


Chapter 4

Negotiating the Professional Identity of a Gay EFL Lecturer in Thai Higher Education: A Positioning Theory Case Study

Crizjale V. Ahmad

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6264-2269>

Cor Jesu College, Philippines

ABSTRACT

Using Positioning Theory, this qualitative case study examines how a gay foreign English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturer negotiates professional identity within Thai higher education. Data were generated through a semi-structured in-depth interview and analyzed in relation to the participant's longitudinal teaching trajectory. The study explores identity positioning in classroom practice, everyday academic interaction, and institutional discourse, and its implications for professional agency, emotional labor, and pedagogical decision-making. Findings show that identity is negotiated through selective visibility grounded in pedagogical professionalism, relational positioning mediated by silence, and ongoing emotional attunement to institutional norms rather than overt disclosure. The study contributes to applied linguistics and EFL scholarship by highlighting identity positioning as an interactional condition shaping pedagogical practice in transnational teaching contexts.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-7194-8.ch004

Copyright © 2026, IGI Global Scientific Publishing. Copying or distributing in print or electronic forms without written permission of IGI Global Scientific Publishing is prohibited. Use of this chapter to train generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies is expressly prohibited. The publisher reserves all rights to license its use for generative AI training and machine learning model development.

INTRODUCTION

Positioning Theory conceptualizes identity as a discursive and relational process rather than as an individual or psychological trait, foregrounding how identities are produced through interaction within specific institutional contexts. Central to the theory are the concepts of positions, storylines, and moral orders, which together shape what actions, identities, and forms of conduct are made possible or constrained within particular social settings (Davies & Harré, 1990). In educational environments, these storylines are embedded in institutional norms of professionalism, authority, and legitimacy that function as moral frameworks governing appropriate conduct and self-presentation. Teachers' actions, emotions, and identities are therefore continuously evaluated against these implicit storylines, rendering identity negotiation an ongoing interactional accomplishment rather than a stable professional state.

Applied to LGBTQ+ educators, Positioning Theory enables analysis of how sexual identity becomes relevant through implication, silence, and relational cues rather than through explicit disclosure. This perspective shifts attention away from visibility as an individual choice and toward positioning as a negotiated outcome shaped by institutional norms, interactional histories, and affective expectations. Such an approach is especially valuable in transnational contexts, where educators must interpret unfamiliar moral orders while drawing on embodied memories formed in prior professional settings.

This study contributes to existing scholarship in three key ways. First, it extends Positioning Theory to the study of LGBTQ+ identity negotiation in higher education EFL contexts, an area that remains underexamined. Second, it foregrounds emotional labor as a central mechanism through which professional positioning is enacted and sustained in everyday academic life. Third, by situating the Thai case within a broader longitudinal professional trajectory, the study offers a relational account of identity negotiation that moves beyond static or celebratory narratives of inclusion.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does the lecturer position himself across his intersecting identities in classroom practice?
2. How do students, colleagues, and institutional structures position him in everyday academic interactions?
3. How do these positioning processes shape his agency, emotional labor, and pedagogical decision-making?

12 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/negotiating-the-professional-identity-of-a-gay-efl-lecturer-in-thai-higher-education/411463

Related Content

Trusting Teachers: Resisting Censorship and Recognizing Euphemisms in Educational Policy and Curriculum Development

Anna Waugh and Carol Reville (2020). *Incorporating LGBTQ+ Identities in K-12 Curriculum and Policy* (pp. 252-288).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/trusting-teachers/243273

LGBTQ+ Books Within Middle School Libraries and How Librarians Promote These LGBTQ+ Books to Students

Kristal Elaine Vallie and Susan Szabo (2020). *Incorporating LGBTQ+ Identities in K-12 Curriculum and Policy* (pp. 289-312).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/lgbtq-books-within-middle-school-libraries-and-how-librarians-promote-these-lgbtq-books-to-students/243274

Addressing Sexual and Gender Diversity in an English Education Teacher Preparation Program

Katherine Mason Cramer (2022). *Research Anthology on Inclusivity and Equity for the LGBTQ+ Community* (pp. 327-362).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/addressing-sexual-and-gender-diversity-in-an-english-education-teacher-preparation-program/291591

Using Social Media to Advocate LGBT Rights in Black Africa: A Study of Nigerian and Cameroonian Gay Bloggers and "Facebookers"

Floribert Patrick C. Endong (2022). *Research Anthology on Inclusivity and Equity for the LGBTQ+ Community* (pp. 169-188).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/using-social-media-to-advocate-lgbt-rights-in-black-africa/291582

Stay Gold: An Intergenerational LGBTQIA+ Arts Program

Eli Burke, Harrison Orrand, Carissa DiCindio (2022). *Research Anthology on Inclusivity and Equity for the LGBTQ+ Community* (pp. 528-548).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/stay-gold/291603