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CHINESE ENGLISH LECTURERS' SELF-IDENTIFICATION AS RESEARCHERS

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ABSTRACT

Since the reform of the Chinese college title granting system in 2017, Chinese lecturers have been allowed to have different self-identification as researchers. This study aimed to investigate Chinese English lecturers' self-identification as researchers and whether gender, age, academic qualification, title, teaching load, and top journal publications had significant influences on their self-identification as researchers. A questionnaire was employed to collect quantitative data from 612 Chinese English lecturers. The findings suggest that the lecturers had a relatively low self-identification as researchers and that all the independent variables had significant influences on their self-identification as researchers. The findings have the following implications. Firstly, colleges can encourage female, elderly, and non-publishing lecturers to do research by offering more incentives and research training. Secondly, colleges can implement favorable policies to encourage lecturers to pursue a doctoral degree. Thirdly, colleges can consider reducing the teaching load of the lecturers who wish to devote more time to research.

Contribution/Originality: The study is one of the first to obtain large-scale cross-sectional quantitative data of Chinese English lecturers' self-identification as researchers and examine the effects of demographic factors on their self-identification as researchers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have witnessed the "publish or perish" paradigm in universities around the world. As a result, lecturers have been facing ever-increasing pressure to do research and publish. In the research performance appraisal systems based on key index lists adopted by Chinese colleges (Zhang, Patton, & Kenney, 2013), preference is given to research articles published in top English-medium journals, i.e. journals included in Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) (Chou, 2014; Luo & Hyland, 2016; Peng & Gao, 2019; Salager-Meyer, 2014; Song, 2018).

Meanwhile, research articles published in top Chinese-medium journals, i.e. journals included in Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index (CSSCI), are also more valued than those published in ordinary Chinese journals (Zheng & Guo, 2019).

On the other hand, there have been growing calls for lecturers to give more priority to teaching as teaching is the basic and most important task of lecturers (Lai, Du, & Li, 2014; Li & Feng, 2016; Zhou, 2020). Chen (2018), the

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former Minister of Education, stated that the primary task and responsibility of lecturers is teaching and that teaching performance should be as important a criterion as research performance in Chinese college title granting system.

Since the reform of the title granting system in Chinese colleges (China's Ministry of Education & Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, 2017), many colleges have adopted different criteria for appraising lecturers' research and teaching achievements according to their self-identification as researchers. Based on the policy issued by China's Ministry of Education & Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (2020), universities have generally set up 3 types of associate professorship and professorship: research-focused, teaching-research-focused, and teaching-focused. While the requirements of research achievements on these 3 types decrease in order, the requirements of teaching achievements increase in order.

Under these circumstances, Chinese lecturers face the challenge to strike a balance between the increasing expectations on their research productions and the increasing importance attached to their teaching performance. However, it is still unknown how this challenge has affected their professional identities, especially their self-identification as researchers.

Lecturers' professional identity has great influences on lecturers' work self-efficacy and professional development (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000). Therefore, the research objective of the current study was to quantitatively measure to what extent Chinese lecturers identify themselves as researchers and what factors significantly affect their self-identification as researchers.

This study focused on the self-identification as researchers of English lecturers in Chinese colleges for two reasons. First, China has the largest number of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students (Borg & Liu, 2013) and therefore insights yielded in this context have significance for EFL lecturers in other countries. Second, Chinese English lecturers are reported to have a low level of research engagement and output (Bai & Hudson, 2011; Peng, 2019; Wang & Han, 2011) and therefore insights yielded in their case can offer references for lecturers with similar low research output around the world.

Eight research questions were formulated based on the research objective:

1. What is Chinese English lecturers' self-identification as researchers?
2. Is there a significant difference in Chinese English lecturers' self-identification as researchers based on gender?
3. Is there a significant difference in Chinese English lecturers' self-identification as researchers based on age?
4. Is there a significant difference in Chinese English lecturers' self-identification as researchers based on academic qualification?
5. Is there a significant difference in Chinese English lecturers' self-identification as researchers based on title?
6. Is there a significant difference in Chinese English lecturers' self-identification as researchers based on teaching load?
7. Is there a significant difference in Chinese English lecturers' self-identification as researchers based on top English-medium journal publications?
8. Is there a significant difference in Chinese English lecturers' self-identification as researchers based on top Chinese-medium journal publications?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Identity is defined as comprising various meanings that the individuals attach to themselves or various meanings assigned by others (Beijaard, 1995). Identity is not a fixed attribute (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Rather, identity is continually constructed and reconstructed as the individuals interact with others, negotiate within social situations, internalize social roles, and evaluate themselves (Cooper & Olson, 1996; Kerby, 1991; Wah

Tan, 1997). In the past few decades, the concept of identity has become an increasingly popular topic in general education (Beijaard et al., 2000; Beijaard et al., 2004; Cheng & Chen, 2021; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Lecturers' professional identity can also be claimed by lecturers themselves or attributed by others (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002). Lecturers' professional identity is not a predetermined or static attribute (Coldron & Smith, 1999), but it is an ongoing process that lasts throughout a lecturer's professional life (Beijaard et al., 2004). Through interacting with the institutional, historical, social, cultural, and political contexts, lecturers continually negotiate various meanings of becoming and being a lecturer (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Lecturers' professional identity is not a unitary entity either (Coldron & Smith, 1999). As lecturers play a variety of roles in their professional life, their identity is also multifaceted (Cooper & Olson, 1996). They can construct multiple sub-identities which may be in conflict or alignment with each other (Mishler, 1999; Norton Peirce, 1995; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Some of these sub-identities may take the predominant position whereas the others may be peripheral (Beijaard et al., 2004). One sub-identity can be of varying degrees of importance in different periods (Danielewicz, 2001; Long & Huang, 2017). Lecturers can also have ideal sub-identities but may encounter challenges that prevent the enactment of an ideal sub-identity when negotiating between the individual and contextual factors (Teng, 2019).

For English language teachers, while there has been substantial literature on their professional identity as teachers (e.g. (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Hao, 2011; Trent & Gao, 2009; Tsui, 2007; Xu, 2012)), studies on their professional identity as researchers, another essential sub-identity, are limited in number and employ mostly a qualitative research design taking a longitudinal view.

For example, Jurasaite-Harbison and Rex (2005) examined through discourse analysis how a Lithuanian elementary school teacher took on a researcher's identity by building research relationships with a researcher. Norton and Early (2011) examined through narrative inquiry how they negotiated their own researcher identities in their collaborative research project with English language teachers in a Ugandan rural school. The narrative by Xu (2014) with 104 Chinese English lecturers explored how these lecturers constructed their researcher identities in different career stages by identifying research interests, publishing, and making use of peer and institutional support. Long and Huang (2017) also conducted a narrative study to shed light on how four Chinese English lecturers constructed their researcher identities through the beginning, development, and struggle stages by dealing with the affordances and constraints in the social-institutional contexts.

Overall, the existing studies on English language lecturers' researcher identity primarily adopted a qualitative research design, which is not easily applicable to a larger population. Besides, they took more of a longitudinal view on the formation of researcher identity.

On the other hand, there have been insufficient cross-sectional studies on English language lecturers' researcher identity at a particular time. In fact, while professional identity is dynamic throughout a lecturer's professional life, it can be static at a particular time due to various factors (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Trent, 2011). Therefore, it is possible to examine how prominent some sub-identities are at a certain time of a lecturer's professional life and what factors have significant influences on these sub-identities. As argued by Han (2017), to evaluate the success or failure of educational policies or reforms, it is necessary to examine teachers' professional identities since teachers are active participants along the implementation of the policies or reforms. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct the current quantitative study to measure Chinese English lecturers' self-identification as researchers with a large population against the backdrop of the reform of the Chinese college title granting system since 2017.

3. METHODS

This descriptive study employed a survey questionnaire consisting of 8 items, which was administered online via Email and Dingtalk (an online collaboration platform for Chinese enterprises and organizations) from October

16 to November 16, 2021. The first 5 items collected the respondents' basic information of gender, age, academic qualification, title, and teaching load. Two more items asked the respondents to indicate whether they had published in top English-medium journals (SSCI or A&HCI journals) and top Chinese-medium journals (CSSCI journals) in the past 10 years. The final item measured the respondents' self-identification as researchers by inviting them to choose the type of lecturers that they identified themselves as: teaching-focused, teaching-research-focused, and research-focused.

According to the policy issued by China's Ministry of Education & Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (2020), the research requirements for promotion on these 3 types of lecturers decrease in order. Correspondingly, the extent to which the 3 types of lecturers identify themselves as researchers also decreases in order. Hence, the scores of 1, 2, and 3 were given for choosing teaching-focused, teaching-research-focused, and research-focused respectively. Independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted with SPSS 25 to analyze the quantitative data and answer the eight research questions.

Table 1. The 612 Chinese English lecturers' basic information.

Category		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	192	31.4%
	Female	420	68.6%
Age	≤39	187	30.6%
	40−49	314	51.3%
	≥50	111	18.1%
Academic qualification	Bachelor's degree	77	12.6%
	Master's degree	364	59.5%
	Doctoral degree	171	27.9%
Title	Lecturer	225	36.8%
	Senior lecturer or assistant professor	91	14.9%
	Associate professor	212	34.6%
	Professor	84	13.7%
Teaching load	≤6	84	13.7%
	7−10	155	25.3%
	11−14	237	38.7%
	≥15	136	22.2%
Top English-medium journal publications	Non-publishing lecturers	547	89.4%
	Publishing lecturers	65	10.6%
Top Chinese-medium journal publications	Non-publishing lecturers	474	77.5%
	Publishing lecturers	138	22.5%

In total, 612 valid responses were collected from English faculties located in Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Central China. The basic information of the 612 Chinese English lecturers is shown in Table 1. As regarding gender, 31.4% were male and 68.6% were female. As regarding age, 30.6% were aged 39 or below, 51.3% were aged between 40 and 49, and 18.1% were aged 50 or above. As regarding academic qualification, 12.6% held a bachelor's degree or below, 59.5% held a master's degree, and 27.9% held a doctoral degree. As regarding title, 36.8% were lecturers, 14.9% were senior lecturers or assistant professors, 34.6% were associate professors, and 13.7% were professors. As regarding teaching load, 13.7% taught 6 periods or less every week, 25.3% taught 7 to 10 periods every week, 38.7% taught 11 to 14 periods every week, and 22.2% taught 15 or more periods every week. As regarding top English-medium journal publications in the past 10 years, 89.4% were non-publishing lecturers and 10.6% were publishing lecturers. As regarding top Chinese-medium journal publications in the past 10 years, 77.5% were non-publishing lecturers and 22.5% were publishing lecturers.

Table 1 clearly indicates that the publication rate of the Chinese English lecturers was at an undesirable level and the majority of them were non-publishing lecturers, which confirms prior findings that Chinese English lecturers have low publication rates in first-tier international and local journals (Bai & Hudson, 2011; Peng, 2019;

Wang & Han, 2011). In addition, most of the lecturers (72.1%) did not have a doctoral degree and the majority of them (60.9%) had a heavy teaching load (more than 11 periods per week). These could be the contributing factors to the low publication rates among Chinese English lecturers.

In addition, the sample of Chinese English lecturers in the current study has demographic features similar to those reported by previous studies (Bai & Hudson, 2011; Borg & Liu, 2013; Dai & Zhang, 2004; Jiang, 2011; Peng & Gao, 2019; Peng, 2019). Previous studies showed that the target population of Chinese English lecturers is made up largely of females, lecturers holding a master's degree, lecturers holding lower titles (including lectureship, senior lectureship, assistant professorship, and associate professorship), and lecturers teaching 8 to 18 periods every week. The current sample was also made up largely of females, lecturers holding a master's degree, lecturers holding lower titles, and lecturers teaching more than 11 periods every week. Therefore, it can be said that the current sample was helpful in answering the research questions.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Research Question 1: What is Chinese English Lecturers' Self-Identification as Researchers?

Table 2. The 612 Chinese English lecturers' self-identification as researchers.

Number	Mean	Standard error	95% confidence interval for mean		5% Trimmed mean	SD
			Lower bound	Upper bound		
612	1.67	0.02	1.62	1.71	1.64	0.55

Table 2 shows that the 612 Chinese English lecturers had a relatively low self-identification as researchers (Mean = 1.67, SD = 0.55). For Chinese English lecturers' self-identification, findings showed that 58.3%, 37.6%, and 4.1% identified themselves as teaching-research-focused, teaching-focused, and research-focused respectively. These findings for RQ 1 suggest that a vast majority of Chinese English lecturers uphold their teacher identity and consider teaching as their primary task. Meanwhile, more than one third of the lecturers consider research as peripheral. This is consistent with the findings that language teaching faculty members in China are more teaching-focused than research-focused (Bai, Millwater, & Hudson, 2012; Hu, Van Der Rijst, Van Veen, & Verloop, 2019).

The reasons for this can be listed as follows. Firstly, the primary goal of English language education in Chinese colleges is to improve students' English language proficiency and employability (Hu et al., 2019). Secondly, the vast majority of Chinese English lecturers think that they are better at teaching than doing research (Dai & Zhang, 2004). Finally, a certain portion of Chinese English lecturers are unaware of the potential benefits of research on their teaching and professional development (Borg, 2007). These findings are also consistent with the claim by Beijaard et al. (2004) that some sub-identities, e.g. teacher identity, may be predominant while other sub-identities, e.g. researcher identity, may be more peripheral.

4.2. Research Question 2: Is there a Significant Difference in Chinese English Lecturers' Self-Identification as Researchers Based on Gender?

Table 3. Comparison of self-identification as researchers based on gender.

Group	Number	Mean	SD	Mean difference	t value	df	p value
Male	192	1.77	0.57	0.15[*]	3.23	610	0.001
Female	420	1.62	0.54				

Note: [*]The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3 shows that the male Chinese English lecturers had a higher self-identification as researchers (Mean = 1.77, SD = 0.57) than the female lecturers (Mean = 1.62, SD = 0.54). Results from independent samples t-test show that the male Chinese English lecturers had a significantly higher self-identification as researchers than the female

lecturers (Mean difference = 0.15, t = 3.23, df = 610, p < 0.01). These findings for Research Question 2 are consistent with the findings by Mitton-Kükner (2016) and Mattingly and Sayer (2006) which indicate that research seems like a part-time thing for female lecturers who have to negotiate the competing demands from their teaching, administrative, and family obligations. Under the Confucian cultural influence, female Chinese lecturers may give more priority to their family role than their professional role (Fan, 2009) and therefore they devote less time to research. By contrast, male Chinese English lecturers can spend significantly more time on research (Peng, 2020). As a result, male lecturers have significantly more research productions than their female counterparts (Lutter & Schröder, 2020; Mayer & Rathmann, 2018; Peng, 2020). Therefore, it is not surprising that in this study, researcher identity took a more prominent position in the male Chinese English lecturers.

4.3. Research Question 3: Is there a Significant Difference in Chinese English Lecturers' Self-Identification as Researchers Based on Age?

Table 4. Comparison of self-identification as researchers based on age.

Group	Number	Mean	SD
≤ 39	187	1.77	0.58
40-49	314	1.61	0.53
≥ 50	111	1.64	0.55
Total	612	1.67	0.55

Table 5. One Way ANOVA of self-identification as researchers based on age.

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F value	p value
Between Groups	3.04	2	1.52	5.04	0.007
Within groups	183.30	609	0.30		
Total	186.33	611			

Table 6. Tukey HSD test of self-identification as researchers based on age.

Group (I)	Group (J)	Mean difference (I-J)	Standard error	p value	95% confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
≤ 39	40-49	0.16[*]	0.05	0.005	0.04	0.28
	≥ 50	0.13	0.07	0.117	-0.02	0.28
40-49	≤ 39	-0.16[*]	0.05	0.005	-0.28	-0.04
	≥ 50	-0.03	0.06	0.888	-0.17	0.11
≥ 50	≤ 39	-0.13	0.07	0.117	-0.28	0.02
	40-49	0.03	0.06	0.888	-0.11	0.17

Note: [*]The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4 shows that the Chinese English lecturers aged 39 or below have the highest self-identification as researchers (Mean = 1.77, SD = 0.58), followed by the lecturers aged 50 or above (Mean = 1.64, SD = 0.55). The lecturers aged 40 to 49 have the lowest self-identification as researchers (Mean = 1.61, SD = 0.53). Results of One Way ANOVA in Table 5 show that there is a significant difference in self-identification as researchers between the three age groups (F = 5.04, df = 2, p < 0.01). Results of Tukey HSD test in Table 6 shows that the English lecturers aged 39 or below have a significantly higher self-identification as researchers than the English lecturers aged 40 to 49 (Mean difference = 0.16, p < 0.01). Therefore, these findings answer Research Question 3.

These results support the findings by Long and Huang (2017) that researcher identity can take a predominant position at the beginning stage but is relegated to a peripheral position in later years. A big reason for this, according to their study, can be that the institutional requirements on novice researchers' research output are more attainable and therefore achievement of the attainable goals reinforces researcher identity. However, with the passage of time, they further added, various factors including heightened institutional requirements, unfavorable

institutional research culture, and heavy teaching load can lead to the decreasing position of researcher identity and the increasing position of teacher identity (Long & Huang, 2017).

4.4. Research Question 4: Is there a Significant Difference in Chinese English Lecturers' Self-Identification as Researchers Based on Academic Qualification?

Table 7. Comparison of self-identification as researchers based on academic qualification.

Group	Number	Mean	SD
Bachelor's degree or below	77	1.44	0.55
Master's degree	364	1.57	0.51
Doctorate	171	1.98	0.51
Total	612	1.67	0.55

Table 8. One Way ANOVA of self-identification as researchers based on academic qualification.

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F value	p value
Between Groups	24.02	2	12.01	45.06	0.000
Within groups	162.31	609	0.27		
Total	186.33	611			

Table 9. Tukey HSD test of self-identification as researchers based on academic qualification.

Group (I)	Group (J)	Mean difference (I-J)	Standard error	p value	95% confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
Bachelor's degree or below	Master's degree	-0.12	0.07	0.134	-0.28	0.03
	Doctoral degree	-0.54*	0.07	0.000	-0.70	-0.37
Master's degree	Bachelor's degree or below	0.12	0.07	0.134	-0.03	0.28
	Doctoral degree	-0.41*	0.05	0.000	-0.52	-0.30
Doctoral degree	Bachelor's degree or below	0.54*	0.07	0.000	0.37	0.70
	Master's degree	0.41*	0.05	0.000	0.30	0.52

Note: *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 7 shows that the doctoral degree holders have the highest self-identification as researchers (Mean = 1.98, SD = 0.51), followed by the master's degree holders (Mean = 1.57, SD = 0.51). The Chinese English lecturers holding a bachelor's degree or below had the lowest self-identification as researchers (Mean = 1.44, SD = 0.55). Results of One Way ANOVA in Table 8 show that there is a significant difference in self-identification as researchers between the 3 groups of academic qualification (F = 45.06, df = 2, $p < 0.01$). Results of Tukey HSD test in Table 9 show that the doctoral degree holders have a significantly higher self-identification as researchers than the master's degree holders (Mean difference = 0.41, $p < 0.01$) and the bachelor's degree holders (Mean difference = 0.54, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, these findings answer Research Question 4.

These findings are similar to the findings by Xu (2014) and Long and Huang (2017) which show that a doctoral degree contributes positively to the formation of researcher identity in Chinese English lecturers. By enrolling in doctoral programs, Chinese English lecturers not only can identify research interests and improve research capacities (Peng, 2019; Xu, 2014), but also gain access to academic networking resources shared by PhD supervisors (Curry & Lillis, 2010). These academic networking resources in turn lead to publishing success in both English-medium journals (Curry & Lillis, 2010) and top Chinese-medium journals (Shi, Wenyu, & Jinwei, 2005; Xu, 2014).

4.5. Research Question 5: Is there a Significant Difference in Chinese English Lecturers' Self-Identification as Researchers Based on Title?

Table 10. Comparison of self-identification as researchers based on title.

Group	Number	Mean	SD
Lecturer	225	1.55	0.57
Senior lecturer or assistant professor	91	1.69	0.51
Associate professor	212	1.70	0.54
Professor	84	1.87	0.51
Total	612	1.67	0.55

Table 11. One Way ANOVA of self-identification as researchers based on title.

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	*F* value	*p* value
Between Groups	6.95	3	2.32	7.85	0.000
Within groups	179.38	608	0.30		
Total	186.33	611			

Table 12. Tukey HSD test of self-identification as researchers based on title.

Group (I)	Group (J)	Mean difference (I-J)	Standard error	*p* value	95% confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
Lecturer	Senior lecturer or assistant professor	-0.15	0.07	0.136	-0.32	0.03
	Associate professor	-0.15*	0.05	0.019	-0.29	-0.02
	Professor	-0.32*	0.07	0.000	-0.50	-0.14
Senior lecturer or assistant professor	Lecturer	0.15	0.07	0.136	-0.03	0.32
	Associate professor	-0.01	0.07	1.000	-0.18	0.17
	Professor	-0.18	0.08	0.139	-0.39	0.03
Associate professor	Lecturer	0.15*	0.05	0.019	0.02	0.29
	Senior lecturer and assistant professor	0.01	0.07	1.000	-0.17	0.18
	Professor	-0.17	0.07	0.071	-0.35	0.01
Professor	Lecturer	0.32*	0.07	0.000	0.14	0.50
	Senior lecturer or assistant professor	0.18	0.08	0.139	-0.03	0.39
	Associate professor	0.17	0.07	0.071	-0.01	0.35

Note: *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 10 shows that professors have the highest self-identification as researchers (Mean = 1.87, SD = 0.51), followed by associate professors (Mean = 1.70, SD = 0.54) and senior lecturers and assistant professors (Mean = 1.69, SD = 0.51). The lecturers have the lowest self-identification as researchers (Mean = 1.55, SD = 0.57). Results of One Way ANOVA in Table 11 show that there is a significant difference in self-identification as researchers between the 4 title groups (F = 7.85, df = 3, $p < 0.01$). Results of Tukey HSD test in Table 12 show that the lecturers have a significantly lower self-identification as researchers than the associate professors (Mean difference = −0.15, p= 0.02) and professors (Mean difference = −0.32, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, these findings answer Research Question 5.

These findings confirm previous findings that title represents research experience and is significantly correlated with publication counts (Horodnic & Zait, 2015; McNally, 2010; North, Zewotir, & Murray, 2012; Peng & Gao, 2019). Attainment of associate professorship and professorship requires publications in top-tier journals, which in turn facilitates the construction of researcher identity (Long & Huang, 2017; Xu, 2014). On the other hand, failures in publishing in high-status journals lead to failures in attaining associate professorship. Since publications serve as a source of research self-efficacy, failures in publishing research works not only decrease

Chinese English lecturers' motivation to do research (Borg & Liu, 2013), but also contribute negatively to the construction of researcher identity (Long & Huang, 2017; Xu, 2014). As reported by Jiang (2011), progression from lectureship to associate professorship is a rather tough journey for Chinese English lecturers. For lecturers, difficulty in meeting the research requirements for promotion can lead to the decreasing position of researcher identity (Long & Huang, 2017).

4.6. Research Question 6: Is there a Significant Difference in Chinese English Lecturers' Self-Identification as Researchers Based on Teaching Load?

Table 13. Comparison of self-identification as researchers based on teaching load.

Group	Number	Mean	SD
≤6	84	1.90	0.57
7−10	155	1.72	0.53
11−14	237	1.54	0.53
≥15	136	1.66	0.55
Total	612	1.67	0.55

Table 14. One Way ANOVA of self-identification as researchers based on teaching load.

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F value	p value
Between Groups	8.80	3	2.93	10.04	0.000
Within groups	177.54	608	0.29		
Total	186.33	611			

Table 15. Tukey HSD test of self-identification as researchers based on teaching load.

Group (I)	Group (J)	Mean difference (I-J)	Standard error	p value	95% Confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
≤6	7−10	0.18	0.07	0.063	-0.01	0.37
	11−14	0.36*	0.07	0.000	0.18	0.54
	≥15	0.24*	0.08	0.007	0.05	0.44
7-10	≤6	−0.18	0.07	0.063	−0.37	0.01
	11−14	0.18*	0.06	0.008	0.03	0.32
	≥15	0.06	0.06	0.773	−0.10	0.22
11−14	≤6	−0.36*	0.07	0.000	−0.54	−0.18
	7−10	−0.18*	0.06	0.008	−0.32	−0.03
	≥15	−0.12	0.06	0.181	−0.27	0.03
≥15	≤6	−0.24*	0.08	0.007	−0.44	−0.05
	7−10	−0.06	0.06	0.773	−0.22	0.10
	11−14	0.12	0.06	0.181	−0.03	0.27

Note: *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 13 shows that the Chinese English lecturers teaching 6 or less periods every week have the highest self-identification as researchers (Mean = 1.90, SD = 0.57), followed by the lecturers teaching 7 to 10 periods every week (Mean = 1.72, SD = 0.53) and lecturers teaching 15 or more periods every week (Mean = 1.66, SD = 0.55). The lecturers teaching 11 to 14 periods every week have the lowest self-identification as researchers (Mean = 1.54, SD = 0.53). Results of One Way ANOVA in Table 14 show that there is a significant difference in self-identification as researchers between the 4 teaching loads (F = 10.04, df = 3, $p < 0.01$). Results of Tukey HSD test in Table 15 show that the lecturers teaching 6 or less periods every week have a significantly higher self-identification as researchers than the lecturers teaching 11 to 14 periods every week (Mean difference = 0.36, $p < 0.01$) and lecturers teaching 15 or more periods every week (Mean difference = 0.24, $p = 0.01$). Besides, the lecturers teaching 7 to 10 periods every week also have a significantly higher self-identification as researchers than the lecturers teaching 11 to 14 periods every week (Mean difference = 0.18, $p = 0.01$). Therefore, these findings answer Research Question 6.

These findings confirm the previous findings that heavy teaching load is a major constraint on Chinese English lecturers' research engagement (Borg, 2007; Borg, 2009; Long & Huang, 2017; Xu, 2014) and can lead to the decreasing position of researcher identity and the increasing position of teacher identity (Long & Huang, 2017).

4.7. Research Question 7: Is there a Significant Difference in Chinese English Lecturers' Self-Identification as Researchers Based on Top English-Medium Journal Publications?

Table 16. Comparison of self-identification as researchers based on top English-medium journal publications.

Group	Number	Mean	SD	Mean difference	*t* value	df	*p* value
Lecturers without publications in top English-medium journals	547	1.61	0.54	−0.48*	−6.84	610	0.000
Lecturers with publications in top English-medium journals	65	2.09	0.42				

Note: *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 16 shows that the Chinese English lecturers without publications in top English-medium journals have a lower self-identification as researchers (Mean= 1.61, SD = 0.57) than the lecturers with publications in top English-medium journals (Mean = 2.09, SD = 0.42). Results from independent samples t-test show that the lecturers without publications in top English-medium journals had a significantly lower self-identification as researchers than the lecturers with publications in top English-medium journals (Mean difference = −0.48, t = −6.84, df = 610, p < 0.01). Therefore, these findings answer Research Question 7. These findings are in line with the previous findings that publications in top-tier journals serve as a source of research self-efficacy and facilitate the construction of researcher identity (Long & Huang, 2017; Xu, 2014).

4.8. Research Question 8: Is there a Significant Difference in Chinese English Lecturers' Self-Identification as Researchers Based on Top Chinese-Medium Journal Publications?

Table 17. Comparison of self-identification as researchers based on top Chinese-medium journal publications.

Group	Number	Mean	SD	Mean difference	*t* value	df	*p* value
Lecturers without publications in top Chinese-medium journals	474	1.57	0.55	−0.42*	−8.36	610	0.000
Lecturers with publications in top Chinese-medium journals	138	1.99	0.41				

Note: *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 17 shows that the Chinese English lecturers without publications in top Chinese-medium journals have a lower self-identification as researchers (Mean = 1.57, SD = 0.55) than the lecturers with publications in top Chinese-medium journals (Mean = 1.99, SD = 0.41). Results from independent samples t-test show that the lecturers without publications in top Chinese-medium journals have a significantly lower self-identification as researchers than the lecturers with publications in top Chinese-medium journals (Mean difference = −0.42, *t* = −8.36, df = 610, *p* < 0.01). Therefore, these findings answer Research Question 8.

These findings are in line with the previous findings that publications in top-tier journals serve as a source of research self-efficacy and facilitate the construction of researcher identity (Long & Huang, 2017; Xu, 2014).

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study was one of the first to quantitatively measure the self-identification as researchers of Chinese English lecturers at a particular time of their careers. This study revealed some important findings. The male lecturers' self-identification as researchers is significantly higher than the female lecturers. The lecturers aged 39

year or below have significantly higher self-identification as researchers than the English lecturers aged 40 to 49. Lecturers with doctoral degree holders significantly indicate higher self-identification as researchers compared to lecturer with Master degree and Bachelor degree. There is also a significant difference in lecturer's self-identification as researchers according to their title or position. Lecturers with less teaching load have significantly higher self-identification as researchers than those with heavy teaching load. The lecturers who publish in top English-medium journals and top Chinese-medium journals have significantly higher self-identification as researchers compared to those who do not publish in those journals.

These quantitative findings are consistent with previous qualitative findings on English lecturers' researcher identity. Therefore, it can be said that the research complemented those qualitative studies and filled a gap in the researcher identity literature. In addition, this study was one of the first to take a snapshot of Chinese English lecturers' self-identification as researchers since the reform of the title granting system. As the reform continues, Chinese English lecturers' self-identification as researchers may go through various changes and therefore more research should be conducted to explain the phenomena. These findings have the following implications for colleges which aim to help lecturers construct their researcher identities and improve their research productivity. Firstly, colleges can encourage female, senior lecturers, and non-publishing lecturers as well as young lecturers to do research by offering more incentives and research training. Secondly, colleges can implement favorable policies to allow more lecturers to pursue a doctoral degree which will be a good foundation for them to do research and publication. Thirdly, colleges can consider reducing the teaching load of the lecturers so that there will be a balance between teaching and research.

This study has several limitations. Firstly, since the sample consisted of only 612 Chinese English lecturers, the findings cannot be generalized to all English lecturers in the Chinese context. Secondly, this study drew conclusions based on self-reported quantitative data. Self-reported information tells what respondents want to say instead of what they actually do (Creswell, 2012) and can be falsely provided by some respondents who wish to enhance their image (Bai, Millwater, & Hudson, 2014). Therefore, it is suggested that future studies will employ a mixed-method design with a larger sample and triangulate the quantitative data with the qualitative data.

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