



Identity Formation of a Filipino Transwoman EFL Teacher in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

As a haven for the LGBTQIA+ community, Thailand has become a niche for EFL teachers from around the world, particularly Filipino transwomen. Despite gender discrimination in academia and being non-native English educators, they hold pivotal roles in connecting Thai students to the inner circle. This case study delves into the perceived and negotiated teacher and gender identities of a Filipino transwoman EFL teacher in Thailand, examining how these identities impact her teaching practices. Through a semi-structured interview, the participant's experiences in a primary school were meticulously explored. Her narratives were captured through recordings and analyzed using Stake's (1995) four-phase analysis framework: description, categorical aggregation, establishing patterns, and naturalistic generalizations. Results revealed predominantly positive perceived identities, such as possessing a neutral accent, versatility, and relatability, significantly influencing her EFL teaching practices. However, challenges included the absence of ELT credentials due to Thailand's lenient recruitment practices. The participant negotiated her gender identity as a

	<p>woman in interactions with students and colleagues, highlighting the complex intersection of gender and professional roles. Future research should include comparative studies with Thai transwomen teachers and explore the impact of English proficiency and nationality on identity formation, offering valuable insights into fostering inclusivity in Thailand's EFL teaching community.</p> <p>Keywords: EFL in Thailand, Filipino transwoman teacher, identity formation, negotiated identity, perceived identity</p>
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Introduction

Thailand's appeal to LGBTQIA+ teachers, including Filipino transwomen educators is strengthened by factors such as its low cost of living, picturesque landscapes, and renowned hospitality. As a hub for English language teaching, the country benefits from the expertise of Filipino educators, despite their non-native English speaker status. The close ties between Thailand and the Philippines under ASEAN facilitate this integration (Sakane, 2017), with shared linguistic conventions aiding Filipino teachers in seamlessly navigating the Thai educational landscape. This symbiotic relationship underscores the significant role Filipino educators play in bridging Thai students to global English standards. Filipino educators, renowned for their fluency in English, often face discrimination as non-native English speakers (NNESTs). This discrimination extends beyond their linguistic background (Holliday, 2006), and encompasses factors such as skin color and accent, perpetuating inequalities in English Language Teaching (ELT).

This situation becomes even more complex for Filipino transwomen EFL teachers in Thailand, where their gender identity adds another layer of discrimination. In the Thai education arena, Thai transwomen teachers, known as kathoey, experience prejudice due to societal expectations based on their biological sex (Kosashunhanan et al., 2022). Although kathoey (transgender women) are generally accepted across various sectors in Thailand, they continue to face marginalization, particularly in academic settings, and often contend with negative public perceptions. This is largely due to the prominent visibility of kathoey in the country's sex work industry. In Pattaya alone, out of the 5,000 transgender women residing in the area, approximately 75% are employed as sex workers (Bocugno, 2015). Previous research, such as Choe (2016), has explored the identity formation of ESL heterosexual Filipino teachers concerning their teacher identity as non-native

English speakers. Similarly, Dumlao & Tepsuriwong (2019) conducted a study on the identity formation of novice EFL Filipino teachers in Thailand. However, scholarly attention has predominantly concentrated on the identity of heterosexual English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, thereby leaving the identity of transwomen teachers largely unexamined in the academic literature. Extensive documentation exists on discrimination and health vulnerabilities of transwomen in the mainstream, while the literature on the gender identity and identity formation of transwomen teachers is notably sparse. This knowledge gap is particularly relevant given the challenges they face. The dominance of Filipino transwomen EFL teachers in Thailand's educational landscape underscores the urgency of exploring their identity formation. Understanding the intricate interplay of factors shaping their identities contributes to the discourse on diversity in education and informs educational policy and practice in Thailand.

This study seeks to fill a gap in the existing literature by investigating the identity formation of a Filipino transwoman EFL teacher in Thailand. Specifically, it focuses on three key aspects of her identity development. First, the study explores her perceived identity, which refers to how individuals believe they are viewed and recognized by others based on their external behaviors, traits, and characteristics (Vignoles, 2011). This perception is influenced by societal expectations, social interactions, and cultural norms (Goffman, 1949). Second, it examines her negotiated teacher and gender identities, referring to the process by which individuals actively shape and redefine their identities through social interactions, balancing personal desires with external expectations (Ting-Toomey, 2017). Finally, the study investigates how these intersecting identities impact her EFL teaching practices. By addressing these research objectives, this pioneering study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the identity formation of Filipino transwoman EFL teachers in Thailand. The study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What are the perceived identities of the Filipino transwoman EFL teacher in Thailand? (2) What are her negotiated identities? (3) How do these identities influence her EFL teaching practices?

Literature Review

The Roles of Filipino Teachers in Thai ELT

As non-native EFL educators, Filipino teachers (FTs) fulfill essential roles in facilitating linguistic and cultural connections between Thai students and the native English-speaking inner circle. This phenomenon gained prominence following the policy reforms initiated in 2001 during the tenure

of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, which facilitated the entry of foreign teachers, prominently from the Philippines (Novio, 2018). This era witnessed a significant influx of international educators, thereby positioning Thailand as a prominent hub for global EFL pedagogy, particularly noted for its integration of Filipino teachers. Despite their proficiency in English, Filipino EFL teachers frequently encounter discrimination within the Thai English Language Teaching (ELT) context. This discrimination is not solely attributed to recruitment practices that favor native English speakers, but also to perceptions associated with their unique accents and skin tones. Such biases contribute to experiences of rejection and perpetuate salary disparities relative to their native English-speaking counterparts (Wongsamuth, 2015). However, Filipino teachers play a crucial role as the blood of English language teaching in Thailand, sustaining the English programs across educational institutions in the country where English is the primary medium of instruction, contrasting with their Thai counterparts who typically teach English in Thai. A 2017 report by the Department of Employment of Thailand revealed that Filipinos were the largest group of migrant workers among nine nationalities, with 14,830 employed in fields such as teaching, management, engineering, architecture, and business (Mala, 2020), underscoring their significant contribution to Thailand's educational landscape. They effectively position their Western colleagues as the visible representatives of ELT, promoting school English curricula and influencing parental decisions regarding student enrollment, particularly in governmental and private schools nationwide. These dynamics underscore the complex interplay of cultural capital and educational influence within the Thai ELT landscape.

For many years, Filipino teachers have played a significant role in the EFL teaching landscape in Thailand, influenced by several key factors. One crucial factor is their strong English proficiency, which stems from the Philippines' status as an official English-speaking nation, fostering widespread linguistic competence among its population (Martin, 2014). Despite variations in accents, many Filipino educators adeptly adjust to a more neutral accent which is highly valued in Thai language education contexts. Furthermore, cultural similarities between the Philippines and Thailand facilitate the seamless integration of Filipino teachers into local educational environments. This cultural congruence enhances communication and rapport with Thai students, thereby creating a conducive learning atmosphere. Such alignment not only supports effective teaching practices but also underscores the suitability of Filipino educators for addressing the diverse educational needs present in Thai schools.

Transwomen in The Philippines and Thailand

Despite the Philippines and Thailand being widely regarded for their comparatively high levels of acceptance towards the LGBTQIA+ community in contrast to other global contexts, transwomen in both countries continue to face substantial societal challenges. These challenges often manifest through persistent negative societal perceptions, which are characterized by derogatory terms and pervasive stereotypes. Despite progress in legal and social recognition, the stigma against transwomen remains a critical issue that hinders their full inclusion and equality in society. In the Philippines, a transwoman is defined as an individual assigned male at birth who identifies and lives as female, regardless of sexual orientation or surgical status (Benedicto, 2008). The term "transpinay" is commonly used by transgender individuals of Filipino descent to affirm their gender identity (Alegre, 2018). Meanwhile, in the northern regions, the term "bakla," and in the southern regions, "bayot," are often used to refer to males attracted to men. Although these terms are frequently applied to transwomen, they carry distinct connotations. Additionally, terms like "parlorista" are often associated with stereotypes of effeminate gay men working in beauty salons or the entertainment industry. Unfortunately, all these labels tend to be used in a derogatory manner, reinforcing negative stereotypes and limiting the broader understanding of transgender identities (Benedicto, 2008). Despite some acceptance, moral beliefs rooted in Roman Catholicism often result in hostility toward gay people (Soberano, 2022). While support for transwomen exists in various fields, including education, challenges persist due to traditional beliefs and insufficient legal protections for civil and human rights. In Thailand, despite its patriarchal society, the country is recognized for its tolerance and is often referred to as a "gay paradise" (Jackson, 1999). The non-judgmental approach of Thai Theravada Buddhism towards sexual and gender diversity promotes a greater expression of gender identity compared to neighboring countries. Terms such as "kathoe" and "tut" have historically been utilized to describe transwomen in Thailand, although they are frequently perceived as derogatory. More respectful alternatives, depending on specific contexts, include "sao praphet song," which translates to "woman/women in the second category," and "phet thi sam," denoting "the third gender," which encompasses individuals who are not heterosexual, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. Additionally, "khon kham phet" serves as a direct translation of the English term "transgender," while "ying kham phet" specifically refers to "transwoman," used to describe transgender individuals who have undergone or are in the process of sex reassignment (Suriyasarn, 2014). Despite their visibility in sectors such as sex tourism and entertainment, transwomen in Thailand

continue to face considerable stigma, particularly within the educational system. This reflects the intricate interplay between cultural tolerance and underlying societal attitudes toward gender diversity. Such challenges underscore the limitations of surface-level acceptance, revealing deeper systemic issues related to gender identity and inclusivity within institutional frameworks.

The academic literature reveals a noticeable gap in research on the social perceptions of transwomen teachers, despite significant attention given to the experiences of transwomen students and transwomen in broader societal contexts. Existing studies primarily focus on themes such as inclusion, discrimination, aggression, health vulnerabilities, and general societal attitudes. Research on transwomen students often explores their challenges in educational settings, including acceptance, support systems, and barriers to academic achievement (Grant et al., 2011). These studies underscore the importance of inclusive policies and supportive environments in fostering educational success among transwomen.

While these contributions have enriched our understanding of transwomen's experiences in education and society, the specific experiences, and social perceptions of transwomen teachers within educational settings remain underexplored. Addressing this gap is crucial for expanding knowledge on gender diversity in education and for promoting inclusive practices that support the professional development and well-being of transwomen educators.

Identity and Identity Formation

Identity is a complex, multifaceted concept characterized by a unique set of traits that reflect individual experiences and sociocultural influences (Pennington, 2014). It is inherently fluid, and continuously shaped by cultural contexts, personal interactions, and life experiences (Deaux & Burke, 2010). Scholars highlight multiple dimensions of identity, such as ethnicity, spirituality, profession, and gender, which are enacted within specific sociocultural frameworks (Oyserman et al., 2012). The rise of digital technology further complicates how individuals express and construct their identities in contemporary society (Zhao et al., 2008).

Identity formation is driven by a complex interplay between individual agency and external societal forces. It involves self-claimed roles and externally imposed labels, resulting in dynamic, often shifting self-positionings that may align with or contradict societal norms (Reeves, 2018). Despite extensive research, no universally accepted model for identity construction exists, as identity remains a fluid process that evolves over time in response to changing cultural traditions and social experiences (Du Gay &

Hall, 1996). This fluidity underscores the importance of context in shaping and reshaping how identities are understood and enacted.

For the participant in this study, identity formation as a transwoman teacher in Thailand is shaped by both personal agency and societal expectations. The strategic use of the term "transwoman" within educational settings serves to assert her identity and influence how others perceive her. However, her identity is also molded by external perceptions and societal norms, creating a dynamic and sometimes precarious negotiation of self, especially as part of a marginalized group. This interplay highlights the broader complexities of identity formation for individuals navigating multiple, intersecting social categories.

Perceived and Negotiated Identities

Identity formation encompasses the interplay between perceived and negotiated identities, both of which are essential in shaping individual experiences and self-concepts within broader social frameworks. Perceived identities are those attributed to individuals by others, often shaped by external forces such as cultural norms, societal expectations, and observable personal characteristics (Reeves, 2018). These external perceptions can significantly influence how individuals are treated within a society, as well as their sense of belonging and self-worth. Positive perceptions, for instance, are often linked to socially desirable traits such as competence, attractiveness, or conformity to dominant social ideals. In contrast, negative perceived identities may arise from stereotypes or biases associated with race, gender, class, or other social markers, which can result in marginalization, discrimination, and internalized oppression (Tajfel & Turner, 2003).

On the other hand, negotiated identities are the products of continuous, dynamic interactions between the self and others, underscoring the importance of relational contexts in identity construction. This process involves ongoing negotiations both internally, where individuals critically reflect on and adjust their self-concept, and externally, where they actively engage in dialogues and interactions that either affirm or challenge their existing sense of self (Belay, 2018). These identities are not static but rather fluid and evolving, shaped by the relational feedback from social interactions and the individual's capacity to assert, resist, or redefine their identity in response to social pressures (Giddens, 1991). Negotiation of identity can involve strategies of identity management (Snow & Anderson, 1987) or even resistance to imposed categories, making identity construction a continuously active and contextually dependent process. This conceptualization of identity as fluid and negotiated highlights the agency individuals possess in shaping their identities while also acknowledging the structural limitations imposed by

societal perceptions and power dynamics (Butler, 1990). Understanding the dual processes of perception and negotiation offers a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of identity formation, particularly in marginalized groups, where identity is often contested or constrained by dominant societal discourses.

Methodology

Participant

In this case study, the participant is a 30-year-old Filipino transwoman EFL teacher in Thailand who holds a bachelor's degree in Biology from the Philippines. She has been employed as a teacher in Thailand for five years. In her professional and personal presentation, she adopts a gender expression typically associated with femininity, including the wearing of women's clothing and makeup within the school environment. Her responsibilities extend beyond the traditional scope of language instruction, encompassing a range of extracurricular activities. These include mentoring students in the performing arts, such as dance, as well as overseeing creative tasks like stage decoration and makeup application during school events. Purposive sampling was employed to select the participant, leveraging her unique characteristics and experiences that are relevant to the study's focus on identity formation in a culturally sensitive context where LGBTQIA+ topics are socially taboo (Patton, 1990). The participant, holding a bachelor's degree from the Philippines, has accumulated over five years of teaching experience in a Thai primary school and met the educational qualifications mandated by the Thai Ministry of Education. Purposive sampling, also referred to as purposeful or selective sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique commonly employed in qualitative research (Palinkas et al., 2015). This method involves the deliberate selection of participants who possess specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the research objectives. In this study, the participant was introduced to the researcher through mutual acquaintances in Thailand they did not have any prior professional or personal relationship. The researcher specifically chose a transwoman EFL teacher in Thailand due to her unique insights into identity formation within a complex sociocultural landscape. While the participant may not represent the entire population of transwomen EFL teachers in Thailand, her inclusion through purposive sampling ensures that she can offer valuable insights pertinent to the study's focus on identity formation within a particular cultural and educational context. To maintain ethical standards and ensure participant confidentiality, the pseudonym "Barbie" was assigned to the participant. This measure protects her identity, upholds the ethical integrity of the study, and enhances

its credibility. This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and informed consent was obtained from the participant prior to data collection, ensuring full adherence to ethical guidelines.

Data Collection

A semi-structured, open-ended interview was conducted in Bangkok, Thailand, utilizing a rigorously developed set of questions that emerged from a comprehensive review of relevant literature and theoretical frameworks pertaining to identity formation and pedagogical practices. This methodological approach sought to elicit the participant's perceived and negotiated identities while critically examining the implications of these identities on her instructional methodologies. The questions were intentionally crafted to foster in-depth reflection and facilitate critical discourse, thereby yielding rich qualitative data for nuanced analysis. The interview spanned approximately 90 to 120 minutes and was structured into three distinct phases for a comprehensive exploration of the research objectives. The initial phase focused on rapport-building and creating a conducive environment for open communication. During this stage, the researcher engaged the participant in discussions about their shared common experiences to foster comfort and trust. At this stage, the researcher discussed the objectives of the interview and stated that the data would be kept private. The second phase involved gathering demographic data, where the researcher posed questions designed to collect essential biographical information about the participant. Questions such as the participant's educational background, age, years teaching in Thailand, etc. The final phase concentrated on eliciting the participant's lived experiences, utilizing open-ended questions that encouraged the participant to recount her teaching journey in detail. This stage allowed for an in-depth exploration of her professional and personal experiences in Thailand. This crucial stage includes questions such as "Could you tell me your teaching experience in Thailand?" "What impact does your gender have on you as a teacher?" The interview was audio-recorded to ensure the capture of nuanced narratives. This methodological approach facilitated a comprehensive analysis of the participant's perceived and negotiated identities, as well as their influence on her EFL teaching practices.

Data Analysis

After gathering the data, the researchers engaged in analyzing and interpreting it, utilizing Stake's (1995) four-phase analysis as adapted from a previous study by Choe (2016). These four phases included: (1) description, in which the researchers derived a general description of the case by reviewing

the entire dataset, making sense of the recordings, and employing thematic coding to develop an overview of the participant's perceived and negotiated gender and teacher identities; (2) categorical aggregation, where data was coded into meaningful categories that emerged from the interview transcripts. For example, the participant's positive self-perception as a "Jill of all trades" was categorized under "positive perceived identities"; (3) establishing patterns, aimed at identifying recurring themes across the data. One prominent pattern was the participant's continuous negotiation of her gender identity within the school setting. For instance, Barbie consistently used her teaching platform to educate students on the distinctions between sex and gender, which emerged as a central theme in her identity formation; and (4) naturalistic generalizations, in which the analysis shifted towards making broader generalizations that could extend beyond the participant's case. The participant's experiences as a Filipino transwoman EFL teacher in Thailand provided insights into the broader issue of how non-native English-speaking teachers and those with diverse gender identities navigate educational spaces. For example, Barbie's challenges with her accent and lack of formal ELT certification could be generalized to other non-native English teachers in Thailand who face similar issues of professional identity formation. The narration of the findings then followed.

The study focused on perceived and negotiated teacher and gender identities. Perceived identities refer to how individuals or external observers, such as students, co-workers, and superiors, understand and acknowledge personal or others' identities based on individual experiences, beliefs, and socio-cultural context. These perceptions can differ from externally imposed labels, illustrating the interplay between self-concept and societal norms. Negotiated identities involve the dynamic process of identity formation through interaction and negotiation with others within social contexts. These identities can be shaped through internal negotiation with oneself and external negotiation with others.

Findings

Barbie's journey to the "Land of Smiles" was anything but straightforward. As the eldest in her family, she carried the weight of Filipino tradition, a responsibility that involved providing for her family back home. While her parents did not explicitly impose this duty, Barbie, a 30-year-old transwoman, took it upon herself to ensure that her siblings' educational needs were met. This self-imposed initiative fueled her determination to create better opportunities for her family, ultimately leading her to Thailand in search of teaching opportunities. Driven by resilience and commitment, Barbie's journey into the world of teaching began.

Upon securing a teaching position in Thailand, Barbie became enamored with her job, particularly due to the inclusive atmosphere created by her Thai co-teachers. In this new environment, Barbie found a sense of comfort and the freedom to openly express her gender identity as a transwoman. Over the past five years, this sense of belonging has allowed Barbie to further explore and affirm her identity. Her experience in Thailand not only nurtured her self-discovery but also empowered her as an EFL teacher. Through her narratives, four major themes emerged: (1) Positive Perceived Identities, (2) Negative Perceived Identities, (3) Negotiated Identity, and (4) The Positive Influence of Her Identities on Her EFL Teaching Practices.

Positive Perceived Identities

Barbie's positive identities have been shaped through her proactive engagement and adaptation within the Thai educational landscape. Firstly, as a "Jill of All Trades," she showcases versatility by not only teaching English but also fulfilling non-teaching roles, making significant contributions beyond language instruction. Her role as a "Relatable Teacher" is emphasized through her physical appearance, fostering stronger connections with students and colleagues and creating a more inclusive teaching environment. Her friendly approachable accent underscores Barbie's linguistic adaptability, seamlessly transitioning from a distinct Filipino accent to a neutral one, enhancing effective communication with Thai students. Together, these positive identities illuminate the multifaceted strengths and contributions of Barbie within the Thai educational landscape.

As a Jill of All Trades

In Thailand, numerous schools offer English programs where teachers are required to manage multiple subjects. As a Filipino transwoman EFL educator, Barbie's teaching responsibilities extend beyond English and Science to include subjects such as Health. This is unsurprising given her academic background in Biology. However, this versatility underscores her capacity to navigate and adapt to diverse instructional roles within the educational framework. Barbie's multifaceted pedagogical approach enhances her contributions to the academic setting, demonstrating her ability to engage in interdisciplinary teaching beyond the realm of language education.

I also teach Health subject in English instructions as well as I am adviser and English teacher but most of my subjects are in science but in English instructions. (Barbie)

As a biology graduate, it is not uncommon for her to teach Health and Sciences subjects. However, Barbie exemplifies versatility not only in her ability to instruct across various academic disciplines but also in her engagement with non-teaching responsibilities. These include decorating the school, providing dance training, applying makeup, and creating costumes. Such multifaceted contributions have earned her the designation of "Jill of All Trades." Her proactive approach to transcending conventional teaching roles underscores her commitment to fostering a dynamic and inclusive educational environment.

I am very flexible! I love to perform, help put decorations on stage at school, I can help them I don't know if native English speakers can do that. I am very flexible like a rubber. (Barbie)

Barbie's remark, "I don't know if native English speakers can do that," offers a noteworthy contrast between herself and native English speakers, even though the task in question is unrelated to English language proficiency. This distinction underscores her flexibility and adaptability within the Thai EFL context. Such versatility highlights her broader contributions to the educational setting, demonstrating her ability to excel in roles beyond their core instructional duties.

..there are a lot of school activities, students are performing on stage so I choreograph, to train them how to dance or what are things they are going to wear so I help them I collaborate with them with some other Thai teachers because no other teachers can do that in my school. They are expecting me because you know transwoman, we are very expressive we are very creative to help them to make some costumes for example. (Barbie)

As a transwoman EFL teacher in Thailand, she brings creativity, talent, humor, and energy to her roles. Viewing her identity as inherently creative, she possesses a multifaceted skill set that extends beyond conventional expectations in both academic and extracurricular domains. Her versatility extends beyond professional competence, contributing to her success. Her versatility not only exemplifies professional competence but also enhances her relatability

As a Relatable Teacher

Barbie's relatability is significantly influenced by external perceptions, particularly those of students and colleagues. As a Filipino teacher, her

physical appearance aligns closely with that of the local population, which enhances her relatability compared to teachers from different cultural backgrounds. She leverages her appearance to foster stronger connections with students and colleagues, facilitating a sense of familiarity and rapport within the educational environment.

They compare me with other Thai teachers who is the same with my identity as a transwoman so they do not see any differences between Filipino citizen gay and or transwoman and the Thai citizen...

.... our Physical similarities with Thai make the students feel that we are the same with Thai people but the difference is only the language yes, the language. (Barbie)

Students perceive Barbie as relatable, fostering a connection similar to that with their Thai teachers. The physical resemblance of Filipino transwoman to the local population contributes to a comfortable classroom atmosphere.

In terms of culture, we are in Asia we are Asian people we also almost have the same cultures....

...we are relatable and since we are Asians, we can understand them we can you know give empathize and umm effort towards our students. (Barbie)

As a Filipino transwoman EFL teacher in Thailand, she effectively leverages shared cultural ties to enhance her relatability with both students and colleagues. Moreover, the linguistic diversity of the Philippines, where English is spoken alongside numerous other languages, further contributes to her ability to seamlessly shift between distinct and approachable accents.

As an English-Speaking Teacher with an Approachable Accent

Barbie's linguistic adaptability, including her ability to shift from a distinct Filipino accent to a neutral one, is advantageous. This flexibility facilitates effective communication, teaching, and identity formation eliminating potential challenges in connecting with Thai students. Rooted in the linguistic diversity of the Philippines, where English is one of the official languages, this adaptability significantly contributes to her linguistic competence. As a result, Barbie finds it easier to connect with her Thai students and navigate the language teaching environment in Thailand.

As a nonnative English teacher in terms of my accent I use neutral accent. I don't use British or any American English

because sometimes they don't understand the word so I explain to them how to pronounce it correctly and how you're going to read the word. (Barbie)

Adopting a neutral accent in teaching is particularly crucial for primary students, as it significantly facilitates faster comprehension and promotes more effective language acquisition among young EFL learners in the Kingdom. However, while Barbie's narratives highlight several positive perceived identities, there are also negative perceptions that have emerged. These contrasting perceptions offer a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding her identity as a transwoman EFL teacher, illustrating the challenges she faces alongside her professional strengths.

Negative Perceived Identities

The first issue, labeled "Teacher with dual identity," relates to her approach to disciplining students. The second challenge, "Lack of ELT Credentials," highlights the negative impact of not possessing formal EFL certification and specialized training. This absence is perceived as a drawback, potentially hindering her effectiveness as an English language teacher in Thailand. These negative identities are constructed through interactions and perceptions in the school context, influenced by Barbie's behavior, vocal demeanor, and educational background. Such perceptions can evolve over time through proactive measures aimed at addressing and mitigating these challenges. These challenges illustrate the dynamic nature of identity construction in educational settings, where external perceptions and internal qualities intersect to shape professional identities over time.

As a Teacher with a Dual Identity

Barbie is perceived by her students as embodying a dual identity when disciplining them, due to her voice changing when she is upset. This leads to the perception of her as a two-faced teacher with both masculine and feminine characteristics. Barbie considers this aspect of her identity negative, as she identifies herself solely as a woman and not as a bisexual individual.

Sometimes they see me like I have a feeling like of a woman very Sympathetic towards them and in terms of my teaching approach (Disciplining them) they are scared sometimes if I get mad to them, they see me as a man something like that but I treat them well. (Barbie)

Negative perceptions from her students underscore the challenges

faced by individuals in the LGBTQIA+ community in navigating societal expectations and stereotypes, even within their professional roles. Another challenge is the lack of ELT credentials.

Lack of ELT Credentials

Barbie's background in Biology, combined with her degree in education, provides her with a solid foundation in teaching. However, her lack of formal ELT (English Language Teaching) credentials and specialized training presents significant challenges to her professional growth. While her EFL teaching practices have not been negatively impacted, this lack of certification has limited her ability to teach more English-focused subjects and prevented her from advancing in roles traditionally associated with English language teaching. Barbie reflects on her educational background and the subjects she currently teaches.

My highest educational background would be college degree with a bachelor's degree of education major in Biology...
...Since I am science teacher, I use English as a medium as instruction doing laboratory projects. I teach also Health subjects but in English instruction, as well as I am adviser and English teacher but most of my subjects are science but in English instruction. (Barbie)

Despite holding an education degree and being fluent in English, the absence of formal ELT credentials creates a perceived barrier to her identity as a conventional English language teacher. This perception is shaped by prevailing norms in the field, which emphasize the importance of specialized qualifications. However, the notion of who is qualified to teach English is debatable, as fluency in the language can be seen as sufficient for teaching, particularly in contexts where English is not the primary medium of communication. Nevertheless, acquiring ELT certification and completing training courses would address this perceived gap, supporting Barbie's continuous professional development and enhancing her pedagogical expertise.

The pursuit of formal ELT credentials would enable Barbie to deepen her understanding of critical areas such as pedagogical strategies, language acquisition theories, and the cultural nuances essential to effective language instruction. Although her fluency in English is a strength, the lack of recognized credentials has contributed to a somewhat negative self-perception of her professional identity within the ELT field. This underscores the importance of formal qualifications and continuous professional development in shaping a teacher's career and sense of legitimacy.

Barbie's self-perceived identities, both positive and negative, are subject to ongoing negotiation. For her, this process of identity negotiation is essential in navigating external factors such as institutional policies, societal norms, and moral beliefs. By continuously engaging in this negotiation, Barbie can reshape and redefine her professional identity in response to the dynamic and evolving demands of the educational landscape.

Barbie's Negotiated Identity

Barbie, as a transwoman teacher, skillfully navigates and negotiates her identity to impart valuable lessons on the distinctions between sex and gender to her students. She transforms challenges into opportunities, using her journey to foster a nuanced understanding of non-normative gender identities. Despite complexities, Barbie's negotiation process has forged genuine connections with her students and cultivated an environment where her identity is understood and respected. This deliberate engagement in identity negotiations serves as a personal expression for Barbie and contributes meaningfully to the discourse on diversity and inclusivity in education.

As a Transwoman Teacher

As a transwoman educator, Barbie navigates and negotiates her intersecting identities as a critical aspect of her professional role. Beyond her conventional teaching responsibilities, she leverages these negotiations to foster a deeper understanding of the distinctions between sex and gender, thereby promoting a more nuanced comprehension of non-normative identities among her students. Despite the inherent challenges, Barbie perceives this process as transformative, actively addressing stigma while establishing an authentic and respectful connection with her students. Her efforts have contributed to creating an inclusive classroom environment where her identity is understood and respected on her own terms. This deliberate engagement not only serves as a personal expression but also represents an educational contribution toward promoting diversity and inclusivity within the educational landscape. Barbie's own words reflect this pedagogical approach.

Before I entered the classroom, I explained to them about the difference between sex and gender. I keep on telling them that these people already know their identity. So, my students see me as a normal teacher, but sometimes they see me as having the feelings of a woman. (Barbie)

Barbie strategically utilizes identity negotiation within her teaching practices to educate students about diverse gender identities, fostering acceptance and understanding in the classroom. This intentional approach enables her to shape a narrative around her identity, challenging stereotypes and promoting awareness in the educational setting. By integrating these strategies into her pedagogy, Barbie not only empowers herself but also acts as a catalyst for positive shifts in her students' perceptions and attitudes toward gender diversity. For a transwoman educator, identity formation plays a vital role, as these identities influence her teaching practices in either positive or negative ways.

A significant challenge arises from the fact that Barbie's transwoman identity inadvertently introduces confusion among some students. Although there are no direct negative impacts on her EFL teaching practices due to her gender identity, some students have expressed uncertainty regarding whether their teacher is a biological woman. This confusion, stemming from the teacher's gender presentation, is a legitimate concern within the classroom. Nevertheless, Barbie continually addresses this issue by engaging in ongoing identity negotiations, helping students to understand what it means to be a transwoman. This process underscores her commitment to fostering clarity and inclusivity in the learning environment.

The Positive Influence of Her Identities on Her EFL Teaching Practices

The participant's positive influence in her EFL teaching practices is unmistakably reflected in the transformative effect of her transwoman identity, notably amplifying her expressiveness to new heights.

Made Her More Expressive and Resourceful

Barbie believes her identity has positively influenced her teaching practices by enhancing her expressiveness and resourcefulness in the classroom. Her unique experiences and perspectives contribute to a heightened awareness of diverse viewpoints and foster creativity in adapting teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles. This insight demonstrates how an individual's identity can enrich their teaching approach, creating a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment.

Every transwoman is very expressive, collaborative and resourceful. As a transwoman I can bring that aspect to my classroom and it will help my teaching strategy. In terms of like getting some information as a resourceful person. Being creative doing some activities. (Barbie)

Barbie's gender identity as a transwoman has had a positive influence on her teaching practices, enhancing both her expressiveness and resourcefulness in the classroom. Her identity empowers her to transcend traditional gender stereotypes, enabling her to be more expressive when delivering lessons, and conducting classroom activities. This expressiveness not only reflects her traits but also aligns with the societal stereotype that associates transwomen with heightened creativity. As a result, her teaching practices become more dynamic and engaging, blending her authentic self with the strengths typically attributed to her gender identity. This heightened expressiveness also extends to her collaborative efforts with colleagues, where Barbie actively contributes innovative ideas and participates in school programs, cultivating a positive and inclusive professional environment. While these collaborative efforts may not directly shape her pedagogical methods, they nonetheless reflect the broader impact of her gender identity on her professional interactions. Furthermore, Barbie's high level of expressiveness enhances her self-assurance in teaching, allowing her to interact more dynamically with students and foster a supportive, inclusive learning environment. Her lack of reticence, coupled with her willingness to openly communicate, strengthens her ability to engage students and cultivate an atmosphere conducive to open dialogue and learning.

.... Through my expressions I didn't feel shy when teaching to my students. (Barbie)

The excerpt from Barbie reflects a significant aspect of how her gender identity influences her teaching practices. Barbie's expressions of identity, likely shaped by her experience as a transwoman, allow her to embrace her authenticity in the classroom. Her gender identity may have empowered her to be more confident and expressive, as she navigates societal expectations that often marginalize trans individuals. By not feeling shy, Barbie demonstrates resilience and self-assurance, crucial traits in a profession where educators often serve as role models.

For transgender teachers like Barbie, expressing their authentic selves can lead to positive classroom dynamics. Her comfort in expressing her gender identity likely fosters an inclusive environment where students feel encouraged to be themselves. This confidence in her identity may also challenge stereotypes about trans individuals, thereby enriching the educational experience by promoting diversity and acceptance. In a broader sense, Barbie's approach to teaching shows how identity expression plays a pivotal role in breaking down barriers, and creating a more open and understanding learning environment for her students.

Discussion

This research investigates the identity formation of a Filipino transwoman EFL teacher in Thailand through narrative inquiry. The findings elucidate how Barbie, as a transwoman teacher, navigates and negotiates her intersecting identities within the educational landscape. The analysis reveals that Barbie's positive identities such as her role as being a "Jill of All Trades," her relatability to students, and her linguistic adaptability significantly enhance her ability to establish connections with Thai students and colleagues, despite the absence of formal English Language Teaching (ELT) credentials. Conversely, she encounters challenges associated with negative perceptions, including being perceived as a "teacher with dual identity" and the implications of her lack of ELT credentials. Through the process of identity negotiation, Barbie adeptly transforms these challenges into opportunities, leveraging her experiences to educate students about gender diversity and promote inclusivity in the classroom. Furthermore, her identity as a transwoman has a positive impact on her pedagogical practices, rendering her more expressive and resourceful. These findings substantiate the research questions by illustrating the intricate ways in which her gender identity informs both her teaching methodologies and her professional experiences within the Thai EFL context.

In this regard, it is essential to consider the role of self-perceived identities, which are predominantly positive and reflect individual's internalized self-conceptions within societal contexts. These identities are often egocentric, frequently resulting in a bias that may not correspond with external perceptions. In the case of Barbie, her self-perceived identities such as a Jill of All trades and an English-speaking teacher with an approachable accent are constructed from an individual's subjective experiences and aspirations, which may diverge from how others view the individual.

Consequently, the self-perceived identity can create a positive self-image that might not be fully congruent with societal evaluations or external attributions (Sedikides & Gregg, 2008). However, these identities are not static; they are actively constructed and maintained over time. According to social identity theory, individuals develop self-perceptions based on their membership in various social groups and the roles they assume within those groups (Turner et al., 1979). While self-perceived identities are often positive, they can evolve and fluctuate in response to changing life circumstances, societal pressures, and personal growth. For instance, a transwoman EFL teacher like Barbie may initially navigate her identity with a strong sense of self-confidence and affirmation within the supportive context of her school environment. However, external factors such as societal prejudices or

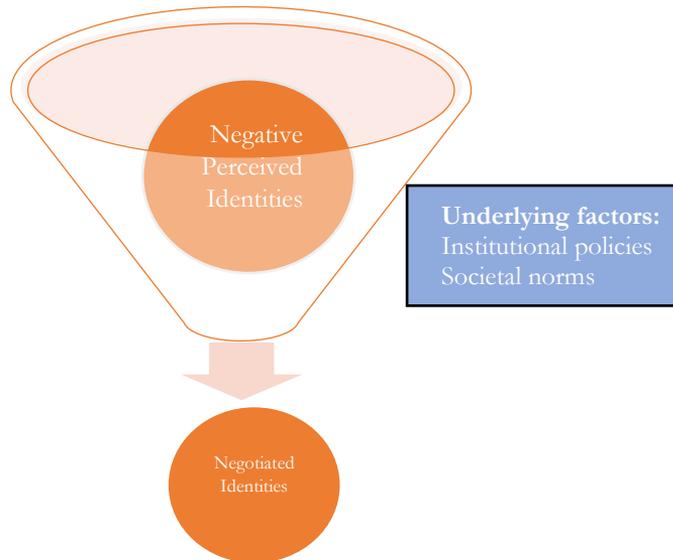
professional challenges could potentially impact and reshape her self-perceptions over time.

Therefore, understanding self-perceived identities involves recognizing their dynamic nature and the continuous process of identity negotiation and adaptation. Individuals actively engage in forming and redefining their identities based on internal reflections and external feedback, contributing to their overall sense of self and social identity within broader cultural frameworks.

External factors significantly influence identity formation, contrasting with self-perceived identities that are internally constructed. These external attributions encompass various dimensions such as social perceptions of attitudes, physical appearance, language use, behavioral norms, and national affiliations. These factors act as mirrors reflecting one's identity, shaped by societal evaluations rather than self-determination.

Positive external attribution such as Barbie being a “relatable teacher” functions as affirmations, validations, or compliments, reinforcing a person's self-concept through positive social feedback (Swann, 2012). Conversely, negative attributions such as a “teacher with dual identity”, and lack of ELT credentials manifest as forms of discrimination or exclusion, impacting an individual's sense of belonging and self-esteem. These evaluations are not static; they can evolve over time due to changing social contexts and interactions. For instance, a person's physical appearance may influence how others perceive their identity, contributing to stereotypes and categorizations (Goffman, 1963). These external attributions, whether positive or negative, shape an individual's social identity and may influence their self-concept and interactions within society (Ashmore et al., 2004).

The figure below elucidates the connection between the participant's negative perceived and negotiated teacher and gender identities. Aspects such as “teacher with dual identity” and “lack of ELT credentials” are shaped by various underlying factors, represented by the funnel's form. These factors include institutional policies and societal norms, which significantly influence her professional identity and self-perception within the educational landscape. This illustration demonstrates that negative perceived identities are subject to negotiation. However, the integrity of these perceived identities often diminishes during the negotiation process. This phenomenon is a common occurrence in identity formation, where individuals must reconcile their identities to accommodate the expectations and needs of their social environment (Burke & Stets, 2009). Such compromises are essential for achieving social harmony and mutual benefit within the community.

Figure 1*The Link Between Negative Perceived Identities and the Negotiated Identities*

Based on Barbie's narratives, the negotiation process seeks to transform negative identities into negotiated, positive ones. This process is integral to identity formation, occurring not instantaneously but through continuous and iterative interactions with those around her. Identity negotiation involves multiple ways including educating, elaborating, embodying the desired identity, and ultimately embracing it. Each way plays a critical role in reshaping how individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by others. Educating is where individuals acquire knowledge and understanding about the identities they wish to negotiate.

For Barbie, this meant gaining awareness about gender diversity and the importance of inclusivity, which she then conveyed to her students. Another way is elaborating where individuals articulate and refine their desired identities. This involves communicating their identities clearly and assertively in various social settings (Burke & Stets, 2009). Barbie elaborated her identity as a transwoman teacher by actively discussing and normalizing gender diversity within her classroom, fostering a supportive learning environment. Embodying the desired identity involves living out the identity in daily practices and interactions. It requires consistency and authenticity, as individuals align their behaviors and actions with their negotiated identities (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Barbie embodied her identity by integrating her personal experiences and values into her teaching practices, serving as a role

model for inclusivity and acceptance. Finally, embracing the identity is the culmination of the negotiation process, where the individual fully accepts and integrates the new identity into their self-concept (Thoits, 1991). For Barbie, embracing her identity as both a transwoman and a teacher meant reconciling her personal and professional identities, thereby achieving a coherent and positive self-concept.

This ongoing process underscores the dynamic and relational nature of identity, which is continuously shaped by and shapes social interactions (Mead, 1934). Barbie's experience highlights the importance of supportive social environments and the role of education in facilitating positive identity negotiations. It also demonstrates how individuals can navigate and mitigate negative external attributions by actively engaging in identity negotiation processes.

In this case study, the participant's identities brought more positive influences than negatives. For instance, Barbie, a transwoman EFL teacher, recounted that her identity significantly shaped her teaching approach. She realized that being a transwoman enabled her to become more expressive and resourceful, aligning with the predominant behaviors observed among her cisgender female counterparts. This insight highlights how her unique perspective and experiences as a transwoman enriched her teaching style, fostering a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment.

Research supports the idea that diverse identities in educational settings contribute to richer, more effective teaching methodologies. According to (Gorski & Parekh, 2020), teachers who embrace their diverse identities can create more inclusive classrooms, promoting better learning outcomes for all students. Similarly, the work of (Kearns et al., 2014) emphasizes the importance of educators' self-awareness and reflection on their identities, which can enhance their teaching practices and student engagement. Barbie's experience as a transwoman EFL teacher exemplifies these findings. Her expressiveness and resourcefulness, traits she associates with her female identity, not only benefited her professional development but also positively impacted her students. This case underscores the broader implication that embracing and leveraging diverse identities in education can lead to more innovative and effective teaching strategies, ultimately benefiting the entire educational community.

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal the successful identity formation of a Filipino transwoman EFL teacher in Thailand, highlighting the complex interplay between self-perceived and externally attributed identities. The participant has cultivated predominantly positive teacher and gender

identities, being recognized as a versatile teacher a "Jill of all trades" with a relatable demeanor and approachable accent that enhances the learning experiences of her primary Thai students. This success in identity formation within the academic sphere significantly bolsters the credibility of this Filipino transwoman and other Filipino EFL teachers in Thailand. A salient discovery is the participant's negotiation of her gender identity, which adds valuable insights to the literature on identity formation among marginalized groups. However, the absence of formal English Language Teaching (ELT) credentials represents a negative aspect of her identity, along with the external perceptions of her as a teacher with a dual identity.

This study underscores the importance of fostering an inclusive teaching environment free from discrimination and harassment, highlighting the evolving identities of EFL teachers in Thailand. Despite facing challenges, the Filipino transwoman EFL teacher in this study has established strong positive identities within the ELT field. Her ongoing negotiation of identity is crucial for addressing and overcoming transgender stigma in academia and beyond, underscoring the dynamic and relational nature of identity formation.

Future research should incorporate comparative studies involving Thai transwomen educators to examine the nuanced dynamics of identity formation within diverse cultural contexts. Additionally, exploring the influence of English proficiency and nationality on identity construction will provide valuable insights into the complexities of fostering inclusivity within Thailand's English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching community. Such investigations could illuminate the intersections of language, identity, and social belonging, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by marginalized educators in the ELT landscape.

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