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Going Global: A Glimpse into the Language Identity and Experiences of Filipino English Teachers Abroad

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Abstract

The past two decades brought increased interest in the study of identity in the field of language education. Numerous studies on language teacher identity mostly center on professional identity and are concentrated on participants from the expanding circle. Studies on English teachers' language identity from the outer circle like the Philippines are scarce, even more so among those residing and teaching abroad. Drawing on the relatively new theoretical frameworks of Norton (Peirce, 1995) and Bucholtz and Hall (2005) on identity, investment, and interaction, this study investigated the language identity and experiences of Filipino English teachers working abroad. Eight English teachers living and working abroad were purposively selected to take part in the study. Five English teachers met the selection criteria. Narrative inquiry through interviews and stories is utilized to gather data, and thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework is employed to analyze the data collected. The results revealed participants' perceptions of English and nativeness, their language identity, and language experiences that include opportunities, challenges, and coping strategies. Moreover, participants' exposure to and interaction with other English speakers influence how they view themselves as language speakers, and their language-related experiences continue to [re]shape their language identities. It is therefore recommended that English education majors are provided with opportunities to [re]construct and analyze their language identities while still in school.

Keywords: teaching English, nativeness, English ownership, language education, internationalization

INTRODUCTION

One of the more pressing issues in higher education around the world is internationalization (Abraham & von Brömssen, 2018; Larsen, 2016; Manakul, 2007). It is defined as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education" (Knight, 2003, p. 2). With the world fast becoming a global village due to rapid developments in technology and globalization, higher educational institutions (HEIs) have no choice but to internationalize if they want their existence to remain significant and relevant. This is because internationalization is a "response to and an agent of globalization" (Larsen, 2016, p. 2).

The Philippines is not exempt from carrying out initiatives in internationalizing higher education (Commission on Higher Education, 2016; Madula, 2018; Rosaroso, Yap, & Gador, 2015). Needless to say, internationalization initiatives must go beyond having an international presence in the institution through foreign students and teachers or student and faculty mobility. It

must aim to "ensure students are better prepared to live and work in a more interconnected world" (Knight, 2012, p. 3). With the ASEAN integration and the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community, it is expected that the Philippines will be viewed favorably as an educational hub in the region (British Council, 2015). The major reason for this is English as the medium of instruction in the country's HEIs. Moreover, the Philippines is also believed to be one of the top countries in Asia for English proficiency (Asian Scientist, 2011, Education First, 2018), and in the world for Business English (Lee, 2012). It is also a producer of the "world's budget English teacher" (McGeown, 2012), as evident in the influx of English language learners, especially those from South Korea (Learning English, 2015).

In light of these attributions given to the Philippines, it is vital that the English teacher education in the country should be strengthened. In fact, concerns were raised on the need to improve the teaching and learning of English in the country despite the seemingly high English competency of Filipinos (Cabigon, 2019). This point of concern only serves to ensure that Philippine HEIs produce globally competitive and locally responsive English teachers. The question that needs to be addressed then is, what is important in the language learning and teaching processes?

Language learning and teaching, to some extent, depend on the skills and expertise of language teachers. Yet, more important than the language teaching knowledge and expertise of language teachers is the teachers' language identity. The fast-paced development and demands brought about by globalization make it challenging for teachers to keep abreast with language teaching trends (Kramsch, 2014); hence, the acquisition of language teaching knowledge may not be as important as the development of teacher identity (Kanno & Stuart, as cited in De Costa & Norton, 2017; Yazan, 2018). This statement holds true because both language learning and language teaching "is identity work" (De Costa & Norton, 2017, pp. 7-8). In other words, language teachers' identities serve as a framework that guides their teaching practices (De Costa & Norton 2017; Yazan, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

The topic of teacher identity has continued to receive strong interest in language education research for the past two decades (Kayi-Aydar, 2019; Norton, 2013). It is even said that there is an "urgent need for more research and closer examination on non-native teachers' identity" (Zhang, 2016, p. 330). However, numerous studies on language teacher identity mostly center on professional identity and are concentrated on participants from the expanding circle. Studies on English teachers' language identity from the outer circle like the Philippines are scarce, even more so among those residing and teaching abroad.

To bridge the gap, the main purpose of this study is to explore the language identity and experiences of Filipino English teachers abroad to draw implications for the internationalization of English Education. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions: (1) How do Filipino English teachers abroad view themselves as English speakers? (2) What are their language experiences while residing and teaching abroad?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the theories of Norton-Peirce (1995) and Bucholtz and Hall (2005). Norton-Peirce (1995) opines that the learning of a second language can be attributed to investment instead of motivation as motivation, whether instrumental or integrative, "do not capture the complex relationship between relations of power, identity, and language learning (p. 17). On the other hand, if language learners invest in a second language, such process is done "with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources" (p. 17). Additionally, learners' social identity continues to remain complex as it is a site of struggle. It can also take multiple forms and is subject to change.

The other theory by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) posits that "identity is the social positioning of self and other" (p. 586). It views identity as emergent, positional, indexical, relational, and partial as "the process of identity construction does not reside within the individual" (p. 608).

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative study is more appropriate to achieve the purpose of this study and to generate in-depth discussion. The following section presents the specific research design, selection of research participants, and research setting. Discussion on data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations follows as well.

Research Design

The specific research design utilized for this study is narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is the "study of experience understood narratively" (Clandinin & Huber, n.d., p. 1). It mainly utilizes narratives that may be oral or written (McAlpine, 2016). In particular, it may also take the form of "a short topical story about a particular event and specific characters" (Chase, 2010, p. 209). Since this study explores the language identity and experiences of selected participants, it is more apt to have them tell their stories. This is because people take part in [re]constructing selves when engaged in storytelling (Chase, 2010; Cheng, 2016; McAlpine, 2016; Morgan, 2017).

Selection of Participants

Purposive sampling was used in the selection of participants for this study. This sampling method is most suited for this study, which requires participants who can provide the best information needed for the topic under exploration (Creswell, 2014; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). In other words, respondents of this study were chosen with the assumption that such individuals are "information-rich cases" (Wiersman & Jurs, 2009, p. 342).

The participants in this study are Filipino English teachers abroad. At first, eight Filipino English teachers were invited to take part in the study. Seven responded positively, but only five of them met the criteria. The selection criteria are as follows: (1) must be a Filipino English teacher currently residing and teaching abroad; (2) must be a BSEd English graduate in the Philippines;

(3) must have lived abroad for at least two years; and (4) must have taught English abroad for at least one year. Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents who took part in this study.

Table 1: Participants' Profile

Participant	**P1**	**P2**	**P3**	**P4**	**P5**
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male
Age	31	32	40	35	41
No. of Years Abroad	3	10	11	10	10
No. of Years Teaching English Abroad	3	10	8	10	2
Countries Resided	Japan	Ukraine, Poland, USA, France	South Korea, Thailand, Canada	Thailand	Thailand, UAE
Current Location	Japan	Poland	Canada	Thailand	UAE
Current Job Description	Asst. Language Teacher	6th Class General English Teacher	ELL Specialist	ESL and Tourism Teacher	Aviation Instructor

Research Setting

The five participants in the study come from three different continents—Asia (Southeast, East, Middle East), North America, and Europe—in the world. Due to geographical distance, asynchronous time, and full-time jobs of both participants and researcher, the study took place in the comfort of our own homes and living spaces in different parts of the world.

Data Collection

The data gathering, collection, and follow-up emails for clarifications and reminders mainly took place in the early months of 2019. Prior to the data gathering, a message explaining the nature of the study with an invitation to participate was sent to prospective participants. All, but one, responded and accepted the request to participate. Respondents were then screened based on the aforementioned selection criteria. Once the participants in this study were finalized, they decided on their preferred method of data collection. Although one was amenable to a phone call, finding a common time to conduct the interview became a challenge. In the end, all agreed that email would be more practical and feasible. So, interview questions and story and drawing prompts were sent through email. Once participants sent in their responses, their questionnaires and prompts were returned for follow-up questions or clarifications, this process was repeated until all answers were clarified and explained in-depth. It is worth noting that participants responded to the interview and story prompt as soon as they could, but the drawing prompt was disregarded. Although they did not outright express their discomfort in doing the drawing, their non-response was assumed as hesitance to tell their stories through the said medium. Hence, a journey log was given to replace the drawing prompt. Three of the participants sent their completed journey logs.

The other two, however, no longer showed interest in completing their journey logs even after numerous reminders and follow-up messages were sent.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the written interviews and stories began as soon as participants sent their responses. Only the data gathered from the interviews and story prompt were included in the analysis since not all participants completed their journey log tasks. To analyze the data collected, a thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework was employed. The six recursive phases are familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

Ethical Considerations

The respondents in this study were fully informed of the nature and purpose of the study prior to the commencement of data gathering and collection. Since the participants are either friends or acquaintances of the researcher, they readily accepted the opportunity to take part in the study, but they did so with the knowledge that they were free to withdraw from the study without prejudice. Some of them were not too keen about keeping their identities a secret when they were asked for their preferred pseudonyms. However, not everyone provided a pseudonym, so a code (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5) was assigned to each of them based on the sequence of their responses. This is to ensure confidentiality and maintain anonymity. Moreover, their preferences (i.e., medium of data gathering), whether expressed explicitly or implicitly, were considered during the process of data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the analysis of data gathered from written interviews and stories sent via email and/or messenger. For referencing and confidentiality purposes, each participant was assigned a code based on the order of when their responses were received. Analyses were done through the lens of the theoretical frameworks of Norton (Peirce, 1995) and Bucholtz and Hall (2005) on identity, investment, and interaction. Existing related literature and previous studies conducted were also considered. Three major themes, with at least two sub-themes and categories, emerged from the data analysis. They are perceptions on English and nativeness, language identity, and language experiences.

Perceptions on English and Nativeness

To find out the language identity of Filipino English teachers abroad, their perceptions on the English language and who are the native speakers of the said language are relevant. Such perceptions would provide the context as to how these participants view themselves as speakers and teachers of English.

Perceptions on English

Two prevalent ideas emerged on how the participants view English: English as a language and English as a tool. The participants' view of English as a language is expected because, after all, English is one of the many languages spoken around the world. Their idea of English as a language describes it as a "very important language" (P1), "one of the many languages" (P2), a common language (P4, P5), and a "lingua franca in tourism and business" (P4). It is also viewed as a language that is simple and easy to learn (P2, P3), to the point that it can be perceived as "quite boring and less challenging once you learn other languages" (P2). Nevertheless, it is a language that "continues to evolve and grow" due to globalization (P3).

English is also perceived as a tool. In particular, it is a "tool for communication" (P2), which has the propensity to "unif[y] people" (P1). Moreover, as a tool, it "gives [people the] opportunity to discover . . . the world" (P1). This idea is even taken further by one participant when he explained that English "would eventually dominate the world . . . [due] to its impact on better opportunities and quality of life" (P4).

Perceptions on Nativeness

Participants in this study are divided on their perceptions on nativeness. Some perceive nativeness by virtue of birth and others by virtue of proficiency. One participant who believes that nativeness is by virtue of birth explains that a native English speaker is "someone who grew up in an English-speaking country and used English as a primary means of concept formation and communication" (P3). Another sees it in a similar way but further explains that the country where a person was born is not the main determinant of that speaker's nativeness. Native speakers are the "ones who are born and first learn or utter the English language irrespective of their country of birth" (P4).

Another perception on nativeness is by virtue of proficiency. Anyone who can "use [the] language any time of the day with fluency and efficiency" (P2) is a native speaker. This idea is affirmed by another participant when he explained that "when one thinks and speaks the language . . . that qualifies him/her to be a native language user" (P5).

The first category of participants' perception about who the native speaker is, is a common folk definition of a native speaker. Such definition can even be found in Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics by Richards and Schmidt (2011), in which the first criterion given for the native speaker is that the person learned the language as a child. In as much as many would seem to agree with this notion, such criterion becomes problematic when one encounters an individual who exhibits a high level of proficiency in a language but did not learn such language as a child. In addition, it has been argued that the concept of "the 'native speaker' [be viewed] as a "social construct" (Lowe, 2020, p. 22). Hence, the perception on nativeness by virtue of proficiency allows for a more inclusive perspective of who a native speaker is.

Language Identity

The theme of language identity mainly answers the first research question of this study. How the participants see themselves as English speakers is reflected in how they own the English language and how closely tied they are to the English language.

English Ownership

Participants in this study either view themselves as non-native or native English speakers. Almost all the respondents (four out of five) see themselves as non-native English speakers. This stems from the idea that native English speakers, in this case, Western English speakers, have superior English language ability than theirs. One explained that "although I have used the [English] language since I was a child . . . I don't think I am as fluent as them" (P1). Another clarified that she "only started learning English in high school and [her] English fluency and proficiency is not [up to] par with that of a native English speaker" (P3). These ideas on native speakers are summed up in one participant's sentiment: "I do not consider myself an equal [to Western English speakers]" (P5). Despite these perceived inequalities between native and non-native English speakers, one participant attributes his being a non-native speaker based on his circumstances at birth and not on his perceived English proficiency. He explained that he "wasn't born [to] English-speaking parents and not surrounded that time with NES community" (P4). Further, "I believe that one can be fluent . . . and not necessarily be a native speaker" (P4).

Surprisingly, one of the participants views herself as a native English speaker. This view confirms their perception on nativeness by virtue of proficiency. Additionally, her view of herself as a native English speaker seems to be her self-affirmation of what others thought of her and her English language skills. She says, "I consider myself a native speaker. Here in Europe, I am also considered as one wherever I work as an English teacher . . . My job position . . . has always been 'native speaker.' I have developed a good sense of neutral accent that when I speak to English native speakers . . . they admitted I sound like one" (P2).

English Affinity

Another subtheme that reflected the participants' language identity is their affinity to the English language. Consistent with the pattern of the previous subthemes, participants are divided into two differing ideas. Some view English as their second language, while some see English as their primary language. These two ideas may not seem too different from each other, but in essence, those who declare that English is their second language seem to uphold their native language or mother tongue as a language that still plays a major role in their lives. On the other hand, those who see English as their primary language have accepted that their current living situation requires them to rely heavily on and use English in their day-to-day functions.

Three participants (P1, P2, P4) agree that English is their second language. One explained that he "still consider[s] English as [his] second language even if [he] is using it every day" (P4). Another explicitly affirmed her mother tongue as her first language and English as her second.

"Filipino is my mother tongue. . . . I just can't think of any other language [aside from English] that could be my second" (P2).

As for the group who considers English as their primary language, one reasoned that this is because "I currently live in an English-speaking country" (P3). Another participant has the same sentiment even though he does not necessarily live in an English-speaking country. He wrote, "I consider it as my primary language because I think and reflect in English" (P5).

From the participants' accounts, it can be deduced that their language-related experiences, exposure to, and interaction with other speakers of English impact their confidence as speakers and users of English. Such assumption only serves to support Norton's theory on investment (Norton-Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2013) in that participants who have stayed and worked longer abroad seemed to have expended more effort in investing for their language learning and development. It is also worth noting that participants' language identity is revealed from how they view themselves as English speakers. Their experience and interactions with others contributed to how they see themselves as English speakers. Their ownership of English and their affinity to the language are best understood through the positional, indexical, and relational principles of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Basically, they identify themselves as speakers based on how they position other speakers in their immediate community.

Language Experiences

Participants in this study came from various parts of the globe. It is not, therefore, surprising to receive a wide range of language experiences while they stay and work abroad. Their stories about their language experiences abroad can be divided into three themes: language opportunities, language challenges, and coping strategies). These themes also consist of three subthemes each and answer the second research question.

Language-Related Opportunities

Living and working abroad as teachers have provided the participants' ample language opportunities. Such opportunities can be categorized as employment, socialization, friendship, and cultural, social, and intellectual enrichment.

Employment

Since all the participants in this study have, for some time, lived and gained employment abroad, most of them cited employment as one of the language opportunities an individual can gain abroad. One stated that "the demand for teaching [English] is overwhelming" (P2). As a matter of fact, this participant professed that for the past nine years of her life abroad, she has been "living a rat race life teaching" for 12 hours a day during weekdays and even on weekends. The other two (P3, P4) explained that with the English language, they were able to apply for and land a job. To expound, "English is the language I used when I applied for a job and had my job interviews. I teach English literacy to both Canadian and ELL students at school" (P3).

Another participant shared that "in a non-English speaking country like Thailand, there are always plenty of opportunities for English speakers. In my case, I was able to apply and got accepted in many prestigious and established English learning agencies . . . I was also asked to do a short review on business English with government workers and engineers" (P4). From what they have shared, it is obvious that the ability to speak English well and the capacity to teach it brings employment opportunities.

Socialization and friendship

As English teachers and fluent English speakers, participants recalled that locals and students seek them out outside their classrooms to spend time with them and practice their English at the same time. One elucidated that "being fluent in English gives [her] a passport to know people" (P1). In fact, this participant was invited to spend time with her friend's family over the weekend so "they can speak English with me during my time with them" (P1).

Another participant agreed that in places where people "are driven to learn English, most people . . . would love to have you around. They like to practice the language with you and learn your culture, or just plainly hang out" (P2). However, she was also quick to explain that the locals do not just befriend English teachers just because they are proficient with the English language. "Your ability to communicate well with them and understand them" (P2) factors in the socialization and friendship equation.

Cultural, social and intellectual enrichment

Another opportunity teaching English abroad brings is the chance to enhance one's cultural, social, and intellectual skills. For some, this opportunity takes the form of doing missionary work or participating in outreach programs (P2, P4). One participant did not only have the privilege to teach students in the classroom but "in the midst of nature" (P2) when she went to India for mission work. She not only helped in the manual labor of building the school for the local children and youth but also handled a few classes as a guest teacher. She described the experience as a humbling one as she got to experience firsthand the students' "eagerness to learn" despite the sacrifices they must make, like crossing rivers or trekking for an hour to reach the school (P2).

For some participants, living and working abroad opened avenues for them to better themselves through their English language skills. One accepts speaking engagements (P5), while another "take courses and attend professional development sessions in English" (P3).

Indeed, English language-related opportunities are limitless if one is ready to embrace the many chances for self-improvement that come their way. As one respondent aptly declared, "we get the privilege to move from one country to another, adopt the local lifestyle, get to learn the different cultures, and [gain] friends from everywhere" (P3).

Language-Related Challenges

Teaching English abroad is an experience that is not exempt from challenges. The challenges participants encountered were incomprehensibility, feelings of inadequacy, and fluency atrophy.

Incomprehensibility

One major challenge that was mentioned is the problem with understanding others. It is common to face difficulty "understanding and comprehending the heavy accents from non-native English speakers" (P5). Basically, this participant struggled with comprehensibility with other speakers' use of English.

On the other hand, another participant's struggle with incomprehensibility is with herself not knowing other languages, particularly the local language (P2). From her account, she does not seem to view English as an answer to all her communication needs as her difficulty lies with her inability to speak the language of the locals where she is currently living.

Feelings of inadequacy

Another difficulty participants encountered in their stay abroad was their feelings of inadequacy. One participant shared that she often encounters situations when she has "difficulty expressing [her] deep thoughts in English" (P3). She felt that native speakers communicate too fast for her to keep up with and that she could have communicated her ideas much better, and contributed more weighty thoughts if she had more time and that the conversation is conducted at a slower pace. Moreover, she admitted that she lacks "knowledge on the cultural reference when a native speaker uses slangs or jargons in their speeches" (P3).

For the other participant, her feelings of inadequacy stemmed from her inability to communicate in the local language. She expressed the necessity of learning even just the "basic of each language wherever [she is]" (P2). She learned this important lesson when she got stranded waiting for a train in the station because she could not understand the announcement. She felt mad that no consideration was given to foreigners but later conceded that it is part of her responsibility to "learn the local language" to avoid similar incidents such as freezing in the cold late at night while waiting for a train to get home.

Fluency atrophy

It is worth noting that only one participant voiced out this specific language-related difficulty, but it warrants a discussion because of how it was repeated in the participants' recounting of her experience. This participant shared that in her teaching work abroad, she had to use simpler English coupled with a lot of gestures. She explained that she had to "break down [her] English to bits and pieces so [her] colleagues, friends, and students can understand [her]" (P1). This communication practice, although helpful in her teaching work and social relations, makes her feel that she is steadily losing her English fluency. "I feel like I've lost my English fluency here [Japan], to be honest" (P1).

Coping Strategies

Living and working abroad has its opportunities and challenges. Nevertheless, if one has to thrive both in personal and professional life, one must learn how to cope. From what the participants shared about their experiences living and teaching abroad, learning the local language, practice, exposure, and integration, and self-awareness and open-mindedness emerged as subthemes under their coping strategies, which helped made their work effective and their overall experience meaningful while living abroad.

Learning the local language

The participants are English teachers, but they have underscored the importance of learning the local language. One shared that despite the challenges of learning Nihongo, specifically with its language structure and characters, it is an important skill to acquire not just to get by when shopping but also to understand correspondents and documents. She also quipped that Google Translate is her best friend as she "always have to use Google Translate" (P1).

Learning the local language is also important in avoiding situations that make one feel helpless. One participant shared that she uses the train for her daily commute. But when the management added one more train track, the schedule got changed, and she was left standing in the cold. "Many nights, I stood in the freezing open station. I couldn't understand the announcement nor read the notices on the board. There were no trains for me for two hours! I was literally freezing at 10 pm" (P3). Such experience taught her the invaluable lesson of learning even just the basics of the local language and not just relying on English to get by.

Practice, exposure, and integration

For participants staying in a non-English speaking country, they find the practice of constant exposure to the English language helpful (P1, P5). P3 takes this English practice and exposure strategy further by "take[ing] every opportunity to practice and learn the cultural integration of the English language." Additionally, she also "participate[s] in meaningful interactions with native speakers to improve [her] listening skills and advance [her] knowledge in lexical phrases or expressions" (P3).

If cultural integration for P3 means engaging in meaningful discourse with native speakers, for another participant, integration takes in the form of speaking the local language of the place where she is at (P2). Both accounts make sense as the native language of the place where P3 is at is English, while for P2, it is something else. As a matter of fact, English does not hold as much importance for P2 as it does for P3. For the former, "English becomes just a means of general language for everyone to communicate," but she "honestly find[s] English boring after encountering Russian, Polish, French, German, Norsk" and other European languages. Such declaration reveals her appreciation of the native language of the places she has lived and worked in. It also helps explain her idea of integration through learning the local language.

Self-awareness and open-mindedness

Another important strategy for coping is self-awareness and open-mindedness. By being self-aware, one can better understand their difficulties and challenges. As a result, they can pursue steps to tackle the challenges they face (P3). For P4, working abroad naturally provides one with the avenue to widen their perspectives. He believes that meeting different people from various cultural backgrounds enhances one's cross-cultural IQ. He also believes that the "higher your cross-cultural IQ, the more open-minded you become" (P4). For this participant, then, open-mindedness seems to be a natural consequence of being exposed to different people of diverse backgrounds. He also emphasized that despite the challenges one experiences while living and working abroad, it is best to realize that "it is the heart that connects everyone effectively" (P4).

In general, it can be said that Filipino English teachers' experiences while working abroad may vary, but they are all similar in the way they contribute to the participants' language identities. For example, the participant (P2), who is constantly surrounded by English speakers, tends to view English as a necessity and continually desires to improve her language skills to be considered up to par with her 'native speaker' counterparts. Thus, her appointment as an ELL specialist and her recognition as a literacy teacher to native English-speaking children brought her a "profound sense of success" (P2). In contrast, someone (P3) who has been surrounded by English speaking 'non-native speakers' and lived in countries where they seem to hold foreigners responsible for learning the local language tend to view English as simply a language for communication but does not necessarily appoint it much power over their overall success. It can then be implied that one's identity is an emergent outcome of their experience and environment. Additionally, their declared language identities are still bound to change as they gain more exposure and different experiences. Therefore, it can also be understood that their expressed identities are still partial accounts and that it is normal, even expected, to have multiple identities. Finally, it is likely for participants to struggle with their identities if they encounter situations that present "inequitable social forces" (Norton-Peirce, 1995, p. 20).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed that participants view English as a language and a tool. They also perceive nativeness either by virtue of birth or proficiency. They are also divided in their ideas regarding English ownership. Most view themselves as non-native speakers, while one participant sees herself as one. Additionally, some perceive English as their second language while others consider it as their primary language. Finally, in the participants' stay and work abroad, they experienced both language-related opportunities such as employment, socialization and friendship, and cultural, social, and intellectual enrichment; and language-related challenges like incomprehensibility, feelings of inadequacy, and fluency atrophy. To meet the demands and challenges of their stay and work abroad, they tried certain coping strategies such as learning the local language, finding avenues for practice, exposure, and integration, and practicing self-awareness and openmindedness.

Based on the result and analyses of the study, it can be concluded that the length of time spent residing and teaching abroad determines teachers' confidence in their ability as English speakers. The participants' exposure to and interaction with other English speakers also influence how they view themselves as language speakers. Finally, teacher participants' language-related experiences continue to [re]shape their language identities.

As part of the initiative to internationalize English education, it is vital to incorporate narratives in English Education courses to raise awareness about students' views of themselves in relation to English. Additionally, English education students should be provided learning opportunities to [re]construct and analyze their language identities in class. Critical analysis of issues like language and power and native speaker ideology in TESL/TESOL courses should also be introduced. Lastly, lessons that promote appreciation for different varieties of English (World Englishes, Global English) should be integrated into all English education major courses. For further study, it is suggested that a comparative analysis be done among Filipino English teachers working in countries belonging to the inner circle versus those working in countries belonging to the outer or expanding circle to investigate if there is really a difference in how teachers view themselves in relation to English based on their experience with and exposure to other English speaking individuals.

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