



TRANSNATIONAL FILIPINO ENGLISH TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES: BEST PRACTICES, CHALLENGES, COPING STRATEGIES, PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY, AND PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of transnational Filipino English teachers working in non-English-speaking countries, focusing on their teaching practices, challenges, coping strategies, professional identity development, and recommendations for teacher education in the Philippines. Using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, the study involved in-depth interviews with fifteen Filipino English teachers employed in Taiwan, Thailand, and Japan. Data were analyzed through iterative within-case and cross-case analysis, leading to the emergence of eight interrelated themes. Findings revealed that participants demonstrated strong pedagogical flexibility and cultural responsiveness while navigating linguistic barriers, cultural adjustment, native-speakerist biases, employment precarity, and emotional strain associated with transnational teaching. Participants also relied on relational support systems, personal resilience, and professional purpose as coping mechanisms, which contributed to the continuous shaping of their professional identities. The study further showed that professional growth and identity expansion often coexisted with emotional fatigue and pressure to establish legitimacy within unequal global labor structures. By foregrounding the lived realities of Filipino teachers abroad, the study contributes to the discourse on international teacher mobility and highlights the need for BSEd-English programs to strengthen intercultural competence, EFL-focused pedagogy, realistic practicum experiences, and teacher well-being to better prepare educators for transnational teaching contexts.

Keywords: *transnational Filipino English teachers, lived experiences, best teaching practices, challenges, professional identity, pedagogical recommendations*

INTRODUCTION

The globalization of English has intensified the demand for English language teachers in non-English-speaking countries, particularly across East and Southeast Asia. As English increasingly functions as a global lingua franca in education, business, and international communication, schools and educational institutions continue to recruit foreign English teachers to strengthen learners' communicative competence and global competitiveness (Sawalmeh & Dey, 2023). Within this context, Filipino English teachers have emerged as a significant workforce in transnational education because of their linguistic proficiency, pedagogical training, and adaptability in multilingual and multicultural learning environments.

The migration of Filipino teachers reflects broader patterns of global labor mobility. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2024), approximately 2.19 million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) were recorded in recent years, including teachers and related professionals. Financial stability, professional advancement, and career growth remain among the primary motivations for migration (Cahilog et al., 2023). Studies further show that Filipino English teachers abroad are often recognized for their culturally responsive teaching practices, intercultural competence, and pedagogical flexibility in multilingual classrooms (Casingal & Caerlang, 2025; Villaver Jr., 2024). Through adaptive instructional strategies and culturally sensitive approaches, they frequently function not only as language teachers but also as intercultural facilitators and cultural ambassadors.

Despite these strengths, Filipino English teachers continue to encounter significant professional and personal challenges abroad. Existing literature documents experiences of native-speakerism, workplace discrimination, linguistic barriers, curriculum adjustment, and emotional strain associated with migration and prolonged separation from family (Dumlao & Mengorio, 2019; Lemana, 2022; Ulla, 2018). Studies conducted in Japan, Thailand, and other international contexts further reveal that Filipino teachers often struggle with culture shock, institutional marginalization, and unequal recognition despite their qualifications and teaching effectiveness (Bisenio, 2024; Cabiladas, 2023). To cope with these pressures, teachers rely on resilience, intercultural adaptation, reflective practice, and strong social support systems (Evans & Lasula, 2022; Sumalinog, 2022). These experiences subsequently shape their evolving professional identities as global educators, intercultural mediators, and multilingual professionals (Balgoa, 2019; Jung & Choe, 2024).

These realities carry important implications for teacher education in the Philippines. Scholars argue that pre-service teacher education programs should strengthen intercultural communication, multilingual pedagogy, emotional preparedness, and global teaching competencies to better prepare future educators for international teaching environments (Alimorong, 2025; Diano et al., 2023). Such reforms are timely in light of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education within increasingly multicultural and multilingual contexts.

Although previous studies have examined particular aspects of Filipino teachers' experiences abroad, most focus only on isolated dimensions such as migration motivation, cultural adaptation, discrimination, pedagogy, or identity formation. Few studies holistically explore how Filipino English teachers simultaneously negotiate pedagogical practices, professional challenges, coping strategies, and identity development within transnational teaching contexts. Moreover, limited qualitative research specifically centers on Filipino English teachers working in Taiwan, Thailand, and Japan despite the growing demand for Filipino educators in these countries. Existing literature also provides limited attention to how these lived experiences may inform the improvement of teacher education programs in the Philippines.

This contextual and research gap establishes the rationale for the present study. Guided by Kachru's World Englishes framework and Transnational Identity Theory, this study explored the lived experiences of transnational Filipino English teachers working in Taiwan, Thailand, and Japan. Specifically, it examined their pedagogical practices, challenges, coping strategies, professional identity formation, and pedagogical recommendations for improving teacher preparation programs in the Philippines. By foregrounding the voices of Filipino educators abroad, the study contributes to discussions on international teacher mobility and offers context-sensitive insights for strengthening globally responsive and culturally grounded teacher education.

Review of Related Literature

Existing literature consistently demonstrates that Filipino English teachers abroad employ adaptive and culturally responsive pedagogical practices in multilingual classrooms. Filipino educators frequently modify instructional strategies, integrate culturally relevant materials, and promote intercultural communicative competence to address learners' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Dela Cruz et al., 2024; Ulla et al., 2024; Villaver Jr., 2024). Studies likewise highlight collaborative classroom management practices and the validation of multiple English varieties as important dimensions of Filipino teachers' pedagogy abroad (Balgoa, 2019).

At the same time, Filipino teachers encounter significant emotional, cultural, and professional challenges. Homesickness, culture shock, communication barriers, and difficulties adjusting to foreign educational systems are commonly reported across studies conducted in Japan, Thailand, the United States, and the Middle East (Cabiladas, 2023; Del Valle, 2024; Sumalinog, 2022). Structural inequalities linked to native-speakerism further contribute to workplace discrimination and diminished professional recognition for non-native English-speaking teachers (Bisenio, 2024; Docot, 2025; Lemana, 2022).

To navigate these difficulties, Filipino teachers employ coping strategies grounded in resilience, intercultural adaptation, and social support. Studies emphasize the importance of community networks, cultural sensitivity, reflective practice, and emotional regulation in sustaining teachers' well-being and professional commitment abroad (Del Valle, 2024; Evans & Lasula, 2022; Sebulen et al., 2023). These experiences also shape teachers'

evolving professional identities as educators, intercultural mediators, and global professionals (Jung & Choe, 2024; Nauryzbayeva, 2024).

The literature further suggests the need to strengthen teacher education programs in the Philippines. Researchers recommend integrating intercultural communication, multilingual pedagogy, emotional preparedness, and global teaching competencies into pre-service curricula to better prepare future teachers for international classrooms (Alimorong, 2025; Dizon & Nanquil, 2024; Ulla, 2018).

Despite these contributions, significant gaps remain. Most studies examine only isolated aspects of transnational teaching rather than exploring pedagogical practices, challenges, coping strategies, professional identity formation, and pedagogical recommendations within a single qualitative framework. Additionally, limited research focuses specifically on Filipino English teachers working in Taiwan, Thailand, and Japan. Addressing these gaps, the present study explored the lived experiences of Filipino English teachers across these contexts through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, providing a more holistic understanding of transnational Filipino teachers' experiences and their implications for Philippine teacher education.

Research Objectives

Through analysis of their best practices, challenges, coping strategies, professional identities, and pedagogical recommendations for enhancing teacher preparation programs, the study aimed to illuminate their transnational teaching journeys and to contribute to future policies and practices in international education and teacher preparation. Specifically, this study aimed to:

1. describe the best teaching practices of transnational Filipino English teachers in their host countries;
2. describe the common challenges they face in non-English-speaking countries, in terms of their:
 - 2.1. personal life; and
 - 2.2. professional life;
3. describe the coping strategies they use to navigate both personal and professional challenges in their host countries;
4. explore how their experiences abroad shape their professional identities as English language teachers; and
5. elicit pedagogical recommendations from them to enhance the Bachelor of Secondary Education-Major in English programs for international teacher mobility.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is grounded in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography and focuses on understanding how individuals make sense of their lived experiences (Smith et al., 2022; Tsirimokou, 2024). The design was appropriate for exploring the personal and professional experiences of Filipino English teachers working in non-English-speaking countries. Through double hermeneutics, the researcher interpreted how respondents themselves interpreted their experiences, allowing for an in-depth examination of meaning-making within transnational teaching contexts.

Research Environment and Respondents

The study was conducted among Filipino English teachers working in Japan, Thailand, and Taiwan, countries classified under Kachru's Expanding Circle, where English functions primarily as a foreign language. These countries were selected because of their increasing demand for foreign English teachers and their multilingual educational environments.

Purposive sampling was used to identify respondents who could provide rich and relevant insights into the phenomenon under investigation. The study involved fifteen Filipino English teachers, with five respondents from each country. To qualify, respondents had to be Filipino citizens, graduates of an education degree in the Philippines, currently employed as English teachers abroad for at least two years, and willing to participate voluntarily in the study. Most respondents were teaching in public schools and had two to five years of teaching experience in their host countries.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide adapted from Lemana (2022) and Kanwal and Farid (2024). The guide consisted of open-ended questions exploring respondents' pedagogical practices, challenges, coping strategies, professional identity formation, and recommendations for improving Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English (BSEd-English) programs in the Philippines. Probing questions were included to encourage elaboration and deeper reflection.

The instrument underwent expert validation by three qualitative research specialists to ensure clarity, coherence, and alignment with the study objectives. Using a four-point validation scale, the instrument obtained an average rating of 3.7, indicating that the interview questions were appropriate for data gathering.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data were collected virtually from July to September 2025 through Zoom, Google Meet, and Meta Messenger due to the respondents' geographic locations. Respondents were recruited through professional networks, online OFW communities, and peer referrals. Before the interviews, electronic informed consent forms were distributed, outlining the purpose of the study, confidentiality measures, and respondents' rights, including voluntary participation and withdrawal at any stage.

Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 40 minutes and was audio-recorded with permission. Interviews primarily used English, although occasional code-switching was accommodated to ensure comfort and authenticity of responses. All recordings were transcribed, anonymized, and securely stored on password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher.

Treatment of Data

Data were analyzed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis framework of Smith et al. (2022). The analysis involved repeated reading of transcripts, exploratory noting, development of experiential statements, clustering of meanings, and generation of themes through within-case and cross-case analysis. Through this iterative process, eight core themes emerged from the respondents' narratives.

To ensure trustworthiness and credibility, the study employed member checking, respondent triangulation, reflexivity, and inter-coder agreement. Two qualitative research experts reviewed the coding and thematic structure, yielding a Cohen's Kappa agreement of 1.00, indicating perfect inter-rater reliability. The researcher also maintained analytic memos and codebooks throughout the analysis process to strengthen dependability and confirmability.

Scope and Limitations

This study focused exclusively on Filipino English teachers working in Taiwan, Thailand, and Japan who had at least two years of teaching experience in their host countries. The study explored their pedagogical practices, challenges, coping strategies, professional identity formation, and recommendations for improving teacher education in the Philippines. As a qualitative phenomenological inquiry, the findings are context-specific and are not intended for statistical generalization. Instead, the study aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of transnational Filipino English teachers within selected Expanding Circle contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and discussion of the study on the lived experiences of transnational Filipino English teachers working in non-English-speaking countries. Using

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2022), the interview data from fifteen respondents were analyzed inductively to identify patterns of meaning across their experiences.

The analysis generated eight interrelated themes that illuminate respondents' pedagogical practices, challenges, coping strategies, professional identity development, and recommendations for improving teacher education in the Philippines. While the themes reflect shared experiences, they also acknowledge the unique contexts and perspectives of individual respondents. Each theme is presented with supporting interview excerpts and interpreted in relation to relevant literature to provide a deeper understanding of the realities of transnational Filipino English teachers.

Best Teaching Practices

Theme	Sub-themes	Sample Excerpts
Theme 1: Teaching English Through Contextualized and Adaptive Pedagogy	Adapting Instruction to Learners' Linguistic Realities	<i>"I simplify my instructions because if I don't, they really won't understand what to do."</i>
	Use of Multimodal and Interactive Strategies	<i>"I always use gestures, pictures, and repetition so they can follow the lesson."</i>
	Contextualizing Lessons Through Culture and Familiar Experiences	<i>"I include familiar Japanese contexts or examples so students can relate better to the lesson."</i>
	Shifting Away from Textbook-Driven Teaching	<i>"Before, I followed the book a lot. Now, I focus more on what the students can actually understand."</i>

Theme 1: Teaching English Through Contextualized and Adaptive Pedagogy

The first theme highlights how transnational Filipino English teachers employ contextualized and adaptive pedagogy to address the linguistic, cultural, and educational realities of learners in English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) settings. Across all fifteen interviews, respondents described teaching as a responsive process that prioritizes learner comprehension and engagement over strict adherence to prescribed methods, textbooks, or lesson plans.

A key aspect of this adaptability involved adjusting instruction to learners' actual levels of English proficiency. Several respondents noted that curriculum expectations often exceeded students' communicative abilities, requiring teachers to simplify explanations,

break down lessons into manageable steps, and modify instructional delivery. As one respondent explained, *"I simplify my instructions because if I don't, they really won't understand what to do"* (R15). Another shared, *"I had to adjust my teaching style because they could not understand long explanations in English"* (R13). These adaptations were viewed as essential for maintaining student participation and preventing disengagement.

Respondents also relied heavily on multimodal and interactive teaching strategies to facilitate understanding. Visual aids, gestures, repetition, and games were frequently used to make lessons more accessible and reduce language anxiety. One teacher remarked, *"I always use gestures, pictures, and repetition so they can follow the lesson"* (R5), while another observed that games increased students' willingness to participate (R13). These practices reflect the culturally responsive and eclectic approaches identified by Dizon and Nanquil (2024), which emphasize flexibility and learner-centered instruction in multilingual classrooms.

Another important practice involved contextualizing lessons through students' cultural experiences and everyday realities. Teachers deliberately incorporated local examples, familiar situations, and culturally relevant references to make English more meaningful and accessible. As one respondent noted, *"I include familiar Japanese contexts or examples so students can relate better to the lesson"* (R2). Another explained, *"I try to connect the lesson to their culture or daily life so they won't feel that English is too foreign"* (R15). Such practices support previous findings that Filipino teachers often function as cultural intermediaries who bridge language learning with learners' sociocultural contexts (Dela Cruz et al., 2024; Nañez & Viray, 2023).

The interviews further revealed a shift away from textbook-driven instruction toward more flexible, learner-responsive teaching. Respondents emphasized that effective teaching depended less on strictly following lesson plans and more on ensuring student understanding. One participant reflected, *"Before, I followed the book a lot. Now, I focus more on what the students can actually understand"* (R13), while another stated, *"What's important is whether the students are learning"* (R1). These reflections align with studies suggesting that Filipino teachers abroad often develop adaptive pedagogical approaches shaped by classroom realities rather than rigid methodological prescriptions (Balgoa, 2019; Villaver Jr., 2024).

Taken together, these findings suggest that transnational Filipino English teachers engage in continuous pedagogical negotiation, balancing curriculum expectations with learners' linguistic and cultural realities. Viewed through the lens of World Englishes and English as an International Language, their practices prioritize intelligibility, relevance, and inclusivity over native-speaker norms (Botha & Bernaisch, 2024; Llorca & Mancho-Barés, 2021). Rather than relying on fixed teaching methods, they demonstrate pedagogical flexibility and cultural responsiveness, positioning English learning as a meaningful and accessible experience for diverse learners.

Common Challenges

Themes	Sub-themes	Sample Excerpts
Theme 2: Living and Teaching Between Cultures While Being Away From Home	Homesickness and Transnational Family Separation	<i>“Homesickness would hit me at times, especially during holidays when I missed family traditions.”</i>
	Culture Shock and Cultural Dislocation	<i>“The biggest challenges were adapting to the pace of life, the unspoken social rules, and navigating everyday situations without speaking much Thai.”</i>
	Language Barriers in Everyday Life Outside the Classroom	<i>“Learning even just the basic phrases ensures one's survival, like when one has to go to the market and other places.”</i>
Theme 3: Teaching in Contexts where English is Marginalized, and Learners are Underprepared	Emotional Labor of Adjusting While Teaching	<i>“I learn to observe and be patient with both the situation and myself as well.”</i>
	English as a Peripheral Language in the Host Context	<i>“In their curriculum here, English was just recently added, so the level of the learners is really lagging behind... Only very few can converse, and many of them cannot read despite being in grade 9.”</i>
	Learners' Limited Proficiency and Underpreparedness	<i>“One of my topics was be-verbs, which is supposed to be an easy topic, but it became really difficult to teach.”</i>
	Pedagogical Regression and the Need to “Lower Expectations”	<i>“Managing differing attention spans, adapting instruction to various developmental stages... are some of the major adjustments.”</i>
	Emotional and Cognitive Labor in Marginalized English Classrooms	<i>“I focus not only on language proficiency but also on building confidence... creating a safe, engaging environment for students to take risks in speaking English.”</i>

Theme 4: Navigating Inequality, Native- Speakerism, and Precarious Employment	Preference for Native Speakers and Racialized Hiring Practices	<i>“The blatant inequality, such as the bias or the preference for native speakers, is generally known all across the world... the NES or the NNES policy is considered to be a double standard.”</i>
	Filipino Teachers as ‘Cost-Effective’ Labor	<i>“There are also schools here that prefer Filipinos, mainly because they can offer lower salaries.”</i>
	Accent Bias and the Need to Constantly Prove Competence	<i>“At times, I’ve noticed a stronger preference for native speakers, especially when it comes to how people perceive pronunciation.”</i>
	Precarious Employment and Replaceability	<i>“I remind myself that I am replaceable... so I am also reminded to always give my best in everything I do.”</i>

Theme 2: Living and Teaching Between Cultures While Being Away From Home

The respondents described teaching abroad as both a professional and personal journey marked by homesickness, cultural adjustment, language barriers, and emotional labor. While committed to their roles as educators, many experienced the emotional strain of being separated from family and familiar support systems. One respondent shared, *“Homesickness would hit me at times, especially during holidays when I missed family traditions”* (R12), while another recalled missing *“family, friends, and even the little routines”* of life in the Philippines (R15). These experiences mirror previous findings on the emotional challenges faced by Filipino teachers abroad (Macapagong et al., 2023; Sumalinog, 2022).

Respondents also reported culture shock and difficulties adapting to unfamiliar social norms, communication styles, and everyday practices. For some, these challenges extended beyond the workplace, requiring continuous adjustment to life between cultures. Language barriers further complicate daily living, particularly when interacting in markets, transportation systems, and public offices. Despite being English language professionals, many felt vulnerable in situations where they could not communicate in the local language.

Beyond these practical challenges, participants emphasized the emotional labor involved in maintaining resilience while simultaneously adapting to new environments and fulfilling professional responsibilities. As one respondent reflected, *“At first, everything felt*

overwhelming, but I took things one day at a time" (R15). Consistent with Barkhuizen (2022), these narratives demonstrate that transnational teaching involves not only pedagogical adaptation but also ongoing emotional negotiation and identity work.

Theme 3: Teaching in Contexts Where English Is Marginalized and Learners Are Underprepared

A second challenge centered on teaching English in environments where the language has limited relevance outside the classroom. Across Japan, Thailand, and Taiwan, respondents described English as a largely academic subject rather than a language used for daily communication. Consequently, many students possessed limited proficiency, low confidence, and minimal exposure to English despite years of formal schooling.

Several respondents noted significant mismatches between curriculum expectations and learners' actual abilities. One teacher observed that many secondary students struggled with skills typically expected at the elementary level, while another explained that even basic grammar lessons required translation and extensive scaffolding (R14). Teachers frequently found themselves revisiting foundational concepts and modifying lessons to accommodate learners' needs.

Respondents also highlighted learners' lack of motivation and difficulty recognizing the practical value of English. As a result, teachers assumed responsibilities beyond language instruction, working to build confidence, reduce anxiety, and create supportive learning environments. Many described the need to "lower expectations," not by reducing standards, but by aligning instruction with learners' realities and developmental readiness.

These findings support earlier studies showing that Filipino English teachers in Expanding Circle contexts must constantly adapt their pedagogy to learners with limited exposure to English (Ulla, 2018; Cabiladas, 2023). The theme illustrates the substantial cognitive, pedagogical, and emotional labor required to teach effectively in settings where English remains socially marginalized.

Theme 4: Navigating Inequality, Native-Speakerism, and Precarious Employment

The third challenge involved systemic inequalities rooted in native-speakerism, racialized hiring practices, salary disparities, and employment insecurity. Respondents consistently reported that native English speakers were often favored in recruitment, compensation, and professional recognition regardless of qualifications or teaching effectiveness.

One respondent described the preference for native speakers as a "double standard," noting that Filipino teachers, despite their proficiency and professional training, remained classified as non-native speakers and were often placed in lower salary categories (R1). Others observed that appearance, nationality, and perceived nativeness frequently influenced hiring decisions more than credentials or teaching competence.

Some participants also perceived that Filipino teachers were valued as cost-effective labor. While demand for Filipino educators created employment opportunities, respondents noted that schools sometimes preferred them because they could be hired at lower salaries than native-speaking counterparts. This reinforced feelings of professional undervaluation despite their expertise and experience.

Accent bias further contributed to a sense of needing to continually prove competence. Several teachers reported feeling additional pressure to demonstrate their effectiveness because of assumptions about pronunciation and language ownership. Rather than allowing these perceptions to define them, many responded by focusing on instructional quality, student relationships, and professional performance.

Job insecurity was another recurring concern. Participants described working under short-term contracts and feeling easily replaceable, which often generated stress and heightened pressure to consistently demonstrate their value. As one respondent stated, *“I remind myself that I am replaceable, so I always give my best in everything I do”* (R14).

These experiences reflect broader patterns identified in the literature on migrant English teachers (Barkhuizen, 2022). Collectively, they reveal how native-speaker ideologies, racialized perceptions, and precarious employment conditions continue to shape the professional lives of transnational Filipino English teachers. Despite these structural challenges, respondents demonstrated resilience and remained committed to their work, viewing their experiences not as personal shortcomings but as reflections of broader inequalities within global English language teaching.

Coping Strategies

Themes	Sub-themes	Sample Excerpts
Theme 5: Coping Through Relationships, Routine, Faith, and Pragmatism	Family, Peer, and Filipino Community Support	<i>“I ask for some advice and feedback from my local English teachers and some suggestions from my fellow foreign English Teachers. I also attend workshops and seminars conducted by TFETP.”</i>
	Faith and Meaning-Making	<i>“Additionally, every Sunday, I attend church.”</i>
	Routine, Organization, and Everyday Structure	<i>“I cope by staying organized and setting small, manageable goals for each day. Taking breaks and giving myself time to recharge also helps a lot.”</i>

Pragmatism and
Financial Goals as
Anchors

“In addition, since I am getting older, I need to earn more and save a lot more... This serves as my intrinsic motivation since I really need to focus now on my future.”

Theme 5: Coping Through Relationships, Routine, Faith, and Pragmatism

The findings revealed that transnational Filipino English teachers cope with personal and professional challenges through a combination of social support, spirituality, structured routines, and pragmatic goal-setting. Rather than relying on a single form of resilience, respondents described coping as a multifaceted and ongoing process that helps them remain emotionally grounded while working abroad.

A prominent source of support was their network of family members, colleagues, and fellow Filipino teachers. Respondents emphasized that maintaining communication with loved ones and seeking advice from professional peers helped alleviate feelings of isolation and provided emotional stability. For example, R9 highlighted the importance of professional support, stating, *“I ask for some advice and feedback from my local English teachers and some suggestions from my fellow foreign English teachers.”* Similarly, R5 emphasized the value of family support, noting that staying connected with family and friends helped them remain grounded. These findings support previous studies highlighting the importance of social networks in helping overseas Filipino teachers navigate transnational challenges (Macapagong et al., 2023; Sebulen et al., 2023).

Faith likewise emerged as a significant coping mechanism. Several respondents described religious beliefs and practices as sources of strength, comfort, and meaning. R5 remarked that faith enabled them to persevere through the challenges of working abroad, stating that *“God is the only reason why I was able to reach this year with a grateful heart.”* Likewise, R4 mentioned regularly attending church as part of maintaining emotional well-being. Consistent with Barkhuizen (2022), spirituality served as a framework through which teachers interpreted and managed the emotional demands of transnational teaching.

Respondents also relied on routines and organizational strategies to create stability in unfamiliar environments. R4 described participating in school-organized recreational activities that fostered collegial relationships, while R15 explained that staying organized, setting manageable goals, and taking breaks helped reduce stress and maintain balance. These routines provided structure and supported adaptation, echoing findings by Altaai and Gokgoz-Kurt (2023).

In addition, many respondents viewed financial responsibility and long-term goals as powerful sources of motivation. Supporting family members, saving for the future, and achieving personal aspirations helped sustain their commitment despite workplace and

cultural challenges. As R14 explained, the need to earn more and prepare for the future served as a strong intrinsic motivator. Similarly, R15 emphasized that maintaining routines and staying connected with loved ones contributed significantly to managing stress. This finding aligns with studies emphasizing the central role of economic aspirations in the overseas experiences of Filipino professionals (Cahilog et al., 2024; Carlos & Sarausad, 2024).

Overall, the findings suggest that resilience among transnational Filipino English teachers is not a singular trait but a dynamic process shaped by interpersonal relationships, faith, daily routines, and future-oriented goals. Together, these coping strategies enable teachers to navigate the emotional, cultural, and professional demands of teaching in non-English-speaking contexts.

Professional Identities

Themes	Sub-themes	Sample Excerpts
Theme 6: Transforming from Rule-Based Teachers to Flexible, Relational, and Global Educators	Identity Shaped by Adaptation and Learner Needs	<i>“Before going abroad, in the Philippines, I was more focused on grammar and textbook-based teaching. Because it is mandatory... So transferring abroad makes my skills more developed.”</i>
	Teaching as Facilitation and Cultural Mediation	<i>“Back home, I saw myself mostly as a guide who explains grammar and vocabulary clearly... Here, I feel more like a cultural bridge and facilitator.”</i>
	Seeing Oneself as a Global English Teacher	<i>“Teaching English led me to appreciate the importance of learning the English language in a global aspect... I see myself now as a world-class English teacher.”</i>
Theme 7: Identity Growth Amid Uncertainty, Burnout, and	Emotional Exhaustion and Self-Doubt	<i>“I was a traditional teacher, the one who really focused on books... That overthinking teacher who always thinks in advance of negative thoughts.”</i>

Career Ambivalence	Identity Shaped by Both Growth and Strain	<i>“Teaching here feels different because the culture and classroom dynamics aren’t the same... It has challenged me to be more flexible and creative, which I see as a big part of my growth as a teacher.”</i>
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Theme 6: From Rule-Based Teachers to Flexible, Relational, and Global Educators

This theme highlights how transnational teaching reshaped respondents’ professional identities. Many began with structured, grammar-focused teaching approaches commonly practiced in the Philippines but gradually became more flexible, relational, and globally oriented. This shift emerged through adaptation, cultural negotiation, and ongoing reflection on what it means to teach abroad.

Respondents described becoming more responsive to diverse learners and unfamiliar educational contexts. For many, this transformation was both professional and personal. R2 shared, *“Before going abroad... I was more focused on grammar and textbook-based teaching... Now, I see myself as more flexible, culturally aware, and student-centered.”* Similarly, R7 noted, *“Now, I am more adaptable, culturally aware, and skilled at connecting with students from diverse backgrounds.”*

However, growth was not always straightforward. R14 reflected, *“I still have an identity crisis because... I am unsure whether I truly love what I do as a teacher.”* These accounts reinforce Barkhuizen’s (2022) view that teacher identity in transnational settings is dynamic and continuously negotiated.

Respondents also described how teaching abroad reshaped their role in the classroom. Teaching extended beyond delivering lessons and became more relational and culturally grounded. R15 explained, *“Here, I feel more like a cultural bridge and facilitator... teaching isn’t just about lessons. It’s about building trust and making learning enjoyable.”* Likewise, R12 emphasized that being a foreign English teacher involves *“bridging cultures and building meaningful connections.”* These narratives align with Nañez and Viray (2023) and Okada (2023), who describe Filipino teachers abroad as cross-cultural mediators.

A further shift involved respondents viewing themselves as part of a wider global teaching community. R9 stated, *“I see myself now as a world-class English teacher,”* while R1 described becoming “globally competent” and more aware of multicultural respect. Others emphasized becoming more student-centered, adaptable, and resourceful. These findings support Jung and Choe (2024) and Kanwal and Farid (2024), showing that teaching across borders enables educators to reimagine themselves as global professionals.

Overall, respondents described a shift from rule-based instruction toward more flexible, relational, and globally minded identities. While often challenging, this transformation reshaped not only their teaching practices but also their sense of purpose and place in education.

Theme 7: Identity Growth Amid Uncertainty, Burnout, and Career Ambivalence

While earlier themes emphasized growth and adaptability, this theme reflects the more vulnerable dimensions of professional identity. Respondents described emotional strain, fatigue, and uncertainty alongside personal and professional development.

Several respondents openly discussed emotional pressure in and beyond the classroom. R10 described being *“that overthinking teacher who always thinks in advance of negative thoughts.”* R13 shared the challenge of continuously creating ways to engage students who lacked interest in English. R14 similarly emphasized classroom difficulties and admitted, *“There are times when I also doubt myself or times when I feel down.”*

For some, these pressures led to career uncertainty. R14 shared being unsure whether teaching remained the right profession and expressed interest in exploring other career paths. Personal realities also shaped professional identity, as R11 described how homesickness became especially difficult because of being separated from family.

These experiences reflect Barkhuizen (2022), Altaai and Gokgoz-Kurt (2023), and Kanwal and Farid (2024), who note that teacher identity abroad is shaped not only by professional demands but also by emotional and personal realities.

Despite these challenges, respondents did not view uncertainty as failure. Instead, identity development often coexisted with struggle. R12 shared that although native-speaker preference was present, they remained focused on *“showing the value I bring.”* R14 described continuing despite uncertainty because of *“a vision of a brighter future.”* Similarly, R15 and R6 emphasized that unfamiliar classroom environments challenged them to become more flexible and creative.

These accounts affirm Barkhuizen (2022) and Tsirimokou et al. (2024), who argue that professional identity is often shaped through tension rather than ease. Overall, respondents presented a realistic and layered understanding of identity formation. Alongside confidence and growth were moments of burnout, ambivalence, and vulnerability. Their experiences highlight that being a Filipino educator in transnational settings involves not only building competence and resilience but also navigating uncertainty with persistence and reflection.

Pedagogical Recommendations

Themes	Sub-themes	Sample Excerpts
Theme 8: Reimagining English Teacher Education for Global Mobility	The Need for Intercultural, Communicative, and EFL-Focused Training	<i>“Some grammar-heavy subjects feel a bit outdated, especially when the focus abroad is more on communication and fluency. There should be more balance between theory and practical use of English.”</i>
	Bridging the Practicum–Reality Gap	<i>“In the Philippines, lessons were easy to execute, but when I started teaching in Thailand, I felt shocked because lessons became really difficult to teach.”</i>
	Preparing Teachers for Low-Proficiency, Multilingual Classrooms	<i>“I wasn’t fully prepared for differences in classroom expectations, student behavior, and cultural nuances. These could be addressed by including modules on cross-cultural communication and adaptive teaching strategies.”</i>

Theme 8: Reimagining English Teacher Education for Global Mobility

This final theme brings together respondents’ reflections on how the Bachelor of Secondary Education–Major in English (BSEd–English) programs in the Philippines could better prepare future teachers for international classrooms. Drawing from their lived experiences abroad, respondents highlighted limitations in current teacher preparation, particularly its strong emphasis on theory and Philippine-based assumptions, and called for reforms that prioritize intercultural competence, communicative teaching, and practical preparation for real-world English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts.

A common concern was the gap between teacher preparation in the Philippines and the realities of teaching abroad. Many respondents shared that their training centered heavily on grammar instruction and theoretical knowledge, which did not always align with the communicative and multicultural demands of international classrooms. R2 explained, *“Some grammar-heavy subjects feel a bit outdated, especially when the focus abroad is more on communication and fluency. There should be more balance between theory and practical use of English.”* Similarly, R3 noted that their training focused mainly on Philippine contexts and offered limited preparation for cross-cultural classroom management or multilingual settings. R8 also described overly theoretical courses as less

relevant for international teaching, while R12 emphasized the need for more practical preparation in cross-cultural communication and classroom management.

These reflections point to the need for a more global, communicative, and inclusive approach to teacher education. They align with scholarship on World Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca, and intercultural competence in language teacher preparation (Llurda & Mancho-Barés, 2021; Selvi & Yazan, 2021; Hiasa, 2025).

Respondents also highlighted a disconnect between practicum experiences in the Philippines and the realities of teaching abroad. Many felt underprepared for multicultural or multilingual classrooms. R2 suggested, *“It would be great if the practicum included options to teach in international or multicultural settings, either locally or online.”* R3 recommended multilingual classroom exposure, virtual exchanges with schools abroad, and mentorship from internationally experienced teachers. R5 reflected on being trained for secondary education but assigned to early childhood teaching abroad, while R10 noted that some pedagogical content remained too abstract and difficult to apply in actual classrooms.

These responses suggest the importance of bridging university-based preparation with the dynamic environments graduates often encounter overseas. Their recommendations mirror global best practices and support current research on internationalized teacher education (Diano et al., 2023; Triyoga et al., 2024).

Another key issue involved preparation for low-proficiency and linguistically diverse learners. Several respondents described feeling unprepared for classrooms where students had limited English proficiency. R9 reflected, *“If students have knowledge or an idea about EFL learners and they have the chance to practice, then they won't be shocked when they reach the global level.”* R11 similarly emphasized the need for courses that realistically prepare teachers to connect with students who cannot speak English. R14 also stressed the importance of adjusting expectations in non-English-speaking countries, while R10 raised concerns about limited preparation for diverse learner needs, including students with behavioral or attention-related challenges.

These experiences support broader discussions on the complexity of EFL classrooms and the importance of differentiated instruction, inclusive teaching strategies, and preparation for learner diversity (Ulla, 2018; Jung et al., 2023; Ulla et al., 2024).

Overall, respondents emphasized the need to rethink how English teacher education in the Philippines prepares graduates for a globalized profession. While they valued the foundations provided by local training, their experiences abroad revealed critical areas for improvement, particularly in intercultural communication, practical classroom exposure, and preparation for EFL and multilingual contexts. Their reflections represent not a rejection of local teacher education, but a call to strengthen it through more global, practical, and inclusive approaches. As a culminating theme, these insights offer a meaningful foundation for the internationalization of teacher education in the Philippines and for future curriculum and policy development.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study draws the following conclusions:

1. Transnational Filipino English teachers show remarkable flexibility in how they teach. Their ability to adapt, whether in simplifying instructions, adjusting lesson pacing, or rethinking how they communicate, proves essential in classrooms where students' proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds vary widely. This kind of responsiveness defines their effectiveness in real EFL settings.
2. The personal and the professional are deeply intertwined in the lives of transnational teachers. Feelings of homesickness, cultural adjustment, and struggling with everyday language in a foreign country do not pause during working hours. These experiences run parallel to teaching responsibilities and have a direct impact on teachers' emotional health and overall well-being. Additionally, teaching English abroad comes with professional inequalities that go beyond the classroom. Many teachers face systemic challenges, like being seen as "less legitimate" than native speakers, dealing with biased perceptions tied to accents, earning lower wages, or working in insecure job conditions. These factors often push them to constantly prove themselves and monitor their performance more than their peers.
3. Coping is unique and always ongoing for everyone. Teachers draw strength from supportive relationships, spiritual practices, routines that offer structure, and practical goals tied to their future. These strategies show that resilience is not just a trait, but a day-to-day process of staying grounded while facing real challenges.
4. Teachers' professional identities evolve, but not always in smooth or straightforward ways. Many respondents spoke about growing into more globally aware, flexible, and culturally sensitive roles. At the same time, they were honest about moments of exhaustion, uncertainty, and doubt. This dual reality suggests that identity formation is dynamic, shaped by both achievement and vulnerability.
5. Teacher education reform is necessary to better prepare future Filipino English teachers for international and EFL realities. That means placing greater emphasis on intercultural communication, real-world EFL pedagogy, hands-on practicum experiences (including virtual and multicultural settings), and preparation for teaching students with limited English and diverse backgrounds.

Recommendations

Grounded in the study's conclusions and aligned with Objective 5, the following recommendations are offered:

For Teacher Education Institutions and Curriculum Developers

1. Strengthen intercultural and global classroom readiness within the curriculum. Programs should explicitly develop intercultural communication competence and culturally responsive teaching practices to prepare graduates for multicultural environments and cross-cultural classroom expectations.
2. Create a better balance between theory and practical, communication-based teaching. While grammar and theoretical foundations still matter, the curriculum should put more focus on communicative teaching strategies that help build student confidence and real-world language use, reflecting what many teachers actually face abroad.
3. Embed preparation for multilingual and low-proficiency learners as a core competency. Programs should offer more hands-on training in simplifying content, using visuals and gestures, differentiating instruction, and motivating students who are just beginning to learn English, since these skills are critical in non-English-speaking contexts.
4. Strengthen training on classroom management and learner diversity in global classrooms. Teacher preparation should address behavioral challenges and inclusive strategies for mixed-ability classes, including learners with special needs or behavioral difficulties, to reflect the realities respondents encountered abroad.
5. Enhance technology integration and digital pedagogy for global teaching contexts. While technology integration in teaching practices in the Philippines is already evident, programs should develop practical competence in using educational technologies that support engagement, interaction, and flexible teaching modalities in global classrooms.

For Practicum Coordinators and Partner Schools

6. Expand practicum experiences in more diverse and multicultural environments. Whenever possible, teacher candidates should be placed in local or foreign settings that reflect the realities of EFL classrooms. This exposure to multilingual learners and international-style schools will better prepare them for the challenges ahead.
7. Institutionalize virtual exchanges, online teaching practice, and international partnerships. If an overseas practicum is not feasible, structured online teaching experiences, virtual student exchanges, or joint projects with international schools can help teacher candidates build cross-cultural awareness and adaptability.
8. Establish mentorship pathways with internationally experienced teachers. Structured mentoring can help pre-service teachers develop realistic expectations and practical strategies for adapting to international classroom and workplace conditions.

For Program Support Systems and Teacher Well-Being Initiatives

9. While the government provides pre-departure orientation, pre-departure preparation, and ongoing support for overseas-bound teachers should be strengthened. Workshops or short courses on workplace culture, teaching expectations, and emotional coping strategies can ease the adjustment process and reduce the impact of culture shock.
10. Acknowledge identity strain and burnout risk as part of mobility preparation. Teacher education programs should incorporate well-being and professional sustainability training to address emotional fatigue, self-doubt, and career ambivalence that may arise during transnational teaching.

For Future Researchers

11. Conduct evaluative studies on the impact of teacher education reforms on global teaching readiness. Future research can help determine how changes to curriculum, practicum design, or digital integration affect the actual preparedness and long-term success of Filipino teachers working overseas.
12. Explore how inequality shapes teacher identity and retention. Long-term studies can explore how issues like native-speaker bias, job insecurity, and cultural adjustment influence whether teachers stay in the profession and how their sense of professional identity evolves.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The author affirms that this study was conducted in full compliance with ethical research standards. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection, and participation was entirely voluntary. Respondents were clearly informed of the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any point without any penalty or adverse consequence.

Throughout the conduct of the study, strict measures were implemented to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of all respondents. Identifying information was removed from transcripts and replaced with codes to protect participant privacy. Data privacy protocols were observed in the storage, handling, and analysis of all research materials, with all digital files secured and accessible only to the researcher. The well-being of the respondents was also prioritized, with sensitivity exercised during interviews to avoid undue emotional distress and to allow participants to pause or discontinue their participation whenever necessary.

The authors further declare that no conflict of interest influenced the design, implementation, analysis, or interpretation of the study. All findings were derived solely from the data gathered, and no external interests or affiliations affected the research process. Plagiarism was strictly avoided through proper citation of all sources, and all ideas, frameworks, and literature used in the study were duly acknowledged in

accordance with academic standards. The interpretation of findings was conducted with care to minimize bias, guided by the principles of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and supported by systematic coding procedures.

The results of this study are intended purely for academic and research purposes, with the aim of contributing to the understanding of transnational Filipino English teachers' lived experiences and informing teacher education and policy development.

Regarding the use of artificial intelligence, the authors declare that AI tools were utilized solely to assist in language refinement, specifically for grammar checking and for guiding the organization and coherence of paragraphs.

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