Englisia
Journal of Language, Education and Humanities
ISSN:
2089-6239 (Print)
2549-0648 (Online)

Shaping professional identity across borders: Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers in Philippine classroom

ABSTRACT - The professional identity of prospective English teachers plays a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of educators in Indonesia, which in turn exerts a significant influence on the nation's overall educational outcomes. This study aims to (1) explore the teaching experiences of prospective English teachers from Muhammadiyah universities (EFL pre-service teachers) during their teaching practicum in the Philippines, and (2) describe how this transnational teaching experience contributes to the development and transformation of their professional identity. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, document analysis (including teaching practicum reports and reflective journals), and reflection journal entries maintained throughout the program. Participants were Muhammadiyah University students who completed a one-month teaching practicum in schools in the Philippines. Data analysis was conducted using thematic techniques, guided by the theoretical framework of teacher professional identity, enabling the mapping of students' experiences into key themes relevant to identity formation. The findings reveal that pre-service teachers encountered linguistic and cultural differences, novel pedagogical practices, pedagogical challenges accompanied by coping strategies, as well as emotional and professional adjustments during the SEA-Teacher program in the Philippines. Furthermore, this transnational exposure contributed to their professional identity development through shifts in their perception of the teaching profession, enhanced pedagogical confidence, and identity negotiation within a global context.

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Article History
Submitted: 4 March 2026
Accepted: 14 May 2026
Published: 31 May 2026

Keywords
EFL pre-service teachers; Professional identity; SEA-teacher

Recommended APA Citation
Triyoga, A., Oktavianti, I. N., & Afriandi, M. A. (2026). Shaping professional identity across borders: Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers in Philippine classroom. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities, 13*(2), 489-510. https://doi.org/10.22373/englisia.64

1. Introduction

In a progressively globalized society, teacher education transcends national boundaries. Indonesian pre-service teachers must enhance their competencies to compete at the international level. The emergence of transnational teaching programs, exemplified by the Southeast Asian (SEA) Teacher Project, has facilitated pre-service educators' participation in multicultural classrooms and exposure to many linguistic and cultural environments (Nazhafah & Muslim, 2021). The SEA-Teacher Project, launched by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Secretariat (SEAMEO Secretariat), provides pre-service student teachers from colleges throughout Southeast Asia with the chance to acquire significant teaching experience via international exchange. Indonesian pre-service teachers who participate in the typical programs are exposed to new pedagogical practices, classroom dynamics, and linguistic environments that differ significantly from those in their home country (Hasymi & Nurkamto, 2023; Maesaro & Wijirahayu, 2025; Setyaningsih et al., 2023).

Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers have a distinctive opportunity to participate in reflective practice through participation in foreign teaching programs, especially in neighbouring countries such as the Philippines, while adapting to unfamiliar educational systems and sociocultural environments. The Philippines, with its English-rich educational environment, offers a distinct context where language functions not only as a medium of instruction but also as a marker of global competence (Babanto et al., 2023; Tamco, 2022). As these pre-service teachers' cross borders physically and pedagogically, their experiences become critical sites for identity formation especially in their linguistic skills, teaching competencies and self-reflection (Parmigiani et al., 2023; Santoso et al., 2023). Understanding how they make sense of experiences including their understanding failure in life can provide insights into how teacher education programs can better support identity development in a global teaching context (Lutovac & Flores, 2021). This reality prepares them to internationally compete with other students.

Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers encounter challenges and get benefits in teaching in the Philippines, as English functions as a foreign language or Lingua Franca in Indonesia (Santoso et al., 2023) whereas in the Philippines, it is a second language (Gapasin, 2025). The challenge encountered on most of the students is in the cultural adaptation, while the exchange programs contribute to the students' cognitive development, behavioural change, multiple skills development, social bonding development, academic competitiveness and employability enhancement (Yang et al., 2021). In the area of teachers' identity development during the international teaching practicum, the majority of studies emphasize Western countries, and studies exploring how pre-service EFL teachers from Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, experience and reflect on teaching abroad remain scarce. Moreover, current literature frequently prioritizes either cultural adaptation or pedagogical efficacy, neglecting a thorough analysis of how multicultural classroom experiences converge with the evolution of professional identity through reflective practice. Despite its English-rich educational landscape and cultural closeness to Indonesia, the Philippine context has garnered minimal attention in transnational teacher education literature. The lived experiences of Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers in Philippine

classrooms, together with the transformative effects on their developing professional identities, are insufficiently examined. This study aims to address the gap by examining how Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers derive meaning from their teaching experiences in the Philippines and how these experiences influence their developing identity as future English educators, and the findings contributes to extend understanding of how pre-service EFL teachers construct their professional identity in global south perspective. This research also provides insights for the study program and host institutions to better support intercultural adaptation, and mentoring practice. In response to this gap, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How do Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers experience teaching in Philippine classrooms?
2. How do these experiences influence their professional identity development?

2.1. Literature review

2.1. Teacher professional identity

The notion of identity is articulated in multiple ways within the broader literature. Through education, contemplation on their position in the educational process, and a variety of experiences or relationships, teachers create their identities. Pre-service teachers' identities are influenced by their linguistic and racial backgrounds, as well as their practicum experiences and critical reflection (Lauwo et al., 2022; Schmid, 2021). Moreover, the notion of professional identity appears to be utilized variably within the fields of teaching and teacher education.

Recent studies depict teachers' professional identity as dynamic, contextual, and relational, rather than a fixed attribute (Gracia et al., 2022; Solari & Ortega, 2022). Recent systematic reviews and empirical studies affirm that identity develops through the interplay of personal histories, institutional expectations, and practical experiences, a viewpoint that emphasizes both agency and structural limitations in identity formation (Rushton et al., 2023). It shows that teachers' identity formation and development is a complex process.

This research highlights the transnational teachers who need to adapt their selves in the international environment. Transnational teachers frequently navigate intricate roles: they may be regarded as less authoritative on specific language varieties while concurrently being viewed as cultural mediators or actors of local significance. This dual stance influences self-perception, pedagogical practices, and professional confidence elements directly pertinent to Indonesian pre-service teachers instructing in Philippine classrooms, where linguistic variations, classroom norms, and expectations may diverge (Moonthiya & Stevenson, 2024).

2.2. Reflective practice

Reflective practice has been acknowledged as a fundamental aspect of teacher education, allowing pre-service teachers to critically evaluate their experiences and link them to professional development (Schon, 2017). This is crucial, as teachers must enhance their self-awareness daily to cultivate their professional identity. Recent literature positions reflection not only as a cognitive endeavor but also as a social, dialogic, and identity-forming process (Lutovac & Flores, 2021). Reflective practice enables pre-service teachers, especially in international

settings, to analyze obstacles, reformulate professional identities, and navigate varied pedagogical expectations.

Recent research emphasizes that reflection is multifaceted, incorporating cognitive, emotive, and practical dimensions (Chaika, 2023; Farrel, 2022; Farrell & Macapinlac, 2021). Through reflective reflection, pre-service teachers increase pedagogical knowledge, strengthen emotional resilience, and reinforce their professional identity. Reflective practice has demonstrated its efficacy in assisting pre-service teachers to expand their teaching repertoire and to navigate the challenges of their inaugural year in the profession (Astuti & Drajati, 2022; Chinokul, 2021). Reflective practice is especially significant in transnational teaching environment. Indonesian pre-service teachers of EFL undertaking practicum in the Philippines must contend with linguistic hierarchies, cultural disparities, and varying classroom conventions. Reflection allows individuals to comprehend their experiences, convert problems into educational opportunities, and assimilate new insights into their evolving professional identities (Parmigiani et al., 2023). Reflective practice serves both as an instructional tool and as a mediating tool for identity construction in international educational contexts.

2.3. Transnational teaching and the SEA-teacher program

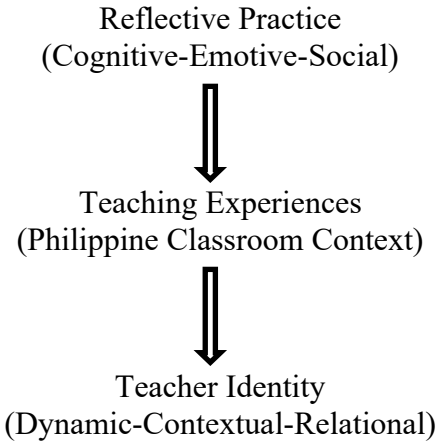
The globalization of education has expanded chances for transnational teaching, enabling pre-service teachers to travel across national and cultural boundaries to acquire professional experience. This kind of program enables pre-service teachers to gain insights into diverse cultures, enhance global networking, and foster respect (Auni et al., 2022). Research indicates that transnational teacher identities evolve within a multifaceted identity framework encompassing roles as a second language learner, educator, user, critical thinker, and global citizen. The identity formation of transnational teachers is not entirely linear, but rather cyclical. The critical thinking and intellectual agency of them serve as catalysts for the maintenance of identity formation (Gao, 2021).

The Southeast Asian (SEA)-Teacher Project, overseen by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO Secretariat), is a major project for transnational teacher education in Southeast Asia. The SEA-Teacher Program enables student exchange for pre-service educators throughout ASEAN nations, providing them with one month of international teaching experience in host institutions. The Philippines has emerged as a significant destination for Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers, owing to its robust English-speaking environment and educational system in which English operates as a second language (Tamco, 2022). A variety of studies have investigated the results of the SEA-Teacher Program. Through this program, Indonesian pre-service teacher gains their both personal and professional competence (Auni et al., 2022).

Further evidence indicates that participation in SEA-Teacher improves professional preparedness, self-assurance, and reflective involvement in teaching methodologies (Hasymi & Nurkamto, 2023). Similarly, Maesaro and Wijirahayu (2025) stated that this program does not only enhances instructional skills but also facilitates a transition in teachers' broader professional identity. Despite these insights, most current study has concentrated on overarching advantages

such as employability, intercultural awareness, or pedagogical abilities, while fewer investigations have examined the negotiation and transformation of identity in transnational classrooms across Southeast Asia. Moreover, studies on teacher mobilities have been largely shaped by western-centric framework that often marginalizes global Southeast Asian countries perspectives. As the consequences, there is a limit on understanding how identity is negotiated under diverse sociocultural.

The Philippine context is notably underexamined in transnational teacher education research. The Philippines provides an English-rich environment that contrasts markedly with Indonesia's EFL context; however, insufficient focus has been placed on how Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers confront challenges and contemplate their developing professional identities during their practicum. This study views the SEA-Teacher Program as a vital context for examining how Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers' cross-border experiences influence their professional identity development. This theoretical review is represented in the following framework.



In this study, identity transformation is operationalized as shifts in self-perception, pedagogical confidence, and career aspirations as expressed in interviews and journals. These shifts are examined through how participants describe their evolving sense of self as EFL teachers. While pedagogical confidence is identified through participants' expression on increased self-efficacy in diverse classroom environment, the career aspirations are explored on how participants envision their future trajectories.

3. Method

3.1. Research design

This research employs a qualitative case study to examine the experiences and professional identity formation of Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers during their practicum in Philippine classrooms. The case was defined by parameters: the participants (Indonesian pre-service teachers), the program (SEA-Teacher exchange), the context (Philippine schools), and the period (one month). A case study was selected for its capacity to facilitate a comprehensive examination

of a phenomenon within its real-world setting (Yin, 2018), offering a holistic perspective that encompasses individual experiences as well as the institutional, cultural, and pedagogical frameworks that influence them. The case study technique facilitated a comprehensive knowledge of how pre-service teachers navigate their professional identities concerning classroom practices and intercultural interactions.

3.2. Research sample

The subjects of this study were Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers who participated in the SEA-Teacher exchange program and had a one-month teaching practicum in Philippine classrooms. A purposive sample technique was utilized to recruit individuals with direct experience of the program who were be willing to offer their insights. This sampling method guaranteed that the collected data was pertinent to the research objective (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Four participants were included, representing distinct origins and teaching places, which provided varied perspectives on international teaching and professional identity development. The demographic data of the participants are shown in the following table.

Table 1

Demographic data of participants.

Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age (Years)	Origin	Teaching Places
Lena	Female	21	Bangka Belitung	Roxas city
Aga	Male	22	Bengkulu	Munoz City
Salim	Male	23	Yogyakarta	Munoz City
Fanny	Female	22	Yogyakarta	Iloilo City

3.2. Data collection

Data were gathered from many sources to ensure comprehensiveness and triangulation. The principal method employed was semi-structured interviews, which examined participants' teaching experiences, challenges, and comments on identity formation. Furthermore, the reflective journals of participants composed during the practicum was examined to elucidate continuous sense-making and self-reflection. Program papers of significance (e.g., practicum guidelines, school reports) was examined to furnish contextual background. The aggregation of data from several sources facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences in Philippine classrooms.

3.3. Data analysis

The data were subjected to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) to discern patterns concerning participants' teaching experiences and the evolution of their professional identity. The procedure encompasses multiple phases: (1) familiarization with the data through continual examination of interview transcripts and journals, (2) preliminary coding informed by the research inquiries, (3) categorization of codes into themes that encapsulate essential elements of experiences and identity development, and (4) evaluation and enhancement of themes to guarantee consistency. The analysis was informed by frameworks of teacher professional

identity (Beijaard et al., 2004) and the idea of reflective practice (Schon, 1983), which collectively offers perspectives to understand how participants interpreted their experiences. Continuous comparison of data sources (interviews, journals, documents was employed to enhance validity and ensure that the findings reflect both individual perspectives and common themes.

3.4. Data trustworthiness

To guarantee the study's credibility and trustworthiness, various procedures was implemented, including member checking. Upon transcribing the interviews and identifying first themes, participants had the option to evaluate their transcripts alongside the researcher's preliminary interpretations. This procedure enabled them to ascertain precision, elucidate desired significations, and incorporate further reflections if necessary. By involving participants in this manner, the study mitigated researcher bias and ensured that the results authentically represented their actual experiences. Moreover, data triangulation through reflective journals and program documents augmented credibility, while comprehensive descriptions of the research context enhanced transferability.

4. Findings

The findings reveal two significant aspects of participants' experiences in the foreign teaching practicum in the Philippines and how this experience shapes their identities as EFL pre-service teachers.

4.1. Lived teaching experiences in Philippine classrooms

The subsequent sections detail four essential characteristics of these lived experiences; navigating linguistic and cultural differences, adapting to new pedagogical practices, managing challenges through strategic agency, and navigating emotional and professional adjustment.

4.1.1. Navigating linguistic and cultural differences

Indonesian students utilizing English as a foreign language faced obstacles stemming not only from linguistic barriers but also from cultural disparities. In contrast to their prior experiences in Indonesia, where English was frequently confined to formal education, English in the Philippines seemed more embedded in everyday classroom interactions. Despite the participants' acquisition of English from secondary to university education, they observed that secondary school students in the Philippines exhibit greater fluency than themselves. From the interview, Lena exposed "I am confused on processing their accents when they speak in English. It seems that the feel the same, they show difficulty with my English accent". Salim also strengthened this statement. He observed that secondary level students in the Philippines exhibited a high proficiency in English, contrasting sharply with the capabilities of secondary school students in Indonesia, as noted by Salim. This made him anxious as he revealed in the interview: "The Indonesia' school environment is actually different from the school's

environment in the Philippine. The students are very fluent in speaking English and it is beyond my imagination. It makes me nervous sometimes". (Salim, interview)

The proficiency of the Philippine students induced anxiety and diminished their self-confidence upon their initial arrival at the institution. Lena documented her worry around her teaching demonstration in her reflective journal. She required to instruct entirely in English "At first I felt a little anxious about the Final Demo because I had to use English fully in class, but I tried to practice and I hope I can do my best for the Final Demo". This linguistic context differentiated individuals in their roles as English users. Although they were regarded as proficient English speakers in Indonesia, the Philippine environment undermined their apparent linguistic authority.

Participants also recognized variations in classroom interaction styles. Specifically, they noted that Filipino students exhibited greater assertiveness and a readiness to articulate their viewpoints during instructional sessions. Fanny told the researchers that:

> The students here are very active even in the online class. They are actively rising their hand to ask and to answer the questions. They do this based on their own initiative. This is different from me especially when I was in junior high school. (Fanny, Interview)

This disparity originally induced uneasiness among certain participants, who were unaccustomed to more dialogic classroom interactions. Moreover, participants observed a significant difference regarding the extent of instructor dominance in classroom interactions. Numerous participants characterized Indonesian English classes as predominantly teacher-centered, wherein teachers generally regulate the debate, deliver explanations, and dominates speaking time. Conversely, they regarded Philippine classrooms as more dialogic and conducive to student participation. Lena explained that "Teachers in the Philippine tend to let the students actively involve in the class. They do not dominate the classroom. They let the students work in group, having peer learning and free them to move". (Lena, Interview)

Fanny provided more information regarding to this matter "Teachers in the Philippine utilize active learning teaching model in the classroom. Game is used very often in the class, and it makes the students enthusiast". These examples demonstrate that classroom authority is influenced by cultural factors. The participants' experience with reduced teacher-dominated engagement questioned their preconceived notions regarding effective instruction.

4.1.2. Adapting to new pedagogical practices

In addition to linguistic and cultural disparities, participants faced instructional methods that diverged from their prior teaching experiences in Indonesia. These disparities necessitated an adaptation of their pedagogical approaches. In Indonesian English classrooms, teachers occasionally observe students utilizing Indonesian or local languages, however in Philippine classrooms, English is the sole language employed. Lena, an Indonesian teacher, adapted by utilizing exclusively English during the class. From the interview, she confirmed that "All of the students here speak in English. I adjust myself and I also use full English in the class". During

the interview, Aga, Salim and Fanny affirmed that they needed to acclimate to a fully English-speaking classroom.

Despite the full English classroom, the new pedagogical practice was lesson planning. The documents showed that Lena, Aga, Salim, and Fanny developed and employed a Philippine Lesson Plan The lesson plan adheres to the K-12 curriculum provided by the government and differs from the lesson plan structure utilized in Indonesia. Nevertheless, they composed it effectively. It is supported by their reflective journal showing that the lesson plan was simple, but very detail and well-structured despite requiring multiple revision.

Participants indicated that pedagogical approaches in Philippine classrooms were more student-cantered than those they previously encountered in Indonesia. This transition necessitated a re-evaluation of their pedagogical responsibilities. Aga described his initial surprised stating that:

> The student in the Philippine is open for any discussion. Unlike teachers in Indonesia who only delivers material and focuses on theoretical things than discussion, I tried to ask the student to have discussion with me and surprisingly they show great excitement. (Aga, Interview)

Similarly, Salim noted that classroom interaction patters were different asserting that:

> Teacher-students interaction in the English classroom in Indonesia is usually dominated with songs and games using flashcard, but the Philippine classroom is different. Songs and flash cards are very common and basic in the Philippine classroom; I should avoid using it and change it into more challenging activities. (Salim, Interview)

Fanny explained, “Indonesian classroom is teacher-centered, and the teachers rarely prepare games to motivate the students to learn English. In the Philippine, the class is students centered and I think we as Indonesian teacher need to adapt it”. The data indicate that adapting to new educational techniques entailed not only technical adjustments but also a re-negotiation of their professional identities as educators. Through engagement in interactive and communicative techniques, participants started to perceive themselves as facilitators rather than mere providers of knowledge.

4.1.3. Managing challenges and coping strategies

Participants encountered diverse academic, linguistic, and socio-cultural hurdles throughout their practicum in Philippine classrooms. Instead of being passive recipients of adversity, they proactively cultivated coping strategies to address these obstacles. The primary obstacle was communication. In the Philippines, individuals communicate in English and Tagalog; yet, participants may encounter difficulties in interacting with locals, not just inside academic settings but also in various other contexts and events. Lena expressed “The main challenge is communication. At the first week, I was so confused what to do in the school

because I have not taken microteaching course in the university." For Lena, this challenge was nothing in the end because her supervisor in the university and internship students helped her a lot as she said "…fortunately my supervisor and some of intern students in that school help me to communicate with the teachers there". This claimed was also supported by Lena's reflective journal express her gratitude to her supervisor "I am very grateful the help and guidance during school and preparation for the Final Demo". Salim also agreed with this, and it was shown on his reflective journal. He wrote:

> Fighting fears within myself, I was afraid to communicate in English, but after four days in the university and met many friends who communicate using English. It gave me the confidence to dare to communicate using English even though my grammar was a little messy, but I am still proud of myself because I can still entertain people. (Salim, Reflective journal)

Another challenge encountered by Salim was challenge in delivering material. In his reflective journal he wrote, "Difficulty in delivering the material… This happened because it was my first time teaching English outside my country using full English… I sometimes felt nervous in class". He also wrote that in the end, he could solve this by having self-practice, absorbing positive energy from his mentor teacher and from the students' positive behaviour. He wrote, "…but it was easy to overcome by practicing independently in front of the mirror… I sometimes felt nervous in class but the positive energy from the cooperating teacher, friends and students boosted my confidence and focus when delivering the material in class".

Lena and Salim faced significant challenges in communication and classroom dynamics, whilst Aga encountered difficulties mostly related to technical aspects. Aga faced signal problems both wi-fi and phone signal. He wrote it in his reflective journal, "The problem that I encountered as long as I have the practicum at this school was the signal. The signal of the school Wi-fi could not reach my classroom, even it was same for the phone signal". Signal is very essential, but he could manage it well by showing his creativity. He wrote:

> This thing, I can manage it by give the activity to the students in real material (conventional) one. The use of paper, and whiteboard to do the activity are my problem solving for the signal problem. This turned out that the students enjoyed with that and more fun than the use of technology. (Aga, Reflective journal)

Furthermore, halal food has emerged as a significant concern. The participant found it challenging to locate halal cuisine in the Philippines. Lena and Fanny experience the same thing. Lena said, "There was no culture shock but finding halal food". Fanny underlines, "From the airport, we were shocked because we did not find halal food until we reached condominium". To overcome this they ate chicken in the fast-food restaurant, they ate eggs and they cooked almost every day as Lena explained "…we ate fast-food and we cooked sometimes", and Fanny

said “We ate eggs very often and sometime ate instant noodle because if we buy food in the Philippine, we are afraid that the food does not meet halal food requirement”.

Addressing challenges in Philippine classrooms required participants to demonstrate adaptation, resilience, and professional agency. The challenges students faced, spanning instructional modifications to linguistic and emotional stresses, transformed into opportunities for introspective development instead of hindrances to performance.

4.1.4. Navigating emotional and professional adjustment

In addition to pedagogical and language adjustments, participants reported considerable emotional and professional adaptations throughout their practicum in Philippine classrooms. Entering a new educational and cultural milieu elicited sensations of anxiety, self-doubt, and vulnerability, especially during the initial weeks of instruction.

Lena reported about her initial feeling of anxiety on entering Philippine classrooms. Nonetheless, these emotions progressively transformed into comfort and professional development as they encountered favorable classroom interactions. “At first, I was nervous. But after observing the class, I realized the students were welcoming and enjoyed the lesson. I also learned a lot from their curriculum and classroom practices. They really paid attention during the lesson.” This excerpt demonstrates the progression of initial anxiety into gratitude and professional understanding. The participant's emotional adaptation was enhanced by encouraging peer interactions and exposure to other educational methodologies. In addition to classroom interaction, informal communication during breaks also played an important role in emotional adaptation. Lena further explained, “During break time, we exchanged stories. They were excited to know about Indonesia, and I was also curious about them. I approached them through sharing stories first before talking about educational matters”. These statements were supported with what Lena wrote on her reflective journal. She wrote,

> I got a lot of input from teachers, fellow interns and buddies. At first, I felt a little anxious about the Final Demo because I had to use English fully in class, but I tried to practice and I hope I can do my best for the Final Demo. The day of the Final Demo has arrived, I gave the Lesson Plan that I had made to the supervisors and started the class by greeting "Mabuhay" and asking how they were today, without me realizing it the children in the class were very enthusiastic about attending the class and I was a little relieved when the class ended. (Lena, Reflective journal).

On her reflective journal, Lena described her anxiety in preparing her final demo and then she demonstrated agency by actively preparing and seeking feedback from her peers.

On the other hand, Salim expressed internal conflicts regarding self-esteem, academic expectations, and cultural disparities. These obstacles were frequently based in both the unfamiliar environment and their self-perceptions as novice educators. He expressed his initial lack of confidence,

"Actually, the difficulty was within me. In the first and second meetings, I lacked confidence. But with support from my cooperating teacher, I was able to overcome it. Maybe I was just nervous and overthinking many things". (Salim, Interview)

Another unexpected challenge involved students' active participation, which contrasted with her prior teaching experiences in Indonesia. Salim explained:

> In Indonesia, when I ask if there are any questions, students usually stay silent. But in the Philippines, when I asked, many students immediately raised their hands. I was shocked and not ready. There was one question I could not answer because it was unexpected." (Salim, Interview)

Salim described feeling unprepared when faced with spontaneous student questions. However, he demonstrated adaptive problem-solving, "I told them I would answer the question at the end of the lesson after the task." This strategy indicates developing professional composure and classroom management skills. Rather than avoiding the situation, she negotiated it strategically, reflecting emerging teacher agency.

Moreover, Fanny showed fear and nervousness as dominant emotional challenges during the early phase of teaching in Philippine classrooms. These emotions were particularly linked to language use and unfamiliar classroom dynamics. She expressed, "The biggest difficulty was fear. I was nervous. To overcome it, I stayed in the classroom 30 minutes before teaching. I observed the previous lesson so I could adapt to the class first. Language was also a challenge". To adjust herself, she tried to improve her English fluency by relying on peer interaction. She said, "I often talked with my buddies to learn how to have conversations because it was my first time using full English". Despite initial nervousness, she also expressed admiration for the classroom environment. She expressed, "I was amazed by the students' enthusiasm. I had never experienced that in Indonesia. They were very active, even competing to come forward without being told". This positive response signified a transition from anxiety to gratitude. The student's enthusiastic participation not only astonished the participant but also transformed her understanding of classroom engagement and pedagogical processes. Fanny also highlighted the emotional comfort she experienced and within the relational culture of the host institution. The strong sense of community played a significant role in facilitating their adjustment. She wrote in on her reflective journal:

> One of the things I loved the most was the strong sense of family in the school and university. The relationship between students and teachers, as well as professors and students, felt very warm and close just like a family. Everyone was so welcoming and supportive, making me feel at home even though I was far away. This atmosphere created a comfortable learning environment, where students were not afraid to ask questions, express themselves, and grow together. It was truly a heartwarming experience". (Fanny, Reflective journal)

The participants found that acquiring skills to navigate emotional and professional transitions was transformative. Initially, I experienced fear, anxiety, and self-doubt; yet, with time, I developed greater confidence, resilience, and interpersonal connections. Assistance from peers, educators, and the congenial school community was crucial in facilitating their adapt. The lived experience across participants is summarized in the following table.

Table 2

Summary of lived experience across participants.

Participants	Linguistics	Pedagogical	Emotional	Coping Strategy
Lena	difficulty in understanding accents; communication barriers, reduced linguistic competence	Shift to student-centred teaching; full English instruction; apply small group work	Experienced anxiety, but then relief it and finally found comfort	Practice, peer support, reflection, mentor teacher guidance
Aga	Minimal linguistic challenge	Adjusting teaching strategies; limiting use of basic class activities.	Experienced mild failure	Creative non-technology adaptation
Salim	Intimidated by students' fluency in English	Managing interactive classroom; responding to spontaneous questions	Experienced nervousness, but then turned into partial confidence	Self-practice, mentor support
Fanny	Challenge using full English	Transition to active learning approach	Experienced fear, but in the end admire some educational aspects the Philippine classroom	Observation and peer interaction

The table above shows that participants' experience is a movement from emerging to transformed professional identity. In the beginning of the program, participants experienced uncertainty, anxiety, and low confidence when facing new linguistic and classroom environment. These challenges reflect their emerging identity as novice teachers adjusting to a new context. Over time, some participants began to understand this challenge and read these as part of their professional growth. They overcome their challenge by having reflecting, having practice, and making interaction with the others. As the result, they developed greater confidence and more adaptive teaching approaches. This indicates a shift toward a transformed identity, where they see themselves as more capable and flexible teachers.

Nevertheless, this transformation did not occur to all participants. Salim, continued to struggle with unexpected classroom situations, while Aga faced ongoing technical limitations. These cases show that identity development is not always smooth or complete, but depends on individual and contextual factors. Professional identity is a dynamic process, and it develops through continuous interaction between challenges and coping strategies.

4.2. Identity development and transformation

Pre-service teachers' experience in teaching in the Philippine classroom contributes to their identity development and transformation as teacher. This section explains; the shift in self-perception as teachers, building pedagogical confidence, and identity negotiation in a global context.

4.2.1. Shifts in self-perception as teachers

Prior to participating in the SEA-Teacher program, the subject aspired to pursue advanced education, become a teacher in Indonesia, work for a multinational corporation without the intention of teaching, and one subject lacked a clear vision of her post-graduation career aspirations. After completing the program, they had different point of view. Their self-perception underwent a transformation.

Aga shifted his view on being a teacher. Previously, he taught that teacher is a noble work but in Indonesia, this is overlooked profession. Aga said:

> Before I joined the SEA-Teacher, I thought teaching was a noble profession but one that wasn't widely appreciated by students in Indonesia. After joining the Sea-Teacher, I realized there were several reasons why the students might not respect the teacher, perhaps because of the way he treated the class and the students, which made them uncomfortable. (Aga, Interview)

Moreover, Aga's assumption that a teacher's position as superior character in the classroom was also changed. Prior joining the SEA-Teacher program, he taught that teacher needed to treat his/her students as elderly treated young people, but this view shifted as he saw that teachers in the Philippine treated their students as their sisters or brothers. Aga explained:

> I've seen teachers in the Philippines, whether they're young or old, they seem like older siblings. So, it's not like a parent watching over their child at school, but rather like an older sibling who invites and teaches their younger siblings something new and exciting. (Aga, Interview)

Salim experience different thing. During this program, he knew that teacher should not dominate the class. He used to talk all the time in the classroom rather than engaged the student to the activities, but from his mentor teacher's suggestion he finally understand that teacher

should reduce his/her talking time and activate the students to participate in the instruction. He revealed:

> So, it's like when I've been compiling lesson plans and teaching in class, there's too much talking, like I don't get straight to the point with the material, too much small talk, too many analogies, and I'm also too loud. My mentor teacher suggests me just go straight to the material, no need to play games, no need to do this, so it's like they know what the lesson is first, then you introduce the game. (Salim, Interview)

Overall, participation in the SEA-Teacher program played a significant role in reshaping the pre-service teachers' professional and self-perceptions. Their narratives demonstrate that career intentions are not fixed but evolve through meaningful cross-cultural and professional experiences. Exposure to international teaching contexts enabled them to re-evaluate their previous assumptions about teaching, broaden their career horizons, and reconstruct their sense of professional identity

4.2.2. Building pedagogical confidence

In the SEA-Teacher program, the pre-service teachers were exposed to real classroom environments that challenged their assumptions, tested their instructional strategies, and required them to adapt to diverse learners. These experiences gradually strengthened their belief in their own teaching capabilities and enabled them to see themselves not merely as students of education, but as legitimate members of the teaching profession. Lena felt that she had more self confidence in teaching and expressing her idea after completing the program. She compared her experience of teaching in the Philippine with her experience of teaching in an elementary school in Indonesia. She explained:

> After I joined this program, I feel more confident than before. For example, when I was in Indonesia, when I was taking PLP 1, I had to organize the class because quite a lot of them were walking around and not listening. After I was in the Philippines, the students were quiet and listened. Well, maybe from there, I can be more like, 'This is how to deal with students like this,' and I can learn several methods so that the class can be calm and continue to follow the lesson. This practice increases self-confidence and also speaking in public, and it's more okay to express what's on your mind. (Lena, Interview)

From the excerpt above, it can be concluded that Lena's learning process during the practicum greatly influence herself confidence in teaching and speaking in public. Aga also felt the similar thing, and he felt that his English skill increased significantly. He was able to speak in full English after returning home from the Philippine. He explained:

> My English-speaking skill increased. That is something that has improved for me and for one month I always spoke full English, although sometimes I interspersed Indonesian to

> talk to my colleagues who are from Indonesia. However, when talking to outsiders or students or teachers at school there, or friends of the Islamic boarding school and staff at the university there, I had to use full English to communicate. (Aga, Interview)

Salim and Fanny wrote almost similar thing as Lena and Aga in his reflective journal. Anxiety attacked them at the beginning, but it disappeared by the time they were in the Philippine. Salim wrote:

> In the beginning I found it difficult because I was nervous and felt insecure, after entering the class and meeting all the students in the class, all my nervousness and insecurity disappeared. I was able to communicate with them and even laugh with them. (Salim, Reflective Journal)

While Fanny wrote:

> At first, I felt a bit shy about speaking, worried about making mistakes. But over time, I realized that confidence matters more than perfection. Seeing how naturally they communicate in English motivated me to practice more and speak without hesitation. It was a great learning experience that helped me grow both personally and professionally. (Fanny, Reflective Journal)

The SEA-Teacher program thus functioned as a significant space for experiential learning, enabling the pre-service teachers to strengthen both their instructional competence and linguistic confidence. Ultimately, this growing pedagogical confidence contributed to a more solidified sense of professional identity, as they began to view themselves as competent, legitimate, and adaptable educators in diverse educational settings.

4.2.3. Identity negotiation in a global context

For pre-service teachers participating in international mobility programs, such as the SEA-Teacher program, engagement in transnational spaces creates opportunities to re-evaluate their roles, beliefs, and aspirations. Exposure to different educational systems, classroom norms, and sociocultural expectations requires them to position themselves not only as representatives of their home country but also as emerging global educators.

Lena revealed that prior joining the program, she wanted to continue her master's degree, but then she changed her mind. In the interview, Lena said, "I want to open an English course class, and I also might want to do a doctorate abroad after completing my Masters." It is different from Lena, Aga did not want to teach, but then he had strong will to become a teacher after completing the program. In the interview, Aga stated, "After I came home from the Philippines, I studied teaching here, and I started to want to be a teacher abroad, a fun teacher, a teacher who can be a friend."

Moreover, Salim only wanted to be a teacher in Indonesia before the international teaching practicum. He changed his mind, and he still wanted to teach, but he wanted to teach abroad. He said:

> My parents wanted me to be a civil servant, to be a teacher in Indonesia. But I initially refused, like, ah, I don't want to be in Indonesia, blah blah blah blah blah. Then when I joined the SEA-Teacher, things really changed, like, oh, it turns out I can still make my parents happy, I still can be a teacher, but a teacher abroad, because I felt that teaching English abroad was more challenging, more fun, and more in tune with me. (Salim, Interview)

On the other hand, Fanny did not have clear vision of what she wants to be in the future. SEA-Teacher program contributed to her vision and view about her future. Fanny explained:

> Previously, I was still confused about what I wanted to be when I graduated. From the start, I didn't want to be a teacher, so it was like I didn't want to be a teacher, but after I was in the Philippines studying teaching here, I wanted to be a teacher, a fun teacher, a teacher who could be a friend" (Fanny, Interview), "Pursue further opportunities abroad to gain more international teaching experience. (Fanny, Reflective Journal)

Lena, Aga, Salim and Fanny's identity negotiation unfolds within complex intersections of local traditions and global influences. For educators and professionals working across linguistic and cultural boundaries, identity is shaped not only by personal history but also by institutional expectations, policy discourses, and global standards of competence.

5. Discussion

5.1. Lived teaching experiences in Philippine classrooms

Teaching in the Philippine for a month manifested the participants valuable experience as EFL Pre-service teachers. They experienced cultural differences and unfamiliar pedagogical norms that contributes to their identity development as EFL pre-service teacher. The accent of the students of the Philippine confused the participants, because the in the Philippine English is a second language where the Philippine's authority was destabilized (Gapasin, 2025). Regarding the accent and fluency of the students in the Philippine classroom, it was culminated anxiety and insecurity among the Indonesian teachers as mentioned by Moonthiya and Stevenson (2024) as the difficult situation of international teachers who may feel less powerful in the class where one language is spoken more than others.

Moreover, exposure on the student-centred learning in the Philippine classroom, re-evaluated their instructional belief. Despite their challenges in new environment and new pedagogical norms, the teachers adapted their selves well. The teachers communicated in full English, applied students-centred instruction, and welcome for open discussion with the students

demonstrated their shift that in line with Solari and Ortega's (2022)view professional identity evolving through the conflicts between established values and emerging institutional practices.

In addition, teacher also struggled in communication barriers, technological limitation and cultural adjustment. In these challenges, the direction from mentor teacher and the contribution from peer contributed to their identity development. It was supported by Anindya and Triyoga (2025) the success of the pre-service teachers in completing the international practicum was often recognized by mentor teachers, peer, students and supervisor. Besides the cultural adjustment with the food was not an obstacle, but sites of agency. However, unlike Anindya and Triyoga (2025), this study also reveals that challenges were not fully resolved, suggesting that support does not guarantee complete adaptation.

After all, the participant's anxiety and active students were managed by having more practice and conducting informal discussion with the students during the break session. This moment of vulnerability and perceived inadequacy could stimulate their reflective growth view (Lutovac & Assunção, 2021; Rushton et al., 2023). The participants' reflective journal presented that emotional discomfort catalysed deeper professional awareness. Their coping strategies illustrated emerging professional agency and resilience.

In summary, lived teaching experiences in the Philippine classrooms served as a critical context for experiential learning, confirming that identity development is shaped through situated practice rather than theoretical preparation alone.

5.2. Identity development and transformation

The shift in self-perception as teachers occurred after the participants join in the SEA-Teacher program. Some participants had negative assumption about being teacher Exposure to Philippine classrooms allowed them to critically re-examine these assumptions. Teaching was no longer viewed merely as a noble profession, but underappreciated job. It was reconstructed as relational, dynamic, and globally relevant. This aligns with Rushton et al.'s view (2023) emphasizing that teacher identity evolves through the interplay of personal beliefs and professional contexts.

Moreover, participants demonstrated increased pedagogical and linguistic confidence. Regular use of English in authentic communicative settings enhanced their fluency and reduced anxiety. As Farrell and Macapinlac (2021) argued that reflective practice strengthens teachers' awareness of their instructional choices and emotional responses. The participants' reflections show a progression from fear and overthinking to confidence and classroom composure. Their growing comfort in handling spontaneous student questions and interactive discussions reflects the internalization of a more adaptive professional identity.

In addition, identity negotiation unfolded within a broader global framework. The experience of teaching abroad repositioned participants not only as Indonesian pre-service teachers but also as emerging global educators. Their future aspirations shifted toward international mobility, advanced study abroad, and teaching in transnational contexts. This transformation supports Gao's (2021) argument that transnational experiences reshape language

teachers' identities across local and global dimensions. Identity negotiation here involved balancing local cultural values with global professional possibilities.

Importantly, identity transformation was not linear. It involved moments of doubt, emotional struggle, and strategic repositioning. The cyclical process observed in this study echoes the dynamic view of identity as relational and context-dependent (Gracia et al., 2022). Through interaction with students, mentors, and peers in Philippine classrooms, participants continuously reconstructed who they were and who they aspired to become.

5.3. Unexpected findings and tensions

From the findings, there is a participant who reported feeling less confidence after returning to Indonesia, but it is a matter of future career as teacher in Indonesia. The Philippine classroom environment encouraged active participation, student-centred interaction, and frequent use of English, while in Indonesia is more teacher-centred contexts appeared to challenge to the sustainability of these newly developed practices and self-perception. This finding strengthens the view of teacher identity as dynamic, relational and context dependent. As participant who re-entered their home context, they were required to negotiate their professional identity, which in some cases led to reduced confidence.

Moreover, the short duration of this program raises questions about the sustainability of the identity shifts. Identity development depends not only on individual effort, but also on the availability of supportive environment. Without continued opportunities for practice, reflection, and mentorship, the participant who began to develop during the practicum may not be sustained. Therefore, while short-term mobility experiences can support identity development, their impact remain temporary unless it strengthened by institutional and social support.

6. Conclusion

This study explored how Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers experienced teaching in Philippine classrooms and how these transnational experiences shaped their professional identity development. The findings demonstrate that participation in the SEA-Teacher program, organized under the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), functioned as a transformative professional space rather than merely a teaching practicum. Exposure to an English-rich environment, student-centered pedagogies, and diverse classroom cultures initially challenged participants' confidence and established assumptions about teaching; however, through reflective practice, peer support, and active classroom engagement, they gradually reconstructed their identities as more confident, adaptive, and globally aware educators. Their experiences confirm that professional identity is dynamic and negotiated through continuous interaction with new linguistic, cultural, and institutional contexts. Practically, pre-departure training should extend beyond pedagogical preparation—such as lesson planning and demonstration teaching—to include emotional resilience strategies and intercultural competence development, while host schools are encouraged to assign skilled mentors familiar with both home and host educational systems. Beyond pedagogical growth, the program also influenced participants' future aspirations, with several expressing stronger

commitment to teaching and increased interest in pursuing international opportunities, highlighting how transnational mobility may initiate short-term transformations requiring ongoing reinforcement. Notwithstanding its contributions, this study is limited by its small sample size and short duration; future research should therefore include longitudinal studies examining how pre-service teachers reconstruct their identity one to five years after returning home, comparative studies across host countries outside Southeast Asia, and incorporate perspectives from teachers at host universities or schools to provide a more comprehensive understanding of pre-service teachers' identity construction. Ultimately, this study contributes to the understanding of teacher identity development in Southeast Asian contexts and suggests that international practicum programs should be intentionally designed to support reflective, intercultural, and identity-oriented learning.

Declaration on the use of AI

The authors declare that artificial intelligence (AI) applications were used solely for language editing and grammar correction. AI tools were not employed in any stage of data collection, data analysis, result interpretation, or conclusion formulation. All intellectual content, analytical interpretations, and final editorial decisions presented in this manuscript remain the full responsibility of the authors.

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