

In his late thirties, Shin finally attained a position at K University. In his early 50s, on the helpful advice of more senior professors at K University, he obtained a PhD and that qualification enabled him to be promoted from Associate Professor to Professor.

Shin wanted to teach students with a deep interest in English, rather than students who were enrolled in English subjects simply because they are a compulsory requirement for graduation. In turn, because K University does not have an English department Shin, on a couple of occasions, applied for employment at universities with English departments but was unsuccessful. He continues to work at K University where he conducts research in his field of specialisation. Today, Shin is happy with his employment and at peace with his career.

4.8 Summary

The life stories presented in this chapter have commonalities; the participants have long histories in and outside of Japan, they have resumes of academic achievement, and they have years of teaching experience. Notwithstanding these

factors, a considerable degree of diversity in identity is also evident: regarding motivation to enter the field; in the types of position held; and in the level of involvement and commitment to various other identities such as researcher, teacher and English user. In terms of the research goals of this dissertation, it is also noteworthy that the participants' narratives culminate in different life course stages and that a variety of age identities are present in the data. This point is further explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Findings: Themes

This chapter reports and discusses the findings to emerge from the thematic analysis of the data related to the participants perceived age identities. The discussion is presented in two sections: individual constructions of personal age identity (5. 1), and the construction of age identity in response to institutional personnel management practices (5.2). This chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings (5.3).

5.1 Individual Construction of Age

5.1.1 'Young' age identities

Yuta, Ren and Alexandra all constructed 'young' age identities. Yuta responded to questions about his age category membership by positioning himself as *arasaa*. This is a Japanese buzzword meaning 'around thirty'. Yuta expressed the opinion that the word has some humorous or even negative connotations, expressing the idea that its referent is in some way related to not fulfilling social expectations concerning a life stage:

> It's (meaning is) definitely around 30, but, plus… Plus, plus, I don't want to be around 30, kind of feeling.
> …
> So, people use it like, *mou arasaa jyan*! (You are already around 30 years old!)

When discussing his age in the context of teaching English, Yuta positioned himself as young and described incidents of himself effectively using technology in his classes. He contrasted his own youthful age identity with that of older teachers who, he said, may be less technologically knowledgeable than he. When asked to think of a metaphor for himself as a teacher, Yuta chose the Japanese word *sempai*, which he translated as "older friend". A *sempai* can be another student at the same institution who is further advanced in their degree and the term does not indicate a significant age disparity.

Like Yuta, Ren also positioned himself as *arasaa* (around thirty). He remarked that he could describe himself as *wakamono* (young person) or *seinen* (young man). Ren also identified himself as *wakate* (young researcher). He said this category is used in application for research grants distributed by the Japanese government, and that the grants aimed to support early stage academics who are also presumably "young". Later in our conversation, Ren indicated that the university context was as a consideration in his youthful age identity, noting; "I'd say I'm still young as a university lecturer, right?" He observed that he looks young and that this probably makes the students feel close to him, which is a "good thing".

Initially, Alexandra constructed a mature identity for herself, choosing the general category "36-90". As the interview progressed however she constructed her identity as 'young' in the context of her work environment and compared herself with her colleagues who, unlike her, are mostly "in their fifties and sixties. Most of the male tenured, like the non-Japanese tenured faculty, they're all within ten years of retirement". Alexandra commented that many of the faculty members would have children in the same age bracket as her. She expressed an impression that young teachers were not considered real teachers by other faculty members, "because we're not old". She also reported that a certain tension existed at work around people her age. Later, she connected her gender with the lack of respect she received from colleagues:

> Being young *and* a woman I think is a bit of a double whammy. And so, people not taking you seriously.

At one point, Alexandra recounted a comment made about her age by a colleague:

> Someone once told me that like, my actual age is 36 but my social age is in my 20s. I don't know what that means, I think it was meant as an insult.

Alexandra allied herself with a young, academically well-qualified cohort of Native English Speaker Teachers (NESTs) whom she contrasted to an older, less qualified NEST teacher cohort. She also contrasted her teaching style to that of older teachers, saying; "I feel like I connect more with my students (than older teachers) because I'm closer in age to them in a lot of ways." She commented that as a young person she has a knowledge of youth pop culture, for example music and fashion, and that this is an advantage in building close relationships with students.

5.1.2 Neither 'young' nor 'old'

Anthony and Beth constructed age identities that were neither "young" nor "old". Anthony explicitly positioned himself as "middle-aged". He connected middle age and its attendant physical characteristics such as greying hair and "carrying myself a little differently now" with garnering more respect from the students and leading to fewer discipline issues in the classroom. He contrasted his present favourable situation with that of colleagues younger than himself, saying the students respond differently to him; "They (the students) just get that I'm older."

Anthony connected age and experience. He mentioned telling the students about the extent of his experience as a teacher:

> And when I tell them I've been teaching 21 years, which is in some cases older than the students themselves, they just get it. They get that … you basically had a life in a job longer than the life they've had on this planet.

Unlike Anthony, when asked which age category she belonged to, Beth answered that she was in her fifties and elaborated that this was "prime working time", a reference to her earning ability. She also reported that in her work at universities she sometimes notices that she is one of the youngest teachers in the staff room and that her age is therefore not problematic in the university context. Beth used the word "mother" metaphorically during our interview:

> Like I'm not their friend, I'm not their peer, but I'm kind of like a mother.

> …
> So, I do have that kind of familiar relationship, if you will, with the students.

When asked about her age and English teaching experience, Beth also indicated that the skills she had learned as a mother had helped with her teaching and classroom management practices.

5.1.3 'Older' age identities

Both Hina and Shin answered that they were older adults when asked about their age category. Unlike the other participants, Hina seemed visibly uncomfortable about answering the question, as evidenced in her response:

> I don't want to, I don't want to probably… I prefer not to admit it, but anyway, I'm kind of between these (pointing to a space between "middle aged" and "senior" on the list of age category words she had previously written).

Hina's discomfort with discussing her age identity was further made apparent in other comments throughout our interview and in our general conversation before and after the recording. She noted that she was concerned she might be the oldest participant in the study and made disparaging comments about her own age in relation to my age.

Like Anthony, Hina also connected age with experience and reported that she told her students about her teaching experiences at other universities to bolster her credibility. When asked about her age and teaching English she said her experience helped her to be patient with students.

Like Beth, Hina also relied on family membership metaphors when constructing her age identity. She described interactions with students that were age constitutive, relying as they did on a generational view of age:

> I teach students that are my son's age, just like, you know, they treat me probably as a mother. I treat them as a child. Maybe (they think), "Oh, Hina you're too old, you don't think about anything!"
> …
> So really, I say (to the students) something… "Oh, I know how your parents feel about such a kind of attitude? Probably because I understand your parents more." Something like that. But anyway, so I prefer not for the, you know, I prefer not for students to think that way.

Like Hina, Shin chose an age category for himself that he situated between the words "middle-aged" and "senior" on his list. He used the Japanese word, *shoro*, translated as "early old man". Unlike Hina, Shin who is almost a decade older did not exhibit any discomfort with his age at any point in our conversation.

Shin noted that university students are always around the same age; namely 18 to 22 years; whereas, his age changes in relation to them as he gets older. He seemed comfortable with the increasing gap in age between himself and his students, saying that it made the students now seem more appealing than they had seemed when he had first started teaching them 40 years ago:

> More and more (they seem) … say, *kawairashii* (lovely, sweet) lovely, yes. I have that kind of feeling. Honestly.

The narrow age range of the student body was also commented on by Alexandra, Ren, Anthony and Hina.

At no time did Shin indicate a need to chastise students, or that he was ever challenged by his students. Later in our discussion about English teaching experience and age, Shin commented that he felt tired now if he had a long day teaching. He also revealed; "I really didn't feel that way when I was young". His comments point to what he considers to be the physical symptoms of his age.

5.2 Institutional Construction of Age

The interviews with participants contained frequent references to age in the institutional context, in terms of explicit workplace rules and regulations, as well as unofficial or unwritten age expectations. The references arose mainly in two areas, recruitment and retirement.

5.2.1 Recruitment and Career Development

After Alexandra discussed the discomfort she felt with her position in the age hierarchy at her present institution she contrasted it with her positive experience at a university she had previously worked at:

> I didn't feel that way at my previous university because the department I was in, hires generally, people fresh out of their master's programs … So again, a specific age range; late twenties, mid-to-late twenties, early thirties, maybe even mid-thirties. But it's unofficial, but I think they don't really hire people for that department over 35.

Looking to the future, Alexandra observed that her age would assist her in gaining tenure:

> I know that's not an easy task (to get tenure), but I also think being younger, getting a doctorate now… You know, I'm starting my doctorate and I'm 36 … That makes me a really good candidate in the job market.

Like Alexandra, Anthony also indicated his age was relevant to his employability. He commented in general about his future employment prospects and whether he is likely to experience disruption:

> Twenty-one years teaching experience, three countries, quite a few publications behind me, soon to be five university degrees, not 60 plus, I think it's okay.

Anthony's comments seem to indicate he feels a level of security with his professional accomplishments and age identity.

Beth said age was relevant for employment at large conversation school chains; "So they definitely want like young single people." She described her experience at a conversation school as follows:

> Definitely, oh yes, at the *eikawa* (conversation school) they don't like to hire old foreign women I get the impression. Um, and once I was married it was pretty much like you can't work here anymore, right. Pretty much, right? (laughs) Yes, you know I'm pretty sure that they hire the full-time staff based on their 20-something age.

Beth remarked that she could probably get a part-time job at a large conversation chain school; "but … yes, their full-time teachers they're like almost like the kind of English missionary …" Here English "missionary" is an allusion to Christian missionaries who came to Japan from the US for brief stints of a year or two soon after graduating from college.

5.2.2 Retirement

When asked about the end of their working lives, most participants raised the issue of mandatory retirement. Yuta, Ren and Alexandra all indicated that they wanted to work until the mandatory retirement age. Ren and Alexandra also indicated a desire to remain professionally active after mandatory retirement. Ren made the following comment by email:

> As far as teaching is concerned, I am okay retiring when I reach the age-limit, but as a researcher, I wish I could continue to work even after I have retired from the university.

Likewise, Alexandra commented:

> I don't think I would ever stop teaching, … um, or if not teaching second language classes, I don't think I would ever stop being involved in the professional community of language teachers.

Both Alexandra and Anthony clearly connected retirement to financial implications. Alexandra conceded that she should be saving for retirement but that she could not do so because she must pay for her PhD studies. Anthony remarked that he planned to work until retirement age, 60 in his case, and then described his financial situation post retirement. He then went on to say:

> I've thought about the possibility of even opening my own language school or doing some other kind of consulting work.

The participants' comments indicate a desire stay professionally active after retirement age.

Neither Hina nor Beth referred to university rules during our discussion of retirement. Beth expressed a wish to continue "working and teaching, um, perhaps not at an institution, but even teaching art until eighties or nineties. I don't really see like a retirement age." In contrast to Beth, Hina mentioned that she was already reducing her working hours to care for her parents who were in poor health. She expected to do so further in the future for the same reason.

Shin spoke about institutional age regulations and how they applied to retirement, remarking that he would probably work until the retirement age mandated by the institution; namely, 68 years. He also noted that some of his colleagues and friends retired at 65 and that he may do the same because he has felt tired recently. However, Shin then commented; "although I say that I feel a little tired, which is true, but at the same time … I like this job. I really don't think of any reason to leave earlier". This comment expresses a high level of job satisfaction.

5.3 Summary

The participants constructed a wide spectrum of age identities. They used their age relative to students and colleagues to construct age identities, either 'young', 'middle-aged' or 'older'. Their age identities were also constructed in terms of their positioning by institutions. Regarding recruitment, some participants observed that youth was an advantage. Most participants framed the end of their working lives in terms of the rules of their institutions, although Ren, Alexandra, Anthony and Beth all indicated a wish to remain professionally active.

Chapter 6 Discussion

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the research findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5, with reference to both research questions (RQ) and in relation to previous research. The first section (6.1) discusses RQ1, "How does age construct the narratives found in the life stories of TESOL teachers working at tertiary institutions in Japan?" It analyses the data in terms of the participants' life course stage (Andrew, 2012; Bytheway, 2011) and social expectations of age appropriate behaviour (Arimoto, 2015; Sakuraba, 2007). The second section (6.2) discusses RQ2, "How is age socially constructed in the case of TESOL teachers working at universities in Japan and what implications does this construction have for their teacher identities?" It analyses data with reference to the literature of LTI and the Japanese context. Of prominence in this analysis is the literature of linguistic identity (Aneja, 2016; Braine, 1998, 1999; Canagarajah, 2012) and gender (Appleby, 2013, 2014; Hicks, 2013; Nagatomo, 2014; Park, 2009), as well as studies that examine the metaphorical construction of LTI (Farrel, 2011; Nguyen, 2016, Yesilbursa, 2012). The last section (6.3) presents a summary of the main ideas and issues discussed throughout this chapter.

6.1 Age Identity and Professional Development

The first research question investigates how age is used to construct the life story narratives of TESOL teachers working at tertiary institutions in Japan. In these narratives, the participants consistently established connections between their career development and their age identity. This occurred via the use of life course stage, a significant type of socially constructed age identity (Bytheway, 2011), as integrated into their narratives. Three areas appeared to be interlinked in the narratives: life course stage regarding family membership, financial considerations, and further study. First, life course stage regarding participants' membership in family structures both influenced, and was influenced by, their career choices. Second, financial factors were taken into consideration by participants when making career decisions and were also heavily influenced by family membership and vice versa. Third, the chronological age of the participant

and the number of years before retirement age were taken into consideration in a cost/benefit analysis used to decide whether to undertake PhD studies.

Throughout the life stories presented in chapter 4 the participants explained their professional development in terms of life course stage and vice versa. The two elements appeared to be co-constitutive. Each relevant stage of the life course; namely, single, married, parent and aged caregiver, is now discussed with reference to the participants' experiences.

Except for Hina, all the participants were unmarried when they entered the TESOL teaching profession. The case of Beth demonstrates the most conspicuous connection between being single and being employed in English language teaching. Beth was conscious of the connection between working in the conversation school industry and her life course stage, her single status, commenting on the party lifestyle and that the schools wanted to recruit young single teachers who were like "English missionaries". Her story is one of initially partying and enjoying her time at the conversation school before adopting a more serious attitude with marriage, and feeling less that she belonged in that environment. In effect, Beth had aged out of her job.

When Beth first arrived in Japan she gained employment at a large and well-known chain of conversation schools. That such schools often promote themselves using young and attractive teachers in their advertisements has been discussed by Piller and Takahashi (2006), and her impression that such an environment tends to favour younger teachers was also reported by participants in Appleby (2013). The male participants in Appleby's study discursively construct working at conversation schools as an immature identity. They then contrast this construction with a mature identity associated with marriage and professional development, including movement out of the conversation school sector into university employment. Beth's story expresses a similar transition from immaturity to maturity, or as "getting more serious" as her career developed.

Many participants link their decisions to pursue or complete studies with marriage and vice versa. Yuta indicates that his sense of panic or urgency about completing his PhD and finding a permanent full-time position is connected to the fact that he is already married. Ren's life history builds a picture of hard work and determination, culminating in professional advancement to a tenured position in his chosen field, and then to marriage. Tenure is presented as a prerequisite to marriage in Ren's story. Anthony links his decision to obtain a Master's degree to his marriage in Japan. Beth also represents marriage as an element in the upward spiral of her career path, connecting it to her decision to leave the chain conversation school and choose a more mature career path.

Although marriage had profound implications for the careers choices and experiences of the participants in this study, it did not always promote career progress, as in Hina's case. Hina indicates marriage as the key reason for her leaving full-time employment and indeed leaving her life and career in Japan. A decision that eventually led to her entry into the TESOL sector.

Most participants were not parents, but of those who were, parenthood affected their career trajectories. Hina's life story indicates parenthood limited her ability to work and study in the US. While the responsibilities of parenthood are handled very differently in Beth's case, she nonetheless indicates that the costs associated with childrearing make further study unfeasible. Caregiving in the form of taking care of ageing and needy parents is another significant life stage. Hina explicitly mentions this as a reason for reducing her work hours.

6.1.1 Deviating from the normative progression

A normative progression of life and work in Japan involves completion of education prior to full-time permanent employment, which is then followed by marriage and eventually children (Sakuraba, 2007). In the case of language teachers working at universities, Sakuraba's normative path can be supplemented by Arimoto's summary of the standard academic resume which outlines professional development expectations in the sector. These stages include a career path of promotion from assistant to lecturer, associate

professor, and professor, with part-time work presumably included only in the earlier stages of the resume. The participants in the present study adhere to this normative progression to varying degrees with varying effects on their career progress and professional identities.

Ren was married after he achieved job security and his story does not include any tension associated with a mismatch in professional development and life course stage. Ren's career progression approximates the traditional or ideal academic career outlined by Arimoto (2015) that doctoral studies usually conclude in the award of a PhD at around 30. However, Yuta's story ends with him experiencing a high level of stress as he focuses on completing his PhD as quickly as possible to fulfil his responsibilities as a new husband. Academically, Yuta's story has a powerful upward trajectory. In terms of education, his story fits well with the standard or normative academic progression found in Japan; that is, completion of an undergraduate degree, quickly followed by a Master's degree and then a PhD. Where he deviates from the norm is in his marriage prior to achieving a PhD and a permanent full-time position. It is Yuta's deviation from the normative path outlined by Sakuraba (2007) that is the cause of his stress.

The timing of choices made in terms of life course and the effect of social context appear to impact career progress. In the case of Shin, obtaining a PhD in his fifties was not necessarily a significant deviation from the social norm that it may at first appear to be. At the time Shin obtained his Master's degree and started full-time work in the tertiary sector PhD qualifications were rare. For Shin, completing a PhD in his fifties was not a speculative measure because he already had tenure, and obtaining the PhD simply meant an increase in status and salary. However, Beth cited the inability to recoup her investment as a reason for not pursuing a doctorate degree after her Master's studies were completed, and Hina also cited financial reasons for not pursuing a PhD. Investing in a PhD only makes sense if it is possible to recoup your investment, however, neither Hina nor Beth have a full-time position, and any investment in further study would be entirely speculative. For both Beth and Hina, completing a PhD at this point in

their respective life courses seems to be inconsistent with their life course stage and its associated financial responsibilities.

6.1.2 Linguistic Identity and Age Identity

Linguistic identity has long been identified as a key component of LTI (Braine, 1998, 1999; Canagarajah, 2012; Ellis, 2016). A comparison of the experiences of Beth and Hina reveal differences that may be due to differences in their identities, specifically their differing linguistic identities and the use made of linguistic identities by the commercial English teaching industry in Japan. Beth's story indicates youth and singleness are desirable teacher traits required for full-time positions at large chain conversation schools that recruit NESTs from abroad. However, a conversation school position was one of the first jobs Hina obtained upon her return from the US, despite being 'middle-aged' and married. She felt welcomed and even pressured by the school to increase her hours.

The different experiences of Beth and Hina may be explained by considering the types of schools at which the women were employed. Unlike Beth, Hina was not employed by a chain school which advertises itself as one that offers all classes taught by NEST staff. Instead, she was employed by a small private school whose advertising and promotional material did not focus on young, attractive, foreign teachers, but on the qualifications of the teachers. This criterion was one that fit Hina well, given her experience abroad, her Master's degree in TESOL and the cultural sensitivity she could demonstrate when teaching Japanese students. While aging had become a liability for Beth in her conversation school setting, it did not have the same implications for Hina due to her linguistic identity and possibly due to her cultural knowledge.

6.1.3 Gender Identity and Age Identity

A strong connection is made by the participants between their life course stage and their career development. The life course stages of the participants are largely constructed in terms of gender, itself a social construct. Yuta, married and *arasaa* (thirty something), feels the influence of societal expectations that he should have a secure job and be able to support a family. The expectations placed

on female teachers are somewhat different. Like the subject of Park (2009), Hina assigns primary responsibility to caring for her children, and her daily schedule is therefore designed to accommodate their schedules, making full-time study or work untenable. Her experiences in the US, which led her to acquire English skill and to pursue a career as an English teacher, were also due to her husband's work transfer.

There appears to be a discrepancy between the genders of the participants and their experiences of age. Yuta, the youngest participant, felt disrespected in the early stages of his career because his youthfulness was associated with lack of experience and an assumed inability to manage the students. At age 28, however, he no longer felt conscious of this aspect in his interactions with students. Alexandra, however, already 36 years of age, described an experience of being positioned as 'young' by some of her colleagues and that this led to her experiencing difficulties at work and possibly in her career progress.

Age, as experienced through position on the life course, is also experienced differently. Nagatomo (2015) illustrates the negative effect of motherhood on one EFL teacher's professional identity in Japan. Alexandra's decision not to have children is a conscious attempt to circumvent gender discrimination by avoiding one stage of the life course, parenthood. She specifically chose not to have children because she felt this would have a negative impact on her ability to build her career; whereas the male participants in the Appleby (2013) study felt marriage and parenthood made them appear mature, steady and committed to Japan, and therefor ideal candidates for promotion. In this present study, Shin, the only male participant with children, did not indicate fatherhood had negatively impacted his career.

Hina's story illustrates very neatly the effect of gender on career development in the English teaching sector. Gender had an impact from the start of her tertiary education when her parents decided not to invest in sending her to cram school. Her tertiary entrance scores reflected this decision, enabling her to enter only a two-year college. The supportive spousal identity adopted by the participant in

Park (2009) appears also to be present in Hina's narrative. The move to an English-speaking country was undertaken because of the priority placed on her husband's career. In addition, the decision to major in TESOL was made on the basis that the TESOL internship requirement hours were a better fit with her child-rearing responsibilities than those of the Psychology internship. Hina's spouse and mother identity prevented the development of her career as an editor but facilitated her entry into the English teaching profession.

The above gender-related results align with analyses found in the literature on LTI in the Japanese context (Nagatomo, 2012, 2015; Simon Maeda, 2004). However, the data do suggest incipient changes in behaviour and attitudes. Beth's husband, a Japanese national, worked part-time while their child was a baby and toddler to help meet the costs of childcare. This meant that Beth could continue to work and to build the social network that eventually led her to find employment in the tertiary sector. At this point, she did not seem to be excluded from the male social networks discussed in Hicks (2013) and Nagatomo (2014).

The attitudes of Yuta and Ren also point to incipient change. On the face of it, both Ren and Yuta followed a very standard life course trajectory. Yet, they both indicated that they wanted to take paternity leave to help raise their children and to support their wives. In contrast, Shin did not do this. Yuta's and Ren's lives have not yet progressed to the point where they have the opportunity to fulfil this wish, and perhaps their wishes may be stymied by work environments that do not support this type of behaviour. However, it does indicate the presence of certain generational attitudes that would have been unthinkable just a generation ago. At this point, Yuta and Ren aspire to be *ikumen,* a Japanese buzzword that describes fathers who are involved in child raising or who enjoy parenting (Mizukoshi, Kohlbacher, & Schimkowsky, 2016). Yuta and Ren will be part of the evolving social environment of higher education in Japan, including the work contexts of English teachers.

To return to RQ1, "How does age construct the narratives found in the life stories of TESOL teachers working at tertiary institutions in Japan?", various key

observations can be made. Age was generally incorporated into the form of life course stage. The extent to which a normative progression through various life course stages was adhered to had an impact on professional identity in terms of career progression. Finally, the integration of age into the narratives could not be considered in isolation from other social identities such as gender and linguistic status.

6.2 Age identity in the workplace

In terms of RQ2, "How is age socially constructed in the case of TESOL teachers working at universities in Japan and what implications does this construction have for their teacher identities?", the participants constructed their age in relation to both students and colleagues. Age identity appeared to be a constitutive element of the way in which the teachers conceptualised and enacted their relationships with students. By contrasting their age identity with teachers of different ages, the participants positioned themselves as "good teachers". Furthermore, age identity – specifically chronological age identity – was relevant in the institutional context. It appeared to influence the participants' access to employment and to a large extent delimited the length of their working lives.

6.2.1 Relationships with students and colleagues

Age identity played a role in how the participants talked about their teaching experiences and the ways of relating to students. Metaphors were used by the teachers to conceptualise themselves as either close to, or distant from, their students, and these metaphors were often age constitutive. All participants took the position that their present age was an asset in their relationships with students. They discursively connected age with experience, emotional rapport with students, and classroom management skills.

Yuta, Ren and Alexandra positioned themselves as young. Furthermore, they suggested that their youth helped students to feel close to them and that this was a positive feature of their teaching identity. Moreover, Yuta conceptualised his relationship with students through use of the *sempai* (older friend) metaphor.

This metaphor indicates the emotional closeness experienced by real friends, while also indicating greater experience and age on the part of the *sempai*.

Anthony constructed a mature masculine identity, as did Shin. Anthony connected middle age and its attendant physical characteristics with an increase in authority, garnering more respect from the students, and having fewer discipline issues in the classroom. Like Anthony, Shin's mature masculine identity was also positive and positioned him as having good relationships with the students. His stance is benevolent, as he says the students appear cuter and cuter as he ages because they stay the same age. This echoes the sentiments expressed in Appleby (2014) where, "… the men's accounts frequently depicted university students as naïve, innocent, and child-like" (p. 784). Shin's relationship with students is benevolent and characterised by warmth.

Use of the "mother" metaphor has been observed in studies on LTI (Farrel, 2011; Nguyen, 2016; Yesilbursa, 2012). However, the metaphor was used by Beth and Hina in this present study in different and quite nuanced ways. Hina constructed the mother metaphor to indicate a generational difference between herself and the students. She identified with the point of view of the university students' parents whom she presumed had expectations of good behaviour from their children, and authoritative parental roles as disciplinarians. While Hina drew on the parent metaphor to shore up her position of distance and authority, Beth constructed the mother and child relationship as one of emotional closeness and trust, mirroring her "familiar relationship" with the students. The data in the present study indicates that the same metaphor can have different nuances.

As with other research in the field (Barkhuizen, 2008; Gu, 2011), context significantly impacts the findings of the present study. The participants constructed age identities as teachers in classroom contexts with students comprising very limited age ranges. The participants' comments concerning their age in relation to the students relied on the homogeneity of the student cohort. Alexandra and Yuta can only argue that youth is an advantage because they assume a young and limited age range amongst the student cohort. Unlike

the diverse student cohorts found in many western countries, mature age students are extremely rare in Japan. The homogeneity of the student cohort in terms of age facilitates treating them as a group with shared interests and cultural knowledge.

The participants appeared to enact age identities both with students and other colleagues. The teachers in the present study tended to construct their ages relative to the ages of those teachers working around them at their institutions, and through the nature of their relationships with those teachers. Two points are significant. The participants established their age identity through comparison with colleagues in other age groups; furthermore, they established identities as "good teachers" by contrasting their age identity with that of other age groups.

The participants compared their teaching styles and student relationships with teachers in other age groups to construct both their teacher and age identities. Both Yuta and Ren constructed a youthful age identity through comparisons with older colleagues, as evidenced in Ren's remark; "I'd say I'm still young as a university lecturer, right?" Yuta associated his youthfulness with greater technological knowledge when compared to older colleagues. Yuta positioned himself as a good teacher by characterising himself as technically skilled.

Like Yuta and Ren, Alexandra constructed her age identity by placing an emphasis on youth. By drawing on age comparisons with her colleagues she thus demonstrated an construction of age identity relative to other colleagues. Alexandra argued that her "youth" age identity facilitated close relationships with students, a key aspect of being a "good teacher" and something that differentiated her from the older teachers in her workplace. Beth's age construction was also done relative to the ages of the other teachers in her institutions. She indicates she doesn't feel old as a teacher at her universities because there are so many teachers older than her in the staff room.

In sum, the teachers used their age identities to indicate emotional closeness to, or distance from, the students, and to discursively position themselves as good

teachers. Age, as a component of LTI, was established relative to colleagues and was positively integrated by the participants into their professional identities, regardless of where they were on the age spectrum.

6.2.2 Context: Social and institutional

Age identity played a significant role in how the participants talked about their employment experiences and prospects. The participants worked in social and institutional contexts that had significant implications for the construction of their professional identities (Barkhuizen, 2008, 2016; Gu, 2011). The social context included the broad the demographic features of Japanese society, and society-wide discourses that constitute age identities as either positive or negative. In terms of the institutional context, the institutional 'beliefs' were implemented materially in terms of hiring conventions and retirement practices. The micro context of particular relationships with colleagues occurring in specific workplaces was also relevant.

The participants were not asked directly about ageism and not all them reported having trouble with their age identities. Two participants, Shin and Ren, did not at any stage indicate discomfort with their age experience. Shin did not report any discomfort with his age or experience ageism in his professional life. Ren also did not describe any experiences of ageism in his life history and, of all the participants, his movement through the life course stages most closely mirrored the stages outlined by Sakuraba (2007) and Arimoto (2015). Ren and Shin both exhibited a favoured constellation of social identities. Being male, Japanese, and passing through the various stages of professional development at roughly the times indicated by Sakuraba and Arimoto might well have facilitated their present positive age identity.

In contrast to the positive construction of age by Ren and Shin, less advantageous constructions also appeared in the data. As defined in the literature review, this study takes the stance that ageism reflects "negative attitudes or behaviours toward an individual solely based on that person's age" (Greenberg, Schimel, & Mertens, 2002, p. 27). Many of the participants reported

that they experienced negative attitudes or behaviours directed toward them; by their students, colleagues or employers, and that these were rooted in societal expectations based on age.

Examples of "youth" constructions to one's disadvantage manifested in the experiences of Yuta and Alexandra. Yuta endured the lack of respect directed at him by students, and Alexandra endured a difficult working relationship with older colleagues that possibly resulted in her failure to gain tenure. Their experiences are in stark contrast to Anthony's experiences where the increase in respect shown to him by students as he aged suggested his age was constructed to his advantage.

The demographic context is also significant. Beth's and Alexandra's comments about the large number of older teachers at their workplaces reflects a growing trend in universities across Japan. As was noted in the Chapter 2, the aging population is having an impact on the composition of the workforce in Japanese universities, a fact described by Arimoto (2016, p. 274) as the "phenomenon of increasing aging of professors". This may increase Beth's level of comfort in the workplace, but it correspondingly reduces the level of comfort of other workers such as Alexandra who have been positioned as young in this context. On the other hand, Beth indicated an awareness that advancing age is not always an asset when she suggested "that there's so many older professors and teachers that this is something I don't have to worry about". This comment logically implies that in a different context Beth may have been worried about her employability as a teacher in her fifties. However, because of the large number of older teachers in the broader working environment, she was not concerned about her age in this context in particular.

At the time of our interviews, Beth was seeking neither full-time nor tenure track employment. Alexandra has a resume that is very similar to Beth's; shares the same phenotype, nationality and NEST status; and has a similarly good rapport with students; but is of a considerably younger age. As such, she did not experience any difficulties in acquiring a full-time position with a high-ranking

university. It could be conjectured that Beth's age had been a liability in her search for full-time employment, but in the less competitive field of part-time employment it had been less of a factor.

Chronological age, which is age measured in terms of the number of years passed since birth, featured significantly in the findings. The data suggests that both recruitment and retirement of English language teachers in the tertiary sector is determined, either overtly or otherwise, by their chronological age. The use of chronological age in this way is itself a social construct and contributes to the social construction of teacher identity, impacting the teachers' lives discursively and materially in terms of future earning capacity.

The most incontestable manifestation of age construction to disadvantage English language teachers working at tertiary institutions in Japan appears to be the mandatory age of retirement set by the institutions, a point also made by Porcaro (2016). All participants were aware that their institutions had mandatory retirement ages and most of them (Ren, Alexandra, Anthony and Beth) indicated a wish to continue to work beyond this age.

Beth's comment that she can see herself working as a teacher into her eighties or nineties, but "perhaps not at an institution", is made in recognition of the fact that institutions in Japan do not generally employ older people. Given the mandatory retirement ages, working into one's eighties or nineties would necessarily involve being your own boss. Moreover, Beth cited the inability to recoup her investment as a reason for not pursuing a PhD after her Master's studies were completed. However, she also indicated that she wanted to continue working after the mandatory working ages specified by the universities. Had the situation been one in which there was no mandatory retirement age, such as in Australia for example, Beth may have chosen to continue her studies. Hina also cited financial reasons for not pursuing a PhD. In this sense, the existence of the mandatory retirement age constructs "older teacher" identities and acts to limit the aspirations of teachers.

It may therefore be argued that the mandatory retirement rules are constitutive of the age identity of older workers. As Higo (2010) pointed out, the policies related to mandatory retirement age and recruitment practices in institutions in Japan have the effect of using chronological age "to control individuals' perceptions and behaviours over the course of their working lives" (p.5). Clearly, a worker's employment duration may be involuntarily curtailed by such a provision. In this sense, the social construction of age has a material consequence in the post retirement period as English language teachers must either work for reduced salaries or not work at all and survive on their pensions.

The oldest participant in the present study was Shin. At 63 years of age he was still four years away from the mandatory retirement age as set by his institution. Given that none of the participants in this study were in the retirement stage of their life course it was not possible to explore the post retirement experience of age based on the available data, and this is one limitation of the present study.

To return to RQ2, "How is age socially constructed in the case of TESOL teachers working at tertiary institutions in Japan and what implications does this have for their teacher identities?", age was constructed discursively and had a material impact on the teachers' lives. Age identity was constructed relative to the ages of students and colleagues, appeared to be enacted in relationships with students and colleagues, and was used to discursively position the participants as good teachers. Furthermore, the institutional context had a powerful influence on age construction enactment. The implication for LTI is that age can be constructed either to the teacher's advantage or disadvantage, depending on the context and the interplay of multiple identities such as gender, nationality and race.

6.3 Summary

The central premise of this study is that age is a significant dimension of social identity and therefore can be considered, along with other dimensions such as gender, sexuality, race, native speaker status and class, as a social construct that contributes to the professional identities of language teachers. The data derived from the study substantiates this point of view. The teacher participants had

recourse to a variety of age perspectives including chronological age, age categories, life course stages and cohort membership. In turn, they used these perspectives to socially construct their age in their interactions with me, and in reports of the elements of their interaction with colleagues, students and institutions.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how age as a social construct is relevant to the LTI of EFL teachers working at tertiary institutions in Japan. Towards this aim, this thesis explored how English language teachers discursively construct and perform age identities as components of their professional identities. It began with a review of the literature relevant to situating age as a social construct, outlining the field of LTI studies and establishing the context of EFL teachers working at universities in Japan. Next, narrative inquiry methodology was used to generate data. The narrative analysis, undertaken from a social constructionist viewpoint, produced findings in the form of the life stories of teachers representing a range of ages. Furthermore, the thematic findings included the social construction of age by both teachers and institutions.

The key findings to emerge from this study are as follows:
(1) The participants' age identities, particularly their life course stages, were seen to be co-constructive of their professional development.
(2) The participants constructed their age relative to the ages of students and other teachers at their institutions and in terms of the institutional context.
(3) The participants' age identities were chronologically framed by their institutions and used to manage their professional opportunities.

The participants' age identities, performed throughout their lives as teachers, were discursively constructed as facilitators of their teaching efficacy. Age identities were used by the participants in their discourse with me to construct identities as competent teachers. The performance of age was conceptualised as achieving either emotional closeness to students or respect and acquiescence from students. Other social identities, those related to linguistic and gender particularly, could not be isolated from age identity in the analysis.

In a material sense, the working lives of the participants are ultimately limited by socially constructed age norms that underpin access to employment and the mandatory retirement rules that determine the end of working life. These are based on chronological age, which is itself a social construct.

As with other narrative inquiry studies, this study has various limitations. Because it was undertaken within a Master's degree programme, the scale of the study was small. The sample comprised only 7 EFL teachers working at tertiary institutions and the reliance on interview method limited the type of data collected. No classroom observations took place and it was therefore impossible to observe the performance of age in the classroom or in interactions with students. No members of hiring committees at the universities were interviewed, nor were teachers working beyond the mandatory retirement age. As such, insights into this age identity are missing from the study.

Japan is a highly age sensitive society. Chronological age remains a highly visible identity marker in society, yet it does not reflect the huge variety in the individual's experiences of age. A key implication is therefore that deviating from the normative progression of work and life in terms of chronological age may make it difficult to develop and maintain a teaching career in academia.

Regarding future research directions, two areas appear promising but could not be included in the present study. Many of the male participants reported positive interactions with older colleagues who took mentorship roles in their lives. This was less apparent in the lives of the female participants. Also, a study of the different uses of metaphors by the teachers regarding the 'closeness' or 'distance' in their relations with students and colleagues may provide insight into the working lives of EFL teachers. Finally, it may be interesting to compare EFL teachers' age experiences in the Japanese context with teachers' experiences in a different context. Of interest would be a comparison with language teachers working in a country without mandatory retirement such as Australia.

The argument that socially constructed age is an important part of identity and that it would influence participants' LTI was substantiated by the data. Furthermore, the influence of ageism in the teachers' experience of their working lives is evident. Ageism is not confined to the elderly and in this study appeared at various ages in the lives of the participants.

This study is significant because of its original focus: socially constructed age as an element of LTI. As Andrew (2012) writes, "People construct age in discursive interaction, drawing on the cultural discourses available to them to position themselves and to position others" (p. 152). Various other identities interacted with the participants' age identities in different contexts, with some identities more salient than others. Research in the field of LTI has gained momentum recently with many thoughtful and provoking studies concerning different constructs relevant to LTI. It is suggested that age is a universal social construct and therefore relevant to all language teachers throughout their professional lives. Hence, it should be explored further in the LTI field.

Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your reasons for becoming an English Teacher.
2. Please draw a timeline of your life, starting with your first school.
3. Tell me about your timeline.
4. Did you have any disruptions in your career?
5. Do you foresee any disruption to your career? (Aging parents, babies, university closing etc.).
6. How do you feel about the direction your career has moved in?
7. When do you plan to retire or take a break from teaching?
8. Would you like to teach in a different country?
9. Tell me about learning (Japanese/English/Language X/Y/Z).
10. Make a list of age categories from birth to death. For example, one age category is *baby.*
11. Which age category are you in now?
12. Tell me about ageing and teaching English.
13. Choose a metaphor for yourself as a teacher now.
14. Choose a metaphor for yourself as a teacher when you first started teaching.
15. Do you feel the age you are at now affects your teaching?
16. How would you graphically represent your education and career until now?

Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Preferred method of communication (circle one):

Telephone *Email* *Facebook Messenger*

Nationality:

Date of birth:

Educational qualifications (please list all, including any currently being undertaken):

Appendix C Ethics Approval Letter

MACQUARIE University

SARAH MASON <sarah.mason1@students.mq.edu.au>

RE: HS Ethics Application - Approved (5201600916)(Con/Met)

FHS Ethics <fhs.ethics@mq.edu.au> Wed, Feb 1, 2017 at 12:37 PM
To: Alice Chik <alice.chik@mq.edu.au>
Cc: Ms Sarah Louise Mason <sarah.mason1@students.mq.edu.au>

Dear Dr Chik,

Re: "Age and professional identity: University English teachers in Japan" (5201600916)

Thank you very much for your response. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Human Sciences Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee and approval has been granted, effective 17th January 2017. This email constitutes ethical approval only.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Dr Alice Chik

Ms Sarah Louise Mason

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 17th January 2018

Progress Report 2 Due: 17th January 2019

Progress Report 3 Due: 17th January 2020

Progress Report 4 Due: 17th January 2021

Final Report Due: 17th January 2022

NB. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final

Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/human_research_ethics/resources

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Sub-Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Sub-Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/human_research_ethics/managing_approved_research_projects

5. Please notify the Sub-Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

http://www.mq.edu.au/policy

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/human_research_ethics/managing_approved_research_projects

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have approval, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat at the address below.

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of ethics approval.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Naomi Sweller

Chair

Faculty of Human Sciences

Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee

FHS Ethics

Faculty of Human Sciences Ethics

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T: +61 2 9850 4197 | http://www.research.mq.edu.au/

Ethics Forms and Templates

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/human_research_ethics/resources

The Faculty of Human Sciences acknowledges the traditional custodians of the Macquarie University Land,

the Wattamattageal clan of the Darug nation, whose cultures and customs have nurtured and continue to

nurture this land since the Dreamtime. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

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