Beyond the "Research vs. Scholarship" Dichotomy:
The Emergence of a New Category of Academic Staff

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This paper deals with the role of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) among staff on teaching-only contracts in UK higher education, particularly in contrast with the activities of research-active staff. Drawing on the results of a quantitative study carried out during the summer of 2021 among modern foreign language teachers in 64 UK universities, the questions of the status and purpose of SoTL are addressed. The results of the survey show that, beyond the traditional two-tier division of academic labour based on the research vs. scholarship dichotomy, a third group of academic staff with no research or SoTL responsibilities has emerged in recent years. The paper concludes with recommendations to review the existing divisions between staff on research, SoTL and teaching-only contracts in order to create a more inclusive academic environment where individuals in different types of academic posts can fulfil their scholarly potential.

The scholarship of teaching, or, as it has been known for the last two decades, the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) often appears in discussions around the professional profile of teaching-only staff in UK higher education as one of the activities that institutions expect teachers to engage with. The term is also used to distinguish the academic activity of this group of staff from the work carried out by their research-active colleagues. The growing number of teaching-only appointments in UK universities over the last few years has brought the nature and status of SoTL to the forefront of the debate around professional development and progression of teaching-only academics.

This paper will examine how the notions of SoTL described in the literature materialise in the work of modern foreign languages (MFL) teachers in UK higher education. The results of a quantitative study carried out during the summer of 2021 will be discussed and analysed with a view to answering the following questions: what type of activities do MFL teachers carry out as SoTL? How are these activities different from traditional research? What are the institutional requirements and expectations for MFL teachers with regard to SoTL? What role does SoTL play in the professional progression of these teachers? Lastly, how can the role, purpose and impact of SoTL be more meaningful and valuable for the community?

In 1990, Ernest Boyer published the essay *Scholarship reconsidered: priorities of the professoriate*, where he vowed to "move beyond the tired old 'teaching versus research' debate" (2016, p. 80) in order to reclaim the different dimensions of academic work: teaching, research and service. He proposed the notion of *scholarship* as an all-encompassing concept that included different areas of activity. The impact of Boyer's work and that of his successors has been notable in the adoption of the "scholarship of teaching" concept (one of the four types of scholarship he identified) on behalf of higher education institutions in the anglosphere with the aim of enhancing and legitimating the academic value of teaching at tertiary level (McEwan, 2022).

Literature on SoTL applied to the area of Arts and Humanities seems to revolve around the teaching of cultural modules (see Huber & Hutchings, 2008, and Chick, 2013), but references to the involvement of language teachers in SoTL are anecdotal (Witman & Richlin, 2007). The fact that the attention to SoTL falls on only one part of the academic activity that goes on in MFL departments reflects the dynamics of the relationship between both areas of work. In the largely devalued teaching ranks of UK higher education, language teachers are often seen as mere service providers (Gallardo, 2019, p. 6). The separation between "language" and "content" or "cultural" modules in modern languages degrees (Parks, 2020) means that, in most cases, both categories of courses are taught by different groups of academics (teaching-only staff for languages vs. research-active staff for culture). The conventional two-tier division of academic labour discussed by Boyer is, thus, alive and healthy in language departments.

The occasional accounts of SoTL activities among language teachers point to their low degree of involvement in work that could be considered equivalent to the generation of new knowledge. Research engagement is recommended to MFL teachers. Nevertheless –and understandably, given the context described above–, its benefits are limited and unclear. Therefore, only a minority of language teachers engage in research (Borg, 2010). To be fair, the low engagement of language teachers in research activity is partly justified by their lack of preparation and training for such academic work. This idea is corroborated by the results of a study carried out among teachers of Spanish as a foreign language, where the need for training in conducting research was identified as one of the most urgent developments in the profession (Muñoz Basols, Rodríguez Lifante & Cruz Moya, 2017, p. 23). Nevertheless, confusion and unpreparedness are not the only factors that hinder MFL teachers engagement in research or scholarship. The data presented in the following sections help shed light on these conditions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data were collected during the summer of 2021 through an anonymous online questionnaire consisting of 18 multiple choice questions, with the option to add free text comments in some of the answers (the questionnaire can be consulted in Appendix 1). It was distributed among an initial sample of 1,439 staff who, according to the information publicly available on the institutional websites of their universities, were involved in language teaching. Teachers in the sample worked in one or more of 64 UK universities, in both language departments and institution-wide language

programmes. All the institutions are members of one (or both) of the main MFL professional associations in the UK: AULC (Association of University Language Communities) and UCML (University Council of Modern Languages). Universities that did not offer MFL provision or did not have information about their language teaching staff on their institutional websites were excluded from the sample. Appendix 2 offers a list of the higher education providers included in the study.

The questionnaire was hosted on Jisc Online Surveys, and the link to complete it was distributed by email. Individual email addresses were collected from the institutional websites of the universities where the participants worked. Every message of invitation to complete the questionnaire contained a unique link, specific to the individual recipient, giving access to the survey. In addition, the link gave access to a consent form that participants were asked to sign as proof that they had understood the purposes of the project and what it involved, and that they had agreed to take part. The first invitation emails were sent between 28 June and 1 July 2021; these were followed by reminders on 1 and 27 September. The survey was open between 28 June and 30 September 2021.

Some invitation messages were returned as undeliverable, since the email addresses they had been sent to were no longer active. After these addresses were removed, the final sample consisted of 1,368 teachers. A total of 295 academics completed the questionnaire (22% response rate). The data were transferred to Microsoft Excel for storage and management, and analysed with Microsoft Access.

The survey was divided into three main sections: questions 1-9 were aimed at gathering information on the participants' length of professional service, working patterns, type of contract, areas of work, Higher Education Academy (HEA) fellowship, and qualifications. The second section (questions 10-14) asked participants about different aspects of their engagement in research or scholarship activities. Questions 15-18 made up the final section; they requested information on the participants' gender, age, ethnic group and identification as native speakers of the language they taught. The following paragraphs offer a summary of the responses to sections 1 and 3; percentages have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number, except when these were inferior to 1%. The full dataset is available to view at: http://doi.org/10.15128/r2mw22v5475.

RESULTS

Over half of the respondents (55.6%) had spent between 10 and 24 years teaching the language they currently work on. 53% were on full-time contracts for the whole calendar year; the rest of the participants had part-time arrangements, either continuous (23%) or discontinuous (15%). A small fraction (7.8%) worked full-time during teaching terms only. 55% were on permanent contracts. The majority of respondents (84%) were on teaching or teaching and scholarship contracts that did not include research. Only 52% of the participants had access to a defined path for professional progression and promotion. The most common postgraduate qualifications were a master's degree in foreign language teaching (24%) and a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE; 23%), followed by a PhD in cultural studies (22%) and a master's degree in cultural studies (20%).

With regard to demographics, 73% of the respondents identified as female, 24% as male and 1% as non-binary. The predominant age group was 45-54 (35% of the respondents), followed by 35-44 (29%), 55-64 (19%), 25-34 (13%) and 65 and over (2%). 69% of respondents declared to belong to a white ethnic group different from English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British (13%), Irish (1%) or White and Asian (1%). 5% belonged to an Asian background different from Chinese (4%). 1% of participants declared to belong to an African ethnic group, and another 1% to an Arab group. 2% belonged to mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds, whereas 3% placed themselves in other ethnic groups. 83% of the respondents identified as native speakers of the language they taught, while 16% did not.

Institutional requirements and expectations for MFL teachers regarding SoTL / The role of SoTL in the professional progression of MFL teachers

Section 2 of the questionnaire deals with the nature and status of professional activities of MFL teachers that fall outside strict teaching duties: research and scholarship. In this report, quantitative data are accompanied by selected examples of qualitative answers, when these were available. Respondents' comments have been coded with a number between 1 and 295, representing the order allocated in the data set to every participant's unique response number.

Question 10 aimed to find out the proportion of MFL teachers who have research or scholarship responsibilities as part of their contractual requirements. 107 respondents (37%) answered that this was the case, while for the remaining 63% (188 respondents) these duties were not part of their contracts.

In view of the confusion around the definition of *scholarship* and its overlap with research, the survey questions make no distinction between both. The aim at this stage is to find out what proportion of language teachers are bound to carry out academic activities beyond teaching; the nature and scope of these activities will be clarified in later questions. It should be noted that, despite the currency of the concepts of *scholarship* and *SoTL* as alleged strategies to increase the symbolic capital of teaching in higher education, these activities are a requirement for barely more than one third of MFL teachers. For the majority of language teachers, the only expectation is that they will deliver their classes, regardless of any other type of academic work. However, any hopes of professional progression depend on the fulfilment of activities akin to research, as acknowledged by some of the respondents:

> Whilst not a contractual requirement, to have any hope of promotion, publishing "on-the-side" is essential. (186)

> [Research or scholarship activities] are encouraged, particularly in view of career progression. (195)

As a result, some teachers who are not required to do SoTL or research still carry out these types of work:

> Not a requirement, but I have taken part in some research and presented at conferences. (197)

> [No], but I am doing research activities while working here. (17)

The majority of staff with research or scholarship responsibilites are on full-time, permanent contracts (79%; 84 respondents). 19% (20 respondents) are on part-time, permanent contracts, whereas only three teachers with these contractual requirements (3%) are on temporary or hourly paid arrangements.

The activities that MFL teachers carry out as scholarship / Differences between these activities and traditional research

Table 1, which gathers the answers to question 11, lays out the type of research and scholarship activities that MFL teachers engage in. In questions 11-14 (tables 1-4), participants were invited to select as many options as they wished. These are ranked from more to less common.

These results confirm the idea, frequent in the literature about SoTL, that practically anything that teachers do beyond actual classroom time can be considered scholarship. The three most common activities (attending conferences, workshops and seminars; taking training courses and doing peer review) do not align with the requirements, laid out by Lee Shulman and widely accepted by the academic community as indicators of quality SoTL, that it is "public, peer-reviewed and exchangeable" (2000, p. 18). Instead, the notion prevails that activities equivalent to "reading the literature" (Boyer, 2016, pp. 86-88) are enough.

Answers to question 12 (table 2) refer to the type of dissemination activities that MFL teachers carry out for their research or scholarship outcomes. These answers seem to indicate that the outputs of the research and scholarship activities undertaken by MFL teachers are disseminated through circuits not drastically different from those available for traditional research. Qualitative data associated to this question, though, offer an insight of the great expense these teachers work at, sometimes to the point of rendering dissemination activities impossible:

> I should mention that these are rare instances due to the pressure of the job. (185)

> Very sporadic activity. (18)

> There is no much time left to write academically after the research and the presentation of the findings. (202)

> I would like to do even more than I do in this area, but there is always the underlying factor of lack of time, no consideration for any kind of research leave, etc. (38)

> I have been forced to abandon academic research for the present owing to lack of institutional support. (45).

Among the 188 respondents who declared not having research or scholarship responsibilities as part of their contractual requirements, the proportion of staff who do not actually engage in these activities is only 16% (30 respondents). This indicates that the vast majority of this group (84%; 158 respondents) undertake at least one of the activities listed in question 11, despite not being required to do so. This proportion decreases when it comes to dissemination activities: the number of staff with no research or scholarship responsibilities who do not carry out dissemination activities is 74 (39%), which means that 114 respondents (61%) do some kind of dissemination of the research or scholarship that they are, actually, not required to undertake. Only 28 respondents (15%) do not engage in research, scholarship or their dissemination at all, while 97 (63%) do research, scholarship and dissemination of the outcomes. These results have to be read in the context of the qualitative answers to question 10: even though some MFL teachers are not required to engage in research or scholarship, they are aware that this is the only route to professional progression and promotion, and feel, therefore, the obligation to do it.

Question 13 gathered data about the institutional support MFL teachers receive for their research and scholarship activities (table 3).

While different types of support are identified, the percentages of staff who receive each type of assistance remain low, with only two categories reaching or surpassing 40%. In addition,

Table 1. Question 11: What type of research or scholarship activities do you undertake?

Options	% answers	# respondents
Professional development activities (e.g. attending conferences, workshops, webinars)	70%	207
Training courses on learning and teaching	53%	155
Peer review of learning and teaching	40%	117
Projects aimed at the enhancement of language learning and teaching (e.g. involving language students)	36%	107
Practice-based SoTL as part of my university job	29%	86
Research on language learning and teaching as part of my university job	26%	77
Research on cultural studies as part of my university job	17%	50
Writing reviews of language textbooks	12%	36
None	11%	31
Other	9%	26
Research as part of my postgraduate programme of study (master's / PhD)	8%	23
Practice-based SoTL as part of my postgraduate programme of study (e.g. certificate in education)	4%	11

Table 2. Question 12: What actions do you take to disseminate the outcomes of your research or scholarship?

Options	% answers	# respondents
Presenting papers to a national audience (e.g. at national conferences)	51%	151
Presenting papers to a local audience (e.g. within my institution)	43%	127
Presenting papers to an international audience (e.g. at international conferences)	41%	120
Publishing papers in peer-reviewed literature	39%	116
None	29%	85
Publishing book reviews in peer-reviewed literature	18%	54
Publishing papers in non peer-reviewed literature	10%	30
Other	6%	17
Publishing book reviews in non peer-reviewed literature	4%	11

Table 3. Question 13: What type of assistance is available in your institution for your research or scholarship activity?

Options	% answers	# respondents
Financial support for travel expenses	42%	123
Allocation of time in annual workload	40%	118
Peer support from a mentoring scheme	22%	66
None	21%	61
Financial support for projects associated with learning and teaching	20%	59
Research / scholarship leave periods	17%	51
Other	6%	18
Financial support for publication expenses	5%	14

the pressures of daily practice in academic departments mean that these affordances cannot always materialise in practice, as explained in the comments submitted by some of the respondents:

> The allocation of time is official, but in reality it is very difficult to fit in research in my current workload. (179)

> In practice, it is not fully acknowledged in workload. (5)

> I have not been able to fully use the time allocated to research as part of my workload, as it fully had to be dedicated to teaching. For the most part, research takes place on top of my contracted hours (unpaid). (30)

> The allocation of time in annual workload is a joke though, this "time" only exists on paper. Financial support is minimal. (184)

Some of these comments anticipate the highlights of answers to question 14, about the obstacles to the conduct of research and scholarship activities (table 4).

Table 4. Question 14: What are the main impediments that hinder your research or scholarship activity?		
Options	**% answers**	**# respondents**
Lack of time	74%	218
Lack of financial support	39%	116
Absence of rewards or recognition	33%	97
Lack of clarity on what is expected from me as a MFL teacher, apart from teaching	33%	96
Lack of encouragement from my manager	21%	62
Lack of peer support in the academic community (e.g. absence of a mentoring scheme)	19%	55
Lack of skills or knowledge of how to undertake research or scholarship	14%	40
Lack of interest or motivation (i.e. I am only interested in teaching)	9%	28
Lack of ideas about what to study	7%	21
None	6%	18
Other	3%	10

Lack of time is overwhelmingly selected as an obstacle to research and scholarship activities. Behind the more or less predictable lack of financial support, the third and fourth most common causes (absence of rewards or recognition and lack of clarity about the expectations placed on MFL teachers) are indicative of the position of this staff group in university departments, especially in relation to the assumption that everyone who teaches has to get involved in some kind of academic activity beyond class delivery. Whether this type of work is sanctioned by the institution is a different matter, judging from the participants' comments:

> It was made very clear that any and all research activities were our own business. While the university is not actively hindering us to pursue research in our own time, they vetoed attempts to research our own practice and overload us with work to such an attempt [*sic*] that most people barely attend any kind of professional development event. (185)

> We were always told that even though we are expected to do it, we need to find the way and the time to do it. (203)

The workload is too much to conduct any significant research on the side, all the more as it carries no impact on my professional development as E&S. (18)

> Unfortunately, the main issue is a lack of time and a very unrealistic workload in terms of teaching and coordination in my case. (38)

> It is difficult to justify the time spent on research because it is not part of my contract, and hard to sustain focus because of teaching load (especially during pandemic with additional student needs / demands). (49)

> During the academic year, I have to work so many hours in teaching / marking / pastoral care at both universities that I hardly have any weekends. There is simply no space for any further reflection or systematic research. (65)

Some of the respondents who added comments found that the list of impediments offered in the questionnaire was not comprehensive enough:

> Missing: lost interest or motivation. Feeling isolated. Not being able to network. Not taken seriously. (202)

DISCUSSION
The type of activities that MFL teachers carry out as scholarship

The range of activities that MFL teachers have identified as research or SoTL in their answers to questions 11 and 12 confirm the notion, present in the literature, that any kind of tasks adjacent to teaching can be considered scholarship. Some of the examples of these areas of work cited by different authors are unquestionably scholarly, but others fail to go beyond the basic requirements of teaching: sharing innovative teaching materials and concepts, formally or informally (Glassick, Huber & Maeroff, 1997, p. 31); journal papers, textbooks, undergraduate classes (Nicholls, 2005, pp. 13-14); reading papers and being informed, but not doing primary research (Cotton, Miller & Kneale, 2018, p. 1634); personal reflection, sharing good practice, publishing research findings; sometimes, reading teaching and learning texts and talking to colleagues about teaching practice (Canning & Masika, 2022, p. 1091).

Differences between the SoTL activities of MFL teachers and traditional research

As some authors have indicated, the attention that SoTL places around what goes on in the classroom steers the notion of scholarship away from intellectual inquiry and the generation of new knowledge (Boshier, 2009, p. 3). It is, indeed, difficult to see how the focus on reading, personal reflection and the sharing of teaching practice as valid SoTL activities can fit in with the conventional idea of what a *scholar* is: in higher education, scholarly practice is usually understood as the full range of academic work, including the generation of new knowledge and the publication of research outcomes (Boyer, 2016, p. 69; Nicholls, 2005, p. 9). In *Scholarship reconsidered*, Boyer advocated for all academics, not only those who are research active, to establish researcher credentials. He later admits that, even though all academics should keep up to date with developments in their fields, there are many ways to do this, and not all necessarily involve publishing new research: "reading the literature" is considered enough (2016, pp. 86-88). While

this admission may be the origin of the idea that reading articles on learning and teaching serves as evidence of conducting SoTL, it could have also been the argument that justifies the perpetuation of the traditional two-tier system in academia: those who publish and those who do not. Boyer and the partisans of SoTL had the best intentions when they claimed that this light-touch engagement with advancements in learning and teaching was enough for all staff to make a valuable contribution to academic life, but their efforts have been counterproductive. As a result, SoTL is seen as amateurish and unintellectual, and is devalued by the idea that anyone who has to teach in higher education, regardless of their research background and credentials, can engage in scholarly work. This adds up to the perception that SoTL is a fallback route for staff with poor research credentials, used to separate research-related from non research-related academic labour (Nicholls, 2005, p. 69; Boshier, 2009, p. 1; Smith & Walker, 2021, p. 4). In light of the type of activities that are considered acceptable as scholarship, the dubious image of SoTL as an academic endeavour that lacks in rigour is hardly surprising. Stigmatised by its association with teaching (Park, 1996, p. 49), less important than disciplinary research (Schroeder, 2007, p. 1; Higher Education Academy [HEA], 2016, p. 5), with little impact and limited scope (Tight, 2018, p. 72; Webb & Tierney, 2020, p. 617), SoTL is "the ugly step-sister of the academic family" (Manarin & Abrahamson, 2016, p. 2).

Institutional requirements and expectations for MFL teachers with regard to SoTL

On the other hand, the belief that staff that have been appointed to teach without a background in research can produce outputs of an academic standard is illusory and unfair on these professionals, who are encouraged to emulate their research-active colleagues while lacking the necessary training, support and disciplinary environment (Harland, 2009, p. 582; Macfarlane, 2011, pp. 127-128). The answers to questions 13 and 14, which define the landscape of support and hindrances to the SoTL of language teachers, need to be read in the context of question 10: a substantial proportion of these teachers have no contractual obligation to perform research or scholarship duties, which could explain both the superficial nature of some of the activities considered SoTL (i.e. they do no have time and resources to engage in deeper intellectual inquiry) and the lack of adequate conditions (especially time) to conduct these activities. Staff who have been hired exclusively to teach will not get workload allowances for other pursuits. However, it is hard to ignore the acquiescence of teachers who, not being required to engage in research or SoTL, still do it as a way of gaining merits for promotion, even though the majority of them do not have access to professional progression paths (question 6).

The free text comments in several questions draw a picture of frustration and hopelessness regarding the professional prospects of language teachers. Another question arises: whose responsibility is this? In all fairness, higher education institutions who do not require their teachers to do research or scholarship cannot be accused of trying to exploit them by forcing them to engage in these. Respondents have made it clear that, when they do research or SoTL without being expected to, they do so of their own accord. Can institutions be blamed for their dissatisfaction? Or is it, rather, a question of managing teachers' expectations?

The role of SoTL in the professional progression of MFL teachers

In the last 30 years, institutions have made some (if limited) efforts to enhance the status of their teaching staff by offering promotion and progression routes which are alternative to the traditional research path. SoTL has been a key instrument in these attempts. However, the results of this study point to a new paradigm where university management looks to curb the assumption that everyone in a teaching role, regardless of the nature and calibre of the activities they carry out on the side, is entitled to promotion. The proliferation of staff on teaching-only contracts with no research or even SoTL responsibilities, and with no chance of professional progression, can be read as the backlash to the all-inclusive trend of considering anything on the side of teaching as valid SoTL.

The lack of agreement on a clear definition of what SoTL is, as well as the absence of a defined set of criteria for its evaluation, have created a sea of confusion around its meaning and purpose (Rubin, 2000; Boshier, 2009; HEA, 2016; Canning & Masika, 2022). This lack of definition has created an overlap with pedagogic research and with research in higher education in general, which adds to the uncertainty (Tight, 2018; Webb & Tierney, 2020). Despite the efforts of Glassick, Huber and Maeroff to establish a framework for the evaluation of scholarship, the fact that their six criteria (clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation, reflective critique; 1997, p. 25) can be applied to all four types of scholarship identified by Boyer does not help to clarify the defining features of SoTL. If the scholarship of discovery and the scholarship of teaching can be assessed with the same parameters, is it necessary to establish a distinction between the two? In other words, what distinguishes the scholarship of teaching from that of discovery, that is, from research? Further, if the scholarship of teaching and the scholarship of research need to meet the same criteria, why are activities like "reading the literature" considered scholarship? Universities seem to have found an answer to this question in the removal of the "scholarship" requirement from the contracts of teaching staff: if there is no SoTL, there is no need to define what it is, no need to assess it, and no need to give the teachers chances for professional progression and promotion.

As a consequence of this development, a new class of academic staff has emerged. The traditional division between those who teach and those who do research is no longer the only split among student-facing academics: now, in the lowly ranks of "teaching-only" staff, a further schism has appeared between those who teach and do SoTL (and are, therefore, eligible for promotion) and those who have been hired to teach, and to teach only, whith no hopes of progressing in the academic ranks: of the 188 teachers who declared not having research or scholarship duties, 121 (64%) are in roles that have no clear progression path. Thus, the two-tier system has evolved into a three-tier structure where teaching staff with scholarship duties are no longer the ones that got the worst deal; SoTL is no longer the ugliest of the ball. Thirty years of efforts inspired by the wish to move on from the old teaching vs. research dichotomy have culminated in further fragmentation with the creation of a three-rank system of academic labour: research, scholarship and teaching.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above, it is now more necessary than ever to clarify concepts, definitions and expectations. The question of what actually distinguishes good quality research from good quality scholarship still remains. In fact, Bruce Macfarlane gave an answer already when he claimed that the only distinction was between good quality and bad quality research (2011, p. 128). The difficulties in finding a definition for the term SoTL lie in the fact that it has been used to bring together activities with enormously different levels of academic rigour: from reading published papers and attending conferences and traning sessions, to publishing original research in peer-reviewed outlets. It is time to ditch the claims of this all-inclusive notion of SoTL as an area of work worthy of the same consideration as research in terms of status and of professional prospects: there is no reason why staff engagement in activities that would be part of ongoing professional development in any area should be rewarded with promotion for doing what is simply part of their job.

The criteria for the evaluation of SoTL need, then, to be clearly defined in line with what is expected from research: a valuable contribution to the advancement of knowledge. For this to happen, the acknowledgement of research activities needs to stop being reserved to the ranks of staff who are eligible to take part in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) assessment. After the recommendation that all research-active staff should be included in the REF was implemented (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2016, p. 19), universities have tended to employ more and more academic staff on teaching-only contracts, as a measure to control and enhance the quality of REF submissions (Smith & Walker, 2021, p. 11). In practice, this has meant that large swathes of staff qualified to do research have been confined to the "teaching-only" ranks for not being considered good enough to satisfy the requirements of the REF assessment panels. Yet there is no impediment, institutional, ethical or otherwise, to these staff doing research if they wish to, beyond the mere practical constraints of time and resources. The recognition of the research activity of staff on teaching contracts does not automatically imply that these have to be included in the REF: in fact, several authors have highlighted the freedom that non REF-able staff can enjoy in their research (Cotton, Miller & Kneale, 2018; Tierney, 2020), liberated from the pressures of metrics and high performance to focus on the true potential of SoTL as an instrument for professional development (Fanghanel, 2013, p. 60).

Making the role, purpose and impact of SoTL more meaningful and valuable for the community

For teaching staff to be able to conduct meaningful research, time and resources need to be made available. It is unrealistic to expect institutions to grant this group of staff the same allowances available to research-active staff, due to the extra cost that would be involved in hiring additional teachers to cover for reallocated contact hours. For this reason, an alternative system is proposed here, based on time-based rewards in exchange for good quality research and SoTL contributions. The system would draw on the existing practice of annual development reviews, which, as reported by 31% of respondents to the survey (90 participants), is the most common procedure to monitor staff performance. The teaching load for every individual member of staff would be

adjusted in view of their annual research or SoTL performance, taking this as a prediction of the potential to produce good quality work and freeing up teaching-related time accordingly. For the system to be successful, the following conditions would be necessary:

- Clear expectations and criteria for the evaluation of research and SoTL. Despite the confusion around how to assess the scholarship activity of teaching staff, there are examples of good practice that could be taken as a model or as an inspiration (see Smith & Walker, 2021, p. 10).
- Transparency, fairness and objectivity as the guiding principles of the work of performance review committees. The influence of office politics has been identified as one of the problems in the assessment of SoTL (Boshier, 2009, p. 11). A robust auditing process, potentially involving anonymity and / or external reviewers, would help prevent these interferences.
- Recognition of valuable contributions to knowledge in the field, regardless of staff eligibility to take part in the REF.

This system would represent a more inclusive and diverse approach to the appraisal of quality academic work beyond the conventional research assessment circuits, in line with the recommendations of the European University Association (EUA, 2022, pp. 4-5). It would also be flexible enough to adapt to the professional circumstances of staff, allowing individuals to develop an academic profile throughout different career stages while making a positive impact on the community of staff and students. Unlike the current system, based on the expectations placed on staff at the time of appointment, the proposed alternative would rely on actual performance to allow every member of the academic community to realise their potential, regardless of their contract type.

Higher education institutions should not use the term *research* as a semantically loaded device to bestow symbolic capital on certain groups while disparaging others with less prestigious denominations. In fact, the ability to secure one of the coveted research-active positions in academia depends as much on talent as on a succession of suitable opportunities: from early education to postdoctoral study, candidates must accumulate certain markers of prestige in order to be considered for a post with research responsibilities. Their past successes are viewed as a guarantee that they will not let their institution down in the next REF exercise. These dynamics mean that large groups of talented and creative individuals are being left out; their contributions are silenced because they did not have the same luck as their research-active counterparts. It would be unfair to deprive staff who have not had access to the best educational and development opportunities from the chance to make a positive contribution to the discipline, the community and the lives of their colleagues and students.

Future prospects for this study include the collection and analysis of qualitative data: the detailed accounts of individuals affected by the issues identified in this paper would allow for a deeper understanding of their circumstances and limitations. Since the scope of the study is restricted to the field of language teaching, similar inquiries could be carried out among different professional groups. Other potential avenues for development include the comparison with the conditions of staff in different working environments (i.e. further education) and European countries.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were reported by the author of this paper.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This project received ethical approval from the School of Modern Languages and Cultures ethics committee at Durham University (reference: MLAC-2021-04-12T11_27_33-ntbk14).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available at http://doi.org/10.15128/r2mw22v5475.

NOTE

This paper was written while its author worked at Durham University (UK). For this reason, the research is based on the UK context, the project was approved by the Durham University research ethics committee, and the research data are available at the Durham University repository. Between acceptance and publication of this paper, the author left Durham University to take up a post at Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), in Spain; hence the discrepancies between the context this paper refers to and the author's professional affiliation.

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APPENDIX 1: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Professional information

1. **How many years have you been teaching the language that you currently teach?**
   a. 0-4
   b. 5-9
   c. 10-14
   d. 15-19
   e. 20-24
   f. 25-29
   g. 30 or more

2. **What is your current working pattern?**
   a. Part-time, discontinuous (term-time only)
   b. Part-time (full calendar year)
   c. Full-time, discontinuous (term-time only)
   d. Full-time (full calendar year)

3. **What type of contract do you hold in your current institution?**
   a. Part-time, hourly paid
   b. Part-time, temporary
   c. Part-time, permanent
   d. Full-time, temporary
   e. Full-time, permanent

4. **What category does your current contract fall into?**
   a. Teaching only
   b. Teaching and scholarship
   c. Teaching and research
   d. Postgraduate teaching assistant
   e. Other (please, specify): _____

5. **What area of language teaching do you work in?**
   a. Modern languages degree programme
   b. Institution-wide language programme
   c. Modern languages programme and institution-wide language programme
   d. Combined / joint honours programme
   e. Other (please, specify): _____

6. **In your current position, is there a defined path for professional progression and promotion?**
   a. Yes
   b. No

7. **Are you a fellow of the Higher Education Academy?**
   a. Yes
   b. No

   7a.   If "yes", what type of fellowship do you hold?
      a. Associate fellow
      b. Fellow
      c. Senior fellow
      d. Principal fellow

Academic and professional qualifications

8. **What is your undergraduate qualification? (Select all that apply)**
   a. A certificate or diploma in a discipline different from languages
   b. A certificate or diploma in a language different from the one I teach
   c. A certificate or diploma in the language that I teach (including translation and interpreting)
   d. A degree in a discipline different from languages
   e. A degree in a language different from the one I teach
   f. A degree in the language that I teach (including translation and interpreting)
   g. None
   h. Other (please, specify): _____

9. **What is your postgraduate qualification? (Select all that apply)**
   a. Postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE)
   b. Postgraduate certificate in academic practice for higher education
   c. Master's degree in foreign language teaching
   d. Master's degree in linguistics
   e. Master's degree in cultural studies
   f. PhD in foreign language teaching
   g. PhD in linguistics
   h. PhD in cultural studies
   i. Diploma or certificate to qualify as a language teacher
   j. None
   k. Other (please, specify): _____

Professional development, research and scholarship

10. **Are research or scholarship activities a contractual requirement in your current position?**
   a. Yes
   b. No

10a. **If "yes", how are these activities monitored and recognised? (Select all that apply)**
   a. Annual development reviews
   b. Submission of an annual report
   c. No monitoring or recognition
   d. Other (please, specify): _____

Comments:

11. **What type of research or scholarship activities do you undertake? (Select all that apply)**
   a. Research on cultural studies as part of my university job
   b. Research on language learning and teaching as part of my university job
   c. Research as part of my postgraduate programme of study (masters / PhD)
   d. Practice-based scholarship of learning and teaching as part of my university job
   e. Practice-based scholarship of learning and teaching as part of my postgraduate programme of study (e.g. certificate in education)
   f. Projects aimed at the enhancement of language learning and teaching (e.g. involving language students)
   g. Professional development activities (e. g. attending conferences, workshops, webinars)
   h. Training courses on learning and teaching
   i. Peer review of learning and teaching
   j. Writing reviews of language textbooks
   k. None
   l. Other (please, specify): _____

Comments:

12. **What actions do you take to disseminate the outcomes of your research or scholarship? (Select all that apply)**
    a. Presenting papers to a local audience (e.g. within my institution)
    b. Presenting papers to a national audience (e.g. at national conferences)
    c. Presenting papers to an international audience (e.g. at international conferences)
    d. Publishing papers in non peer-reviewed literature
    e. Publishing papers in peer-reviewed literature
    f. Publishing book reviews in non peer-reviewed literature
    g. Publishing book reviews in peer-reviewed literature
    h. None
    i. Other (please, specify): _____

Comments:

13. **What type of assistance is available in your institution for your research or scholarship activity? (Select all that apply)**
    a. Allocation of time in annual workload
    b. Research / scholarship leave periods
    c. Financial support for travel expenses associated to research or scholarship
    d. Financial support for publication expenses
    e. Financial support for projects associated with learning and teaching (e.g. involving language students)
    f. Peer support from a mentoring scheme
    g. None
    h. Other (please, specify): _____

Comments:

14. **What are the main impediments that hinder your research or scholarship activity? (Select all that apply)**
    a. Lack of time
    b. Lack of financial support
    c. Lack of peer support in the academic community (e.g. absence of mentoring scheme)
    d. Lack of encouragement from my manager
    e. Lack of clarity on what is expected from me as a MFL teacher, apart from teaching
    f. Absence of rewards or recognition
    g. Lack of skills or knowledge of how to undertake research or scholarship
    h. Lack of ideas about what to study
    i. Lack of interest or motivation (i.e. I am only interested in teaching)
    j. None
    k. Other (please, specify): _____

Comments:

Personal information

15. **What gender category do you identify with?**
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Non-binary
    d. Transgender
    e. Agender
    f. Intersex

16. What is your age group?
   a. 18-24
   b. 25-34
   c. 35-44
   d. 45-54
   e. 55-64
   f. 65 and over

17. What ethnic group do you belong to?
   a. English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
   b. Irish
   c. Romani or Irish Traveller
   d. Any other White background
   e. White and Black Caribbean
   f. White and Black African
   g. White and Asian
   h. Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background
   i. Indian
   j. Pakistani
   k. Bangladeshi
   l. Chinese
   m. Any other Asian background
   n. African
   o. Caribbean
   p. Any other Black, African or Caribbean background
   q. Arab
   r. Any other ethnic group

18. Do you identify as a native speaker of the language that you teach?
   a. Yes
   b. No

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF UNIVERSITIES THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY

Aberystwyth University	University of Bath
Aston University	University of Birmingham
Bangor University	University of Bristol
Birbeck College	University of Cambridge
Brunel University	University of Central Lancashire
Cardiff University	University of Chester
Coventry University	University of Dundee
Durham University	University of East Anglia
Greenwich University	University of Edinburgh
Huddersfield University	University of Essex
Imperial College London	University of Exeter
King's College London	University of Glasgow
Lancaster University	University of Hertfordshire
Leicester University	University of Hull
London School of Economics and Political Science	University of Keele
Loughborough University	University of Kent
Manchester Metropolitan University	University of Leeds
Newcastle University	University of Lincoln
Northumbria University	University of Liverpool
Open University	University of Manchester
Oxford Brookes University	University of Nottingham
Portsmouth University	University of Oxford
Queen Mary University of London	University of Reading
Regent's University London	University of Sheffield
Royal Holloway, University of London	University of Southampton
School of Oriental and African Studies	University of St Andrews
Sheffield Hallam University	University of Stirling
Surrey University	University of Strathclyde
Sussex University	University of Warwick
Swansea University	University of Worcester
University College London	University of York
University of Aberdeen	Westminster University