



Influence of teacher and gender identities in EFL classroom: A case study of a Filipino transwoman in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Thailand, renowned for its LGBTQIA+ inclusivity, still confronts societal stereotypes that affect transwomen in academia. Although the literature extensively addresses gender discrimination, inclusivity, and identity construction in educational contexts, it often overlooks the specific effects of intersecting teacher and gender identities within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) frameworks. This study aims to bridge this gap through a narrative inquiry into the lived experiences of a Filipino transwoman EFL teacher. Data were collected via Semi-structured open-ended in-depth interviews and analyzed using Stake's (1995) four-phase framework: description, categorical aggregation, establishing patterns, and naturalistic generalization. Findings reveal that the participant's intersecting identities positively influenced her pedagogical practices. Her dual roles as a transwoman and a non-native English speaker enhanced her instructional methods by integrating personal language learning experiences, emphasizing linguistic precision, and adapting teaching strategies aligned with her gender identity. This research highlights the significant interplay between teacher and gender identities in shaping EFL teaching practices. Notably, these identities did not negatively affect her instructional effectiveness. Future research should further explore the experiences of transgender educators across diverse cultural contexts to elucidate how their identities inform and enhance pedagogical practices in various educational settings.

KEYWORDS

EFL in Thailand, Filipino transwoman teacher, gender identity, teacher identity

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INTRODUCTION

In educational settings, including English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms and the broader academic sphere, teacher and gender identities are frequently expected to align with conventional notions of teacher professionalism. This expectation typically demands adherence to a normative teacher persona, which is intrinsically tied to binary gender identities. Society often confers respect upon educators who conform to these traditional gender norms, while marginalizing those who deviate from them (Connell & Pearse, 2014). Such normative perceptions overlook the diverse identities of teachers, particularly those who do not fit neatly into binary gender categories, thereby perpetuating a narrow understanding of professionalism in education. This study seeks to challenge these

normative perceptions by exploring the influence of teacher and gender identities through the lens of a Filipino transwoman EFL teacher working in an EFL classroom in Thailand. Previous research has extensively explored gender discrimination, inclusion, identity formation, and teacher-student relationships within EFL contexts. For instance, Sánchez et al. (2013) examined the influence of teacher-student relationships in EFL settings, finding that students demonstrated greater trust and improved performance when they perceived their teachers as trustworthy, particularly during the revision of written works. However, this study primarily focused on the impact of relational dynamics, without delving into the complexities of teacher identity.

Similarly, Razmjoo (2012) investigated the influence of identity aspects on EFL learners' achievement, focusing on the broad spectrum of identity among students, particularly gender identities, yet limiting the discussion to male and female identities. In contrast, Evripidou (2018) explored the impact of heteronormativity in an EFL classroom, revealing that heteronormative beliefs in Cypriot EFL settings reinforce the idea that students belong to two distinct genders with complementary roles, often sidelining discussions or references to LGBTQIA+ topics. In Thailand, where cultural acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals is relatively high, transwomen teachers nonetheless face unique challenges. Despite the country's reputation for tolerance, persistent stereotypes and prejudices related to gender identity continue to impact these educators.

This study aims to address the gap in the existing literature by investigating the influence of teacher and gender identities in a foreign educational context, specifically through the lived experiences of a Filipino transwoman EFL teacher in an EFL classroom in Thailand. By exploring her experiences, this research seeks to highlight the complexities of her role and challenge existing stereotypes within the academic community. The study will address the following research questions: (1) What are the teacher and gender identities of the Filipino transwoman EFL teacher in Thailand? and (2) How do these identities influence her EFL teaching practices?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Filipino transwomen EFL teachers in Thailand

EFL teaching in Thailand is particularly notable for the presence of Filipino transwomen, a phenomenon attributable to the country's relative acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community. The term "transwoman" refers to individuals who were assigned male at birth but have undergone a gender transition to affirm their female identity (Chakrapani, 2010). Thailand is recognized as an accommodating society for marginalized groups, distinguishing itself not only within Southeast Asia but also on a global scale (Winter, 2016). The positive reception of Filipino transwomen EFL teachers is further enhanced by the friendly and non-judgmental nature of Thai society, along with favorable work-life balance, low cost of living, and accessible cosmetic products. While precise statistics on the number of Filipino transwomen working as EFL teachers in Thailand are lacking, their significant presence in

Thai EFL classrooms is undeniable. These educators teach across a wide range of subjects and educational levels, from kindergarten to university, with a substantial emphasis on English language instruction. Such teaching opportunities enable Filipino transwomen to form and express their identities, which are often repressed in their home country for various reasons.

As integral members of the Filipino EFL teaching community in Thailand, these transwomen fulfill the role of language educators, aiming to connect Thai students to the core of the English language. Filipino transwomen teachers often find it easier to secure teaching positions compared to their counterparts from other ASEAN nations due to their proficiency in English. This proficiency stems from the Philippines' long-standing reputation for English fluency, where English is widely utilized as a second language (Martin, 2014). The established demand for English-speaking educators in various international contexts has consequently created significant employment opportunities for these teachers. However, despite their engagement in academia, these transwomen continue to be impacted by negative societal stereotypes associated with trans identities across diverse contexts.

Societal stereotypes among transwomen

Despite Thailand's reputation as a global "gay paradise," common societal stereotypes persist about transwomen in the country. These stereotypes, which often portray transwomen as lewd, loud-mouthed, drag queens, and even sex workers, contribute to negative generalizations, particularly concerning those in academia (Jackson, 1999). However, it is crucial to recognize that transwomen also venture into diverse professional fields, including medicine, media, sales, and notably, education. The presence of transwomen in these sectors challenges the monolithic stereotypes and highlights their multifaceted contributions to society (Kang, 2011). For instance, transwomen educators in Thailand play a vital role in bridging cultural and linguistic gaps, particularly in the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Their professional achievements and contributions to the educational sector underscore the need to dismantle harmful stereotypes that undermine their capabilities and accomplishments.

Stereotyping transwomen not only perpetuates discrimination but also hinders their professional growth and societal acceptance. It is essential to promote a more inclusive and accurate representation of transwomen, recognizing their diverse roles and contributions beyond the confines of entertainment and sex work. Educational and policy interventions are necessary to address and mitigate these stereotypes, fostering a more equitable environment for all individuals regardless of gender identity (Jackson, 2011).

Teacher identity and professionalism

Teacher identity is a multifaceted construct that includes personal beliefs, experiences, and professional roles, all of which contribute to how teachers approach their practice

(Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). This identity is not static; it evolves through reflective practice, student interactions, and engagement with the broader educational community. Teacher identity is closely tied to notions of professionalism, which traditionally align with normative gender roles. For instance, male teachers are often expected to embody authority and discipline, while female teachers are associated with nurturing and care (Connell & Pearse, 2014). These gendered expectations can influence how teachers are treated by colleagues, administrators, and students, as well as how they navigate their professional responsibilities.

Over the years, researchers have engaged in defining and discussing various aspects of teacher identity. While there has been a substantial focus on learner identity, investigations into language teacher identity have emerged as a growing field within academia (Cross & Gearon, 2007; Singh & Richards, 2006). The concept of teacher identity has undergone a notable resurgence in research, drawing attention from scholars in education, psychology, and related fields. This renewed interest has broadened our understanding of identity, shifting from a perspective of something internal, coherent, and fixed to one that is socially mediated, fragmented, and multiple (Reeves, 2018). The evolving landscape of teacher identity research emphasizes the dynamic interplay between internal perceptions and external influences, shedding light on the intricate processes through which individuals navigate and negotiate their roles as educators.

In the domain of English as a foreign language (EFL), teacher identity can be dichotomized into two primary categories: native English teachers, whose first language is English, and non-native teachers, who speak English as their second or foreign language. The teacher identity of a Filipino transwoman English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher further involves multiple dimensions, encompassing her Filipino nationality, non-native English proficiency, and being a transwoman teacher.

The present study aims to contribute a novel perspective by exploring a unique identity that has not been previously studied in the Thai context as a Filipino transwoman English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher. Trent (2010) delved into investigating future teachers' identities and discovered that in-training instructors often held fixed ideas about being a teacher. These individuals perceived their identities as "spaces of ambiguity," suggesting a tension between established notions of teaching and the evolving nature of their own identities. Trent's findings indicate that early-career teachers may undergo identity crises, prompting rapid shifts in their perceptions of who they are and their roles as educators, particularly in response to the perceived rigidity of traditional teaching identities.

Given its socially mediated and discursive nature, teacher identity is intricately connected to societal, institutional, and ideological power dynamics. Within language teaching, particularly in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), the dichotomy between native and non-native speaker identities underscores significant power imbalances and legitimization disparities. Research in TESOL has extensively examined the impact of the native-speaker myth, which perpetuates the notion that native speakers of the target language are inherently superior teachers. This myth has profound consequences for the legitimacy of non-native speakers' identities as language teachers. Unfortunately, non-

native speakers often face prejudice and are sometimes perceived as less qualified to teach the language they have adopted. This perception is a form of marginalization that contributes to inequities in the teaching profession.

Gender identity and its influence on teaching practices

Gender identity, defined as an individual's deeply held sense of being male, female, or another gender, plays a critical role in shaping a teacher's approach to pedagogy. Teachers who do not conform to traditional gender norms may experience marginalization or discrimination within educational institutions (Meyer, 2008). However, their unique perspectives can also enrich their teaching practices. For example, transgender educators may bring a heightened awareness of diversity and inclusion into their classrooms, fostering an environment where all students feel valued and respected (Miller, 2016).

In the context of EFL teaching, gender identity can influence not only how teachers interact with students but also how they select and present content. Teachers with non-normative gender identities may challenge traditional gender roles in language teaching materials, thereby promoting critical thinking and cultural awareness among students (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004). Additionally, these teachers may employ pedagogical strategies that emphasize empathy, understanding, and inclusivity, which are essential in multicultural and multilingual classrooms (Morgan, 2004).

In contemporary society, there has been a significant shift in the ways people identify themselves, exemplified by the evolution from the LGBT community to the LGBTQIA+ community. This inclusive categorization acknowledges a spectrum of identities, reflecting the rich tapestry of human experiences. This study narrows its focus to a Filipino English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher who identifies herself as a transwoman, recognizing the importance of understanding the unique challenges and experiences of this teacher. The transwoman identity is increasingly recognized within the marginalized spectrum, highlighting the need for societal acceptance and amplification of their voices. Transwomen actively contribute to various sectors, including businesses, entertainment, healthcare, and academia, where their presence is instrumental in fostering diversity and inclusivity. In the context of Thailand, Filipino transwomen teachers play a crucial role in educating young children by imparting the English language. Exploring the teacher's narratives not only adds depth to our understanding of gender identity but also sheds light on the broader impact of diverse identities in educational settings. Within the intricate tapestry of gender identity and the nuanced exploration of transwoman identity, the narrative shifts towards the key facet of teacher identity, inviting a closer examination of how this educator navigates and integrates her roles as a teacher within the broader context of her gender identities.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative methodology rooted in constructivist perspectives was utilized to investigate the lived experiences of a Filipino transwoman EFL teacher in Thailand. Concentrating on the participant's narratives, this study seeks to generate a theoretical framework or pattern, providing profound insights into the interplay between teacher and gender identity in the context of an EFL classroom in Thailand.

Participant

The participant in this study was a 29-year-old Filipino teacher who identifies as a transwoman and is actively engaging in gender-affirming practices, including gender expression through clothing typically associated with women, as part of her social transition. Additionally, she is undergoing hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to support her physical transition and alignment with her affirmed gender identity. She was selected using purposive sampling due to her unique attributes and experiences relevant to the study's examination of the influence of teacher and gender identities in an EFL classroom in Thailand. With over four years of teaching experience in a Thai EFL classroom and a bachelor's degree, she fulfills the educational qualifications mandated by the Thai Ministry of Education. Purposive selective or purposeful sampling is a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research (Etikan et al., 2016). This method involves deliberately selecting participants who possess specific traits or experiences relevant to the study's aims.

While the participant may not fully represent the broader population of transwomen EFL teachers in Thailand, her selection through purposive sampling provides valuable insights into the study's exploration of the influence of teacher and gender identities in an EFL classroom. In narrative inquiry, a single participant cannot and should not be generalized (Wells, 2011); however, the unique insights gained from her experiences contribute meaningfully to the existing literature on gender and identity studies, particularly in educational contexts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). To maintain ethical standards and protect the participant's confidentiality, a pseudonym was assigned to her, safeguarding her identity and enhancing the ethical rigor and credibility of the study. The participant was informed that all data collected would be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. This research received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and informed consent was obtained from the participant, ensuring her voluntary and informed participation.

Data collection

In this narrative inquiry, a qualitative methodology was employed to explore the lived experiences of a Filipino transwoman EFL teacher in Thailand. Open-ended interview questions were carefully developed to elicit detailed insights into the intersections between

the participant's teacher and gender identities. The interview guide underwent rigorous review by academic experts to ensure that the questions were effective in capturing the nuanced complexities of intersecting identities. To refine both the questions and interview structure, a pilot interview was conducted, resulting in adjustments to enhance clarity and depth in the data collection process.

The primary data collection involved a ninety-minute, in-person, semi-structured interview conducted in Bangkok, Thailand, at a convenient location for the participant. The interview was conducted in English, which, as the participant's second language, allowed her to articulate her experiences with clarity. Sample interview questions included, "Could you tell me about your teaching experiences in Thailand?" and "What impact does your gender have on your role as a teacher in this context?" These questions were designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how her gender identity influenced her pedagogical choices, classroom interactions, and professional self-concept.

Throughout the session, the participant shared her experiences as an EFL kindergarten teacher, highlighting how her identities as a teacher and transwoman shaped her instructional practices and classroom management strategies. Audio recordings were made to ensure that her narratives were captured in a nuanced and authentic manner. Following the initial interview, a follow-up session was conducted for member checking, allowing the participant to review and confirm the accuracy of the recorded data. This methodological approach, grounded in narrative inquiry, facilitated a robust examination of how her intersecting identities influenced her teaching practices within the EFL kindergarten classroom in Thailand.

Data analysis

After gathering the data, the researchers employed Stake's (1995) four-phase framework for analysis and interpretation to systematically explore and interpret the participant's experiences. These four phases include Description, Categorical Aggregation, Establishing Patterns, and Naturalistic Generalizations. In the Description phase, the researchers carefully reviewed the entire data set, generating a comprehensive portrayal of Andria's gender and teacher identities. This initial phase involved an in-depth immersion in the participant's narratives, with particular attention to her experiences as both a transwoman and an EFL teacher in Thailand. Key elements such as Andria's self-perception as a non-native English teacher, her position as a preferred teaching partner among local co-workers, and her transwoman gender identity in the classroom were captured during this phase. In the second phase, Categorical Aggregation, the researcher identified recurring elements within the data and organized them into distinct categories. Categories like "teacher identity," and "gender identity," were established to structure Andria's identities and "identities' influence on her EFL teaching practices" to structure her identities' influence on her EFL teaching practices in Thailand. Each category contained specific narratives, including Andria's heightened focus on accurate pronunciation as a defining trait of her teacher identity.

The third phase, Establishing Patterns, involved detecting broader themes across the data. The analysis revealed key patterns in how Andria's teacher identity intersected with her gender identity, particularly how these identities influenced her pedagogical approaches and classroom interactions. Her positioning as a non-native teacher, compounded by her transwoman identity, impacted perceptions held by both co-workers and students. Notably, Andria's conscious effort to be seen primarily as a woman and her nurturing, mother-like approach in the classroom were recurring patterns that shaped her educational identity. In the final phase, Naturalistic Generalizations, the researchers interpreted the findings, drawing broader insights into how teacher and gender identities intersect within EFL teaching contexts. The analysis illustrated how Andria's successful integration of her gender identity enhanced her rapport with students and helped challenge traditional gender norms within her school environment. This structured approach, grounded in qualitative methods, allowed for a nuanced examination of the participant's lived experiences and intersecting identities.

To ensure reliability, the researchers maintained rigorous documentation of all coding and categorization decisions, following a transparent process to verify the consistency of findings. Additionally, member-checking was conducted to confirm the accuracy of interpretations, allowing Andria to review and validate the researcher's analyses. Stake's four-phase framework provided a coherent and structured methodology, enhancing the credibility of the research by organizing and presenting the collected narratives systematically. This study conceptualized teacher identity as the socially constructed persona of educators, shaped by professional demeanor, discourse, and pedagogical practices (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). In contrast, gender identity refers to an individual's self-concept and expression of gender, embracing the fluidity of contemporary gender understandings beyond traditional binaries (Butler, 1990). This construct of gender identity was expressed through various dimensions, such as physical appearance, sartorial choices, and linguistic behavior (McConnell-Ginet, 2003).

RESULTS

Andria, a 29-year-old Filipino transwoman teacher with four years of experience teaching in Thailand, faced significant struggles with her gender identity back home. In the Philippines, Andria initially identified as a gay man and presented herself in male-associated clothing, largely conforming to societal and family expectations rooted in a conservative, Catholic environment. This environment limited her freedom to express her authentic identity, leaving her unable to explore and live as her true self. Seeking acceptance and a more supportive setting, Andria moved to Thailand, a country known for its LGBTQIA+ tolerance and openness (Jackson, 1999). Holding a degree in business administration, Andria began her teaching career in Thailand, where she has developed a professional identity in the EFL classroom. Her proficiency in English acquired as a second language in the Philippines has significantly shaped her pedagogical approach and professional identity as an EFL teacher. Andria has fully embraced her identity as a transwoman. Recently, she

began hormone therapy and transitioned to a female wardrobe, including wearing makeup in her school environment. Despite her initial concerns about potential reactions from her students, co-workers, and superiors, Andria has been met with acceptance and support, allowing her to live authentically as the woman she is becoming.

The table below highlights Andria's teacher and gender identities in the EFL classroom in Thailand and the influence these identities have on her EFL teaching practices.

Table 1. Summary of Andria's teacher and gender identities and the influence on her EFL teaching practices.

Research Questions	Results			
	Teacher identities		Gender identities	
(RQ1) <i>Andria's teacher and gender identities</i>	1	As a preferred teaching partner among local co-teachers	5	As a woman teacher
	2	As a non-native English conversation teacher	6	As a mother-like figure to her students
	3	Lack of linguistic competence	7	As a transwoman co-worker
	4	Lack of ELT credentials		
(RQ2) <i>Andria's teacher and gender identities' influence on her EFL teaching practices.</i>	1	Integrate personal language learning experience		
	2	Heightened focus on accurate pronunciation and accent		
	3	Emotional and understand students' learning styles		

Four months before the research interview, Andria transitioned after initially presenting with a masculine appearance at school, despite identifying as a woman. The disparity between her gender identity and outward appearance significantly motivated her decision to fully transition. In the early stages of transition, she faced challenges with makeup application, and her co-teachers provided support.

Excerpt 1:

They help me to look better they taught me how to wear makeup, specially my K1 and K3 Thai teachers. They also give me some dress to wear at school and ribbon for my hair. So, they accepted me for being who I am during my transition (Andria)

This kind of acceptance shown by her Thai co-workers played a vital role in supporting her gender transition and affirming her identity. Her K1 and K3 co-teachers welcomed her and actively encouraged her self-expression by helping her with makeup, providing her with school-appropriate dresses, and gifting her hair ribbons. This support was not limited to verbal encouragement; it involved practical acts that helped Andria feel more comfortable and accepted in her evolving identity. Their gestures created a positive workplace environment where she could present herself authentically, free from fear of judgment or alienation, which was instrumental in helping her establish both her teacher and gender identity in Thailand.

Andria's teacher and gender identities

To comprehend the influence of teacher and gender identities on a participant's EFL teaching practices in Thailand, it is imperative to first dissect the socially established identities of the participant, as these identities fundamentally shape her pedagogical methodologies. A thorough examination of Andria's narratives revealed the emergence of four distinct teacher identities alongside three gender identities.

The teacher identities warrant detailed exploration and include her role as a preferred teaching partner among local co-teachers, her positioning as a non-native English-speaking conversation teacher, her perceived lack of linguistic competence, and her perceived lack of ELT credentials. Each of these identities has shaped her professional interactions and instructional approach within the EFL context.

As a preferred teaching partner among local co-teachers

The "Filipino Sash Factor Identity Advantage" highlights the benefit Filipino EFL teachers in Thailand gain from their established reputation. This term, borrowed from beauty pageants, symbolizes the inherent advantage of their national identity. Andria's effective collaboration with Thai co-teachers and proficiency in English instruction enhance her status as a preferred partner among Thai educators. This external perception reinforces her confidence and self-affirmation as a transwoman teacher.

Excerpt 2:

My Thai partner told me before that she really likes Filipino teachers rather than other nationalities. She told me that one before a year ago and it already instilled in my mind. I can see the difference. I can see how we teach and better understanding towards our students. So, I guess being a Filipino is an advantage. (Andria)

Andria's recognition of the positive perception Filipino teachers holds within the Thai education system, particularly in the eyes of her Thai co-teachers, who expressed a preference for Filipino educators over others. This sentiment, embedded in what may be termed the "Filipino Sash Factor," reflects the strong, positive reputation Filipino teachers have built in Thailand. It underscores their adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and dedication to fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Filipino educators, especially transwomen like Andria, contribute a unique blend of empathy, respect for cultural diversity, and effective pedagogical strategies, which resonate with Thai students and colleagues alike. This "Filipino Sash Factor" highlights a blend of traits including linguistic proficiency in English and a deep cultural understanding that makes Filipino transwomen EFL teachers valuable within Thai schools. By leveraging these qualities, they integrate seamlessly into local teaching communities and actively contribute to educational initiatives as a non-native English conversation teacher.

As a non-native English conversation teacher

Andria, a business administration graduate, transitioned to a role as a non-native English conversation teacher in Thailand, where she developed a distinct and positive teacher identity. As a Filipino transwoman, her journey into EFL teaching marked both a professional and personal evolution, allowing her to cultivate a reputation of trust and competence within the school community. Her proficiency in English, though a second language, enabled her to effectively support young learners, creating a bridge between her linguistic skills and her pedagogical goals. In her role, Andria emphasizes helping students develop foundational communication skills in English. She describes her responsibilities as guiding students in progressively mastering language skills at different levels.

Excerpt 3:

My responsibility is to help the students speak, know some words and use the words into sentences. In K1 I help them to know some words. In K2 I help them familiarize the sounds of the letters. In K3 I let them speak freely. If they can't I let them to follow me. My responsibility is to help them speak English language. (Andria)

Andria's English fluency was likely instrumental in facilitating her transition to an English conversation teacher in Thailand, underscoring the role of language proficiency in securing teaching opportunities. However, despite her fluency in spoken English, her perceived linguistic incompetence as a non-native speaker persists, particularly regarding the accurate pronunciation of English words. This perception highlights the ongoing challenges non-native English teachers face concerning native speakerism and linguistic authenticity in language instruction.

Lack of linguistic competence

Not all Filipino transwomen EFL teachers exhibit equal confidence in their linguistic competence. Like Andria, some openly acknowledge limitations in English proficiency due to being non-native speakers. For example, Andria admits to difficulties with certain English words and their pronunciation, reflecting common linguistic challenges.

Excerpt 4:

Regarding with the pronunciation if I am not sure about the words, I try to search it first before I teach to my kids. So, whatever my lesson, I must study the vocabulary so I must know how to pronounce it correctly. (Andria)

This admission reflects a genuine self-awareness about areas in which she may seek improvement. It also underscores the importance of ongoing language development initiatives, such as pronunciation practice and vocabulary enhancement, to address these challenges and enhance her overall linguistic competence in the classroom.

Lack of ELT credentials

Andria, a graduate of a business administration program, lacks formal ELT credentials and prior experience teaching English in her home country. However, her professional identity as an EFL teacher has evolved through her engagement in ELT-focused experiences, including specialized training, workshops, and speech clinics provided by her employer. Despite her initial lack of ELT qualifications, her employer's commitment to her ongoing professional development has been instrumental in supporting her growth, which is essential for enhancing teacher efficacy and pedagogical competence.

Excerpt 5:

I graduated in Business Administration major in financial management. Regarding with my professional development, my employer holds some training, workshops and speech clinic and I am joining. Sometimes I volunteered. (Andria)

Scholars suggest that ongoing professional development can enhance non-native English-speaking teachers' classroom effectiveness (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Engaging in speech clinics and training can help Andria improve her language proficiency and pedagogical skills, addressing her initial lack of ELT credentials.

Andria has successfully established her teacher identity in ways that significantly influence her EFL teaching practices in the classroom in Thailand. Additionally, she has also established her gender identity within the EFL classroom. These identities include her role as a woman teacher, her positioning as a mother-like figure to her students, and (her identity as a transwoman co-worker.

These gender identities profoundly affect her instructional methods and her interactions with both students and colleagues. As a minority within her institutional context, Andria underscores the importance of manifesting her gender identity within the classroom, asserting that authentic self-representation is crucial for fostering students' comprehension of her genuine identity. This transparency not only cultivates empathy and inclusivity but also contributes to establishing an affirming and supportive learning environment. Additionally, Andria benefits from the facilitative role of her Thai teaching partner, who aids in elucidating her gender identity to students, thereby mitigating inquiries regarding her position as a transwoman EFL educator.

Excerpt 6:

I think that their Thai teacher explain to them. Their Thai teacher is really good and since that if I will explain to them, they might not understand me. I just transitioned 4 months ago, so they know how I look like before. So I think someone explained to them already. (Andria)

Although Andria did not directly observe these interactions, the support from her co-workers underscores the importance of fostering understanding and acceptance of gender

diversity in educational settings. This collective effort helps create an inclusive environment and supports Andria's establishing her identity as a woman teacher.

As a woman teacher

Andria employs a strategic approach in addressing her gender identity with her older students by openly discussing her romantic attraction to men, which serves as an entry point to broader conversations about gender identity. Recognizing that many of her students may have a limited understanding of transgender identities, Andria uses personal disclosures as a means of bridging this gap, effectively fostering an inclusive and understanding classroom dynamic. By engaging in honest dialogue about her inner sense of self as a woman, she encourages students to reflect on gender as a nuanced, personally experienced construct, rather than a rigid binary.

This approach not only promotes empathy but also advances students' conceptualization of gender identity as fluid and diverse. Andria's disclosures allow her to humanize transgender identities, making them more accessible and relatable for her students. By cultivating a learning environment rooted in authenticity and self-acceptance, she enhances the classroom's inclusivity and encourages students to embrace diverse identities, contributing to a respectful and supportive atmosphere. Her intentional and authentic engagement with her students facilitates a deeper understanding of transgender identity, thus normalizing conversations about gender diversity within educational spaces.

Excerpt 7:

My students don't know what's transwoman means. I tell them that I like man. I never tell them that I'm a transwoman because they don't know. I just told them that teacher Addie likes man. In that way they will not ask question anymore. (Andria)

Andria's approach with her students is primarily focused on being perceived as a woman, leveraging their innocence to communicate feelings and behaviors commonly associated with women, such as attraction to the opposite sex. This deliberate positioning not only shapes how her students view her but also sets the foundation for her secondary role within the classroom her identity as a mother-like figure to her students. This maternal role further influences her pedagogical approach and her nurturing interactions with students, establishing a deeper emotional connection that reinforces her teaching identity.

As a mother-like figure to her students

As a transwoman teacher, Andria occasionally employs humor by playfully referring to herself as "like their mother" during interactions with her students. This lighthearted approach serves as a means for Andria to subtly negotiate her gender identity with her young learners.

Excerpt 8:

I consider myself as their mother, and as mothers we give what we can give to our kids to the extent that I give my free time for them like doing some stuffs for the activity. Sometimes I tell a joke to them that I am their mother. (Andria)

Andria's decision to adopt a maternal role arises from her desire to cultivate a deeper bond with her students during her transition. Embracing this maternal identity has been instrumental in strengthening her rapport with students and fostering a nurturing, supportive learning environment. The successful integration of both her gender and teacher identities within the socio-cultural landscape of Thailand has significantly influenced her EFL teaching practices. Furthermore, this identity formation extends beyond the classroom, impacting her professional relationships, particularly in her role as a transwoman co-teacher, where her interactions with colleagues also play a crucial part in her overall teaching experience.

As a transwoman co-worker

At Andria's school, her co-workers recognized and accepted her identity as a transwoman, even though she initially did not disclose it. Their acceptance created a supportive environment, further demonstrated by their provision of women's clothing to affirm her gender identity. This underscores the positive impact of inclusive work environments on transgender individuals as they navigate their identities in professional settings.

Excerpt 9:

In my school there is no problem if you are transwoman because even Thai teachers giving you some stuffs to wear at school so that really a good sign that you are accepted as a transwoman. (Andria)

The gift of women's clothing from Andria's co-workers symbolizes their recognition and acceptance of her identity as a transwoman, validating her journey toward authenticity. This gesture reflects their commitment to inclusivity and strengthens positive relationships, creating a supportive community where Andria can thrive both personally and professionally. This unique community, where Andria successfully established both her teacher and gender identities, enabled her to become an effective teacher. The supportive environment significantly influenced her EFL teaching practices, fostering a sense of professional and personal authenticity that enhanced her pedagogical effectiveness.

Andria's Teacher and Gender Identities' Influence Towards her EFL Teaching Practices

In response to the second research question, "How do these identities influence her EFL teaching practices?" the researcher identified three distinct themes: integrate personal language learning experience, emphasize accurate pronunciation, and make her emotional and understand her students' learning styles. Each theme emerges from the participant's

interwoven teacher and gender identities, as discussed in previous sections. Through these emergent themes, the researchers will illustrate how Andria's dual identities as a teacher and transwoman influence her EFL teaching practices.

Integrate personal language learning experience

Andria's teacher identity as a non-native English conversation teacher plays a significant role in shaping her EFL teaching practices. Drawing on her own experiences of English language acquisition in the Philippines, she adopts a practical and relatable approach to English instruction within the Thai context. The positive impact on her EFL teaching is primarily attributed to her identity as a non-native English teacher, rather than her gender identity as a transwoman. This highlights the importance of teacher identity in influencing pedagogical strategies and effectiveness.

Excerpt 10:

I know how to handle my kids. I know their difficulties in learning English. I know how to teach them because we learned it. We learn how to speak in English because it is not our mother tongue so in that way it is very advantage for me. I have techniques to share with them how to learn English as their second language easily. (Andria)

Teachers who share a similar linguistic background with their students often possess unique insights and strategies for effective language teaching. Drawing from her firsthand experiences, Andria can empathize with the challenges faced by her students, thereby enhancing her ability to tailor instruction to meet their needs. As a result, Andria emerges as a valuable asset in language education, offering a perspective that resonates with learners and contributes to their linguistic development. This advantage in language teaching positioned her as a preferred teaching partner among her local colleagues in Thailand, thereby augmenting her confidence in articulating her authentic identity as a transwoman educator. Although this teacher identity does not exert a direct influence on her EFL pedagogical practices, the resultant increased self-assurance has notably enhanced her meticulous approach to the precise pronunciation of words.

Heightened focus on accurate pronunciation and accent

Like her colleagues, particularly the Filipino women, Andria demonstrates a heightened awareness of her pronunciation and enunciation when teaching English. This is rooted in her teacher identity as a woman which contrasts with many male Filipino educators, whose speech often retains distinctive features of the Filipino accent. In the context of the Philippines, where English is one of the official languages, males who exhibit fluency in English are frequently stereotyped as homosexual partly due to English's association with urban sophistication and Westernized tastes. These perceptions may reinforce stereotypes, as English proficiency can signify an alignment with certain social identities in Philippine society (Baytan, 2000). Consequently, Andria's gender identity may have contributed to her

heightened focus on precise pronunciation, as it aligns with gendered expectations and the desire to counter prevalent stereotypes. This attention to linguistic accuracy highlights the complex interplay between gender and language in her professional identity. Conversely, the limitations in linguistic competence as an aspect of her teacher identity necessitate that she acquire precise pronunciation of the vocabulary she teaches. This gap highlights the importance of continuous professional development in language accuracy, ensuring that her instruction aligns with linguistic standards and effectively supports student learning.

Excerpt 11:

Regarding with my accent and pronunciation, if I am not sure about the words I try to search it first before I teach to my kids. I must study the vocabulary, and I must know how to pronounce it correctly. I always make sure that I can pronounce the vocabulary before I will teach to my students. (Andria)

The clear accent and careful pronunciation of transwomen teachers is notably influenced by their gender identity, as they strive to communicate effectively in the English language. This dedication to clear articulation contributes to a more neutral and universally understandable delivery of instruction in the EFL context.

Emotional and understand students' learning styles

Andria's transition to identifying as a transwoman, along with the hormonal changes she is experiencing, has made her more emotional and attached to her students it also deepened her awareness and adaptability in customizing her teaching strategies to address the diverse learning styles of her students. She views this transition and the effects of female hormones as catalysts for a pedagogical shift towards a more student-centered approach, prioritizing the needs and preferences of her students over her own. This influence is closely tied to her emerging identity as a mother-like figure, which has enhanced her ability to understand and respond to the varied learning needs of her students with greater empathy and sensitivity.

Excerpt 12:

When I started my transition, I become more emotional, I always wanted to be with my students in my free time, I am more willing to help them. I have better understanding with my students because in teaching kids we are not teacher centered, we are child centered. Before I always say that they need to follow me, but lately I have better understanding that I must focus on how they learn things. Because they have different ways in learning. (Andria)

This adjustment has fostered a more inclusive and effective teaching environment, enhanced student engagement and improving learning outcomes. Andria's transwoman identity, influenced by female hormones, plays a crucial role in shaping her teaching styles and strategies. Research indicates that hormonal changes in transgender women can significantly impact emotional regulation, aligning their pedagogical approaches with those of cisgender women, particularly in nurturing and emotionally responsive teaching contexts

like early childhood education, where women are predominant (Nguyen et al., 2019). Consequently, these hormonal influences, as part of her transwoman identity, may contribute to adopting teaching practices that emphasize empathy, patience, and care qualities often associated with female-dominated educational spaces.

DISCUSSION

The participant's narratives reveal that she effectively established both her teacher and gender identities within the EFL classroom in Thailand. Her teacher identities comprising her role as a preferred teaching partner among her local co-teachers, her status as a non-native English conversation teacher, and her perceived lack of linguistic competence and ELT credentials intersected with her gender identities as a woman teacher, a mother-like figure to her students, and a transwoman co-worker. These intersecting identities significantly shaped her EFL teaching practices.

The acknowledgment and positive regard she received from her local teaching partners enhanced her professional confidence and bolstered the credibility of Filipino teachers in Thailand, which subsequently influenced their EFL teaching practices. The national identity of Filipino transwomen, as perceived by colleagues and students, further contributed to this well-respected teacher identity. Furthermore, the integration of English language proficiency into her professional persona aligns with the Philippines' reputation for using English as a second language, thus reinforcing the legitimacy of Filipino teachers in the EFL context. Her position as a non-native English-speaking teacher (NNEST) also introduced challenges related to linguistic competence, particularly when evaluated against native-speaker norms. Although this positioning could impact her teaching, such challenges can be addressed through ongoing professional development focused on refining linguistic skills (Farrell, 2022). The absence of formal EFL credentials can be contextualized within Thailand's relatively lenient recruitment practices, which have historically accommodated flexible qualifications due to a shortage of EFL teachers. This has resulted in an overwhelming number of foreign teachers teaching in Thailand, reflecting the country's need for English language educators and its willingness to prioritize availability over strict credentialing. The question of what defines a qualified English teacher remains relevant, raising concerns about whether proficiency in English alone qualifies one to teach. The answer largely depends on the recruitment policies of Thai schools and agencies, where criteria for teacher qualifications vary widely, reflecting broader socio-economic and educational challenges (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017).

The intersection of Andria's teacher and gender identities has also notably influenced her approach to integrating personal language learning experiences into her teaching methodology. As an NNEST, her firsthand experience with learning English provides her with unique insights, allowing her to relate to her students' struggles and offer tailored support. Research suggests that NNESTs, by drawing from their own language learning journeys, often bring a valuable perspective to the classroom, enhancing students' language acquisition (Medgyes, 2011). Additionally, her focus on accurate pronunciation is closely

linked to her gender identity. As a transwoman, Andria strives for linguistic precision, a trait commonly observed among her female Filipino colleagues, echoing findings from research on the relationship between gender identity and language fluency among LGBTQ+ individuals in the Philippines (David, 2015). Furthermore, her gender identity has shaped her emotional responses and teaching approach. The use of hormone therapy during her gender transition has influenced her emotions, fostering a more nurturing and empathetic demeanor in the classroom. Studies indicate that hormonal treatments can affect behavioral patterns and emotional regulation, which may, in turn, impact teaching styles (Nguyen et al., 2018). This heightened empathy has allowed Andria to better understand and respond to her students' learning styles, ultimately enhancing her effectiveness as an educator. Finally, the acceptance she has received from both students and colleagues regarding her identity as a transwoman has further contributed to her teaching efficacy. Inclusive classroom environments, where teachers feel safe to express their authentic selves, have been shown to improve teaching performance and overall classroom dynamics (Kosciw et al., 2020). The findings from this research align with the existing literature, suggesting that when teachers are embraced for who they are, their teaching efficacy increases (Jones et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

The exploration of the influence of teacher and gender identities of a Filipino transwoman in an EFL classroom revealed predominantly positive outcomes. The participant successfully established her teacher and gender identities, which were reinforced by the acceptance and support from her students and colleagues. Her national identity as a Filipino educator also played a pivotal role in gaining the trust of the local community, where Filipino teachers are highly regarded in the EFL field. These intersecting identities have had a positive impact on her EFL teaching practices. For instance, she effectively integrated her personal language learning experiences into her teaching methodology, with a focus on accurate pronunciation, and demonstrated a heightened sensitivity to her students' diverse learning styles. Such practices are characteristic of NNESTs, who frequently draw upon their own language-learning experiences to inform their instructional approaches (Medgyes, 1992). Significantly, no negative impact of her transwoman identity on her EFL teaching experience in Thailand was reported, suggesting that gender identity is perceived as irrelevant in the EFL context within the country. This finding underscores the inclusive environment and acceptance she encountered. This case highlights how a supportive and non-prejudiced environment can positively shape teaching practices.

However, despite the overall positive outcomes, there remain certain limitations. The study is based on the experiences of a single participant, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other transwoman teachers or educators from different cultural or educational contexts. Additionally, the research focuses primarily on the perspectives of the teacher, without integrating input from students or administrators, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and successes faced by transwoman educators. Future research should expand the scope by including multiple participants, as

well as exploring the perspectives of students and administrators to provide a more holistic view of how gender identity influences teaching practices. Furthermore, longitudinal studies could explore how the participant's experience evolves, especially in different educational environments or with more professional development opportunities.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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BIODATA

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