

Teaching English, Living Japanese: Autoethnographic Exploration of a Filipino English Teacher's Journey in Japan

Dominic Bryan S. San Jose, Ed.D.¹, Andrew O. Refareal²

¹GLP International School, Japan. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9089-9336>

²Shinagawa Shouei Junior and Senior High School, Japan. <https://orcid.org/0009000113430961>

*Corresponding Author: Dominic Bryan S. San Jose, GLP International School, Japan.

ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of increasing globalization and the demand for English education in non-native English-speaking countries, the study explores how personal identity, cultural integration, and professional practice intersect in the life of a migrant teacher. With an autoethnographic methodology, the study is based on one of the researchers' narratives, reflections, and interactions within the Japanese educational system and society at large. Cultural dissonance, hierarchical social structures, and distinct educational paradigms presented both opportunities and problems, which emerged through a critical analysis of these encounters. Key findings show that resilience, adaptability, and the necessity to embrace cultural diversity are characteristics of a Filipino English teacher's journey in Japan. It highlights the teacher's dual role as both an educator and a cultural ambassador, tasked with bridging linguistic and cultural gaps between students and their global context. The study emphasizes the transformative potential of intercultural exchange, where language teaching fosters mutual understanding and global connectedness. It also underscores the importance of self-reflection and identity negotiation for migrant educators' growth. With implications for education and migration discourses, the research advocates for supporting diverse teaching identities and promoting culturally responsive practices. By situating the Filipino teacher's experiences within the broader context of globalization, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers, institutions, and migrant educators, illustrating how living and teaching abroad reshapes both professional practices and personal identities. It ultimately offers lessons on embracing diversity and fostering inclusivity in an interconnected global society.

Keywords: Autoethnography, Filipino Teacher, Japan, non-native English teacher, teaching English.

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INTRODUCTION

The English language has emerged as the universal language of international communication in a world growing more interconnected each day. English as a second or foreign language instructors are essential in fostering global connections. The experiences of teachers who speak English as their first language are the subject of a lot of research, while non-native English speakers' stories are still not well represented. Particularly when these educators operate in culturally diverse environments,

these narratives provide insightful perspectives on the intricacies of language, culture, and identity.

English education has become a top priority in Asia for both global competitiveness and economic growth. China (Qin, 2024), South Korea (Choi, 2023), Japan (Yoko, 2023), and other nations have made significant investments in English language programs and frequently depend on foreign instructors to meet their objectives. The story, however, usually emphasizes native speakers from the West while ignoring the increasing number of non-native instructors

from nearby nations, such as the Philippines. Because of their cultural and linguistic diversity, Filipino teachers, who are proficient in both English and their native tongues, offer a distinct viewpoint to English instruction in Asia.

The need for English proficiency in Japan has sparked initiatives, such as hiring foreign teachers for private schools and educational institutions like Eikaiwa or English conversation schools. Despite their important role in these programs, Filipino teachers frequently face two obstacles: adjusting to Japanese cultural norms and navigating their perceptions as non-native English speakers. For foreign educators attempting to incorporate their teaching methods into this unique educational setting, Japan's insistence on cultural uniformity (Woo, 2022) adds another level of complexity.

In Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture, one of the authors witnessed the complex relationship between teaching English and assimilating into Japanese society. His students, who range in age from preschoolers to elderly adults, represent the various demands and expectations of English language learners in Japan. His experience working in an eikaiwa has exposed him to various cultural and educational dynamics, frequently urging him to bridge the gap between Japanese and Filipino ways of thinking. These encounters have made him more interested in how his identity as a Filipino teacher influences his relationships and methods of instruction in this local context.

Even though the number of Filipino instructors in Japan is increasing, little research has looked at their experiences from the perspective of their distinct linguistic and cultural backgrounds. There is a knowledge vacuum regarding the contributions and difficulties faced by Filipino educators in Japan because previous research frequently concentrates on native-speaking instructors or broader English education trends. By examining the convergence of his professional and personal experiences as a Filipino teacher teaching in Japanese schools, this study seeks to close this gap.

This autoethnographic study aims to explore one of the author's experiences navigating cultural differences, professional challenges, and personal development as a Filipino English teacher in Japan. The authors want to contribute to the conversation on multicultural education, illuminate the lived realities of non-native English speakers, and offer useful advice for enhancing instruction in diverse classrooms by sharing the participant's experiences. This study emphasizes how crucial it is to acknowledge and value Filipino educators' contributions to the development of English instruction in Japan.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

An autoethnographic method is used in this study to examine the participant's experiences teaching English in Japan as a Filipino. Autoethnography is perfect for

investigating the relationship between the participant's identity, teaching methods, and the Japanese cultural setting since it is a qualitative research method combining cultural analysis and personal narrative (Creswell & Poth, 2016). By placing the participant's individual experiences in larger social and cultural contexts, this approach enables the authors to critically evaluate the difficulties, adjustments, and development the participant has faced. Since autoethnography (Clandinin, 2022) offers deep insights into the convergence of teaching, culture, and identity, it is especially well-suited to this study. It reflects the depth and complexity of the participant's experience as both a participant and an observer.

Participant

As the sole participant in this autoethnographic study, one of the researchers represents a unique case of a Filipino non-native English speaker navigating the educational and cultural landscapes of Japan. His professional background, spanning from teaching at a university in the Philippines to working in eikaiwas in Aichi Prefecture, provides a diverse and layered perspective. His experiences encompass teaching students of various ages and backgrounds, making his narrative a valuable lens for understanding the multifaceted realities of non-native teachers in Japan.

Instrument

As a reflective practitioner, one of the authors served as the main instrument in this inquiry. Methods for gathering and evaluating data included his journals, field notes, lesson plans, and student feedback. With the use of these tools, he could methodically record and consider his lived experiences. Teaching artifacts and student comments provide concrete proof of his professional methods and their effects, while journals offer a constant log of his feelings and thoughts. Combining these resources guarantees that the research is based on genuine, real-world experiences.

Data Collection Procedure

The data-gathering process used three primary sources: field notes, reflective journals, and pertinent teaching artifacts. For the last four years, one of the researchers have kept a journal recording his experiences as a teacher, his interactions with different cultures, and his thoughts. Contextual and situational details were captured through field notes taken during daily encounters with students, coworkers, and the larger community. The researchers examined lesson plans, educational materials, and students' feedback to cross-check the information and present a thorough picture of work practices. This multifaceted strategy guarantees data-gathering the depth and richness of the data gathered.

Data Analysis

The authors used the three-dimensional framework of temporality, sociality, and spatiality to analyze the data (Clandinin, 2022). In temporality, they examined how

the participant's past experiences as an educator in the Philippines influenced his present teaching practices in Japan and how these experiences shaped his future aspirations. In sociality, the analysis explored the personal, social, and cultural dimensions of his experiences, focusing on interactions with students, colleagues, and the broader Japanese society. Lastly, in spatiality, they considered how the physical and institutional environments of Aichi Prefecture and eikaiwa shaped the participant's teaching methods and cultural adaptation. Journal entries, field notes, and artifacts were grouped under these three dimensions using iterative coding as part of the study. This framework is suitable because it enables a comprehensive examination of the participant's lived experiences, encompassing their contextual impacts, relationship dynamics, and temporal progression.

Data Trustworthiness

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of this study, the authors adhered to the qualitative research criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Thomson & Crowther, 2022), with a particular focus on maintaining objectivity through the epoche technique or bracketing. Triangulating information from several sources, such as reflective journals, field notes, lesson plans, and student remarks, helped to develop credibility. This guaranteed an extensive understanding of the subject matter being examined. We also constantly reviewed and examined the data to make sure they were in line with the study's goals as part of our ongoing self-checking and reflection. Rich, detailed accounts of the participant's experiences were used to achieve transferability, which allowed readers to identify with and place the findings in comparable cultural or educational contexts. Through a detailed description of the institutional and cultural surroundings of his teaching in Aichi Prefecture, this study provides insights that can be applied to other non-native English teachers in Japan or comparable settings. The study procedure was carefully documented to guarantee dependability. Keeping track of the data collection, analysis, and interpretation process was part of this. This kind of transparency makes it possible to replicate the study or its methods in subsequent investigations. By minimizing personal biases through bracketing or the epoche approach, confirmability was reinforced. To analyze the data and concentrate just on the main points, this method required putting aside cultural presumptions, personal experiences, and preconceived conceptions. The authors deliberately used introspective techniques to separate their personal opinions from the factual story that emerged from the data. This method makes sure that the study's conclusions are based on the facts and not their own prejudices.

Ethical Considerations

To maintain the integrity of the research process, this study complies with ethical guidelines. The authors have made sure that their reflections preserve the confidentiality and

privacy of everyone listed in the data, including coworkers and students. Where necessary, generalizations and pseudonyms have been employed to safeguard identity. Furthermore, by stressing openness, truthfulness, and reflection at every stage of the research process, this study conforms to ethical standards for autoethnographic research. This methodology contributes to a greater understanding of the challenges of teaching in a multicultural setting by guaranteeing a thorough, introspective, and culturally based examination of the participant's experience as a Filipino English teacher in Japan.

RESULTS

The findings of this autoethnographic study are organized according to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework: temporality (past, present, and future), sociality (personal, social, and cultural dimensions), and spatiality (environment and institutional contexts). In order to examine the professional and personal experiences of a Filipino English teacher adjusting to living and teaching in Japan, these dimensions offer a structured lens.

Temporality

The participant's academic and professional journey began in the Philippines, where English is one of the two official languages and is widely used in education, business, and governance. As a Philosophy graduate from Holy Trinity College Seminary, he initially envisioned being a Catholic priest, which led him to pursue an MA in Theology with a major in Pastoral Ministry at Seton Hall University in the USA with the help of his religious community, the Adorno Fathers and Brothers (Clerics Regular Minor). While this foundation seemed far removed from teaching English, it cultivated his ability to communicate complex ideas clearly and thoughtfully, which later became a cornerstone of his teaching philosophy.

Upon his return to the Philippines, he became an instructor and eventually an assistant professor of English and theology at the University of Santo Tomas-Legazpi. Combining his theological understanding with his developing interest in language instruction was made possible by his experience teaching at a university. Because they frequently had different levels of English ability, his students challenged him to refine his teaching methods in order to guarantee inclusivity and engagement.

To strengthen his credentials, he pursued an MA in English Education at Bicol University and later in 2018 earned a Master's Diploma in TESOL from TEFL Training College based in the UK. In 2024, he completed his doctoral degree in English Education. These academic pursuits broadened his understanding of language acquisition theories and practical teaching methodologies. He remembers vividly how his TESOL coursework required him to create lesson plans for hypothetical multicultural classrooms. Little did he know that these exercises would prepare him for real-world teaching challenges in Japan.

Even with this strong foundation, it was difficult to make the transition from teaching in the Philippines to working in Japan. He had to relearn several techniques that worked well in a Filipino classroom but were not as appropriate for the structured, hierarchical educational system in Japan. For example, in the Philippines, students are encouraged to openly criticize ideas and frequently participate in active conversations. Japanese classrooms, in contrast, place a strong emphasis on indirect feedback, stillness as a form of active listening, and respect for authority. It was enlightening and humbling to adjust to this cultural paradigm.

Presently, he teaches conversational English at several Eikaiwas in Nagoya City, Inuyama City, Komaki City, and Konan City where he engages with students of all ages, from animated kids in kindergarten who are excited to sing English songs to elderly people who are eager to tell their life stories. Every age group has its opportunities and unique challenges.

For instance, to keep the attention of young students, interactive games and activities are frequently incorporated into instruction. A session where he introduced a Filipino traditional song in English was one of his favorite experiences. The children's excitement and laughter not only added enjoyment to the activity but also demonstrated the value of cross-cultural interaction. Adult learners require a completely different approach. Most of them have specific objectives, including improving business communication or getting ready for a trip abroad. One senior student, he remembered, proudly told him how his classes had given him the confidence to handle a family reunion in the United States. These stories highlight how English instruction has the power to bridge cultural and individual goals.

The difficulties of striking a balance between his structured teaching style and Eikaiwas' preferred conversational focus are made clear by his daily journal entries. For instance, when students showed an interest in learning how to naturally reply to greetings or compliments in English, he had to immediately modify a session he had prepared on grammatical drills. The comments he got frequently emphasized the cultural expectation that English teachers in Japan should speak with fluency and accents similar to those of native speakers. This occasionally caused him to doubt his credibility in the position as a Filipino. However, he started to see these instances as chances to question conventional ideas of "nativeness" in language instruction and to affirm the worth of multilingual teachers.

In the future, he hopes to use his experiences to support more cultural awareness and diversity in English instruction, both in Japan and beyond. He wants to create instructional strategies that honor and promote the variety of backgrounds that non-native English speakers like him have.

One of his objectives is to create training materials, especially for non-native English teachers employed in Japan. These modules would place a strong emphasis on methods for negotiating cultural differences, developing self-assurance in one's linguistic identity, and creating cooperative learning settings. Additionally, he wishes to publish research that emphasizes the distinct viewpoints of multilingual educators in order to contribute to international discussions on English education.

His long-term goal is to encourage global communication by fostering respect and acceptance of different varieties of English or world Englishes. As the world grows more interconnected, important voices are frequently left out due to the dominance of native English speaker norms. By sharing his journey, he hopes to inspire other non-native English teachers to embrace their identities and recognize the unique contributions they bring to the classroom.

In a nutshell, a story of advocacy, flexibility, and resilience is created by the intersection of his prior experiences in the Philippines, his current teaching position in Japan, and his future goals. These historical factors not only influence his professional development but also provide valuable perspectives on how English instruction is changing in multicultural and multilingual contexts.

Sociality

His personal journey as a Filipino living in Japan has been a profound blend of victories and setbacks. There were particular difficulties when he moved to a place where he had trouble understanding the language well at first. Simple activities like grocery shopping or using transportation turned into learning experiences. These experiences humbled him and made him more aware of the difficulties his students may have when studying English. Reflections on his identity—not only as a teacher but also as a Filipino immigrant in a culture that values cultural uniformity—abound in his journal entries from this time.

Being a non-native English instructor and feeling invisible was a recurring theme in his reflections. In spite of his credentials, he sometimes faced suspicion from organizations or students who believed that only native English speakers were qualified to teach the language. During his first lesson, he remembered one student asking tentatively, "Where are you from?" and then reacting in surprise when he gave the Philippines as the answer. Though frustrating, these kinds of experiences inspired him to demonstrate that good instruction is not limited by a person's nationality.

However, there have also been several instances of personal pride. Being able to represent the Filipino identity in a global context has provided him with a special opportunity to share his culture with others. Throughout his classes, he had piqued his students' interest by telling them stories of Filipino hospitality, food, beautiful places, and traditions. Teaching his senior students about

“Bayanihan,” the Filipino custom of camaraderie and mutual aid, and connecting it to their understanding of “Omotenashi,” or Japanese hospitality, was one of his most memorable lessons. These experiences serve as a reminder that teaching English is only one aspect of his journey; another is fostering cross-cultural understanding.

Social encounters with students and at work have greatly influenced his experience. It took time and knowledge of Japanese workplace culture to establish a connection with Japanese colleagues. At first, the Japanese workplace's emphasis on hierarchy, attention to detail, and indirect communication seemed intimidating. His journal frequently documented instances of miscommunication, such as the time he enthusiastically proposed a new instructional activity and received polite but vague answers from colleagues. He eventually figured out how to handle these nuances and realized that, even if his ideas were not confirmed right away, they were being thought about.

Engaging with students has also been transforming. Connections have been forged through shared cultural experiences. For instance, he taught his students about Japanese holidays like Tanabata and Filipino festivals like Sinulog in one class. The parallels, particularly the utilization of vibrant décor and the sense of community, captivated the children. These conversations frequently encouraged more in-depth participation and provided a context for speaking English.

Changing lesson plans to accommodate cultural preferences was another important social experience. For example, he developed a lecture on travel vocabulary and phrases during Golden Week, a significant Japanese holiday. He invited students to share their domestic and international travel plans to make them relatable, and he also gave them useful expressions to utilize. The significance of culturally relevant instruction was reaffirmed when a high school student afterward joyfully shared that she had successfully used the words during a family trip.

Cultural differences have presented opportunities for development as well as challenges. He had to quickly adjust to the classroom culture in Japan as a teacher because it differs greatly from what he was used to in the Philippines. Silence and attentiveness are valued as signs of respect by Japanese students, who frequently show a high degree of respect to their teachers. His prior experience in the Philippines, where students were encouraged to express themselves freely and participate in active discussions, was very different from this.

But he experienced a distinct vibe at the Eikaiwa. Because conversational English lessons are informal, students frequently anticipate a more laid-back and participatory teaching style. He had to change his strategy and create a facilitative method that struck a balance between spontaneity and structure because of this cultural dichotomy. For instance, he designed exercises that prompted students to

act out real-world situations, such as placing an order at a restaurant or making an introduction at a global gathering. While retaining the interactive engagement that they found enjoyable, these exercises assisted students in developing practical skills.

There is one particularly noteworthy cultural story from a senior citizen class. “It’s raining cats and dogs,” is a common expression that he shared and explained. Japanese phrases for heavy rain, such as “It’s raining like a waterfall” (滝のように降る), seemed more natural to one of the students, who chuckled. A lively discussion comparing English and Japanese idioms resulted from this, illustrating how linguistic subtleties are influenced by cultural factors. In addition to enriching the educational process, these cultural exchanges increased his understanding of how teaching and culture are intertwined.

In summary, his journey in Japan has been shaped by personal resilience, meaningful social interactions, and the ability to navigate and embrace cultural differences. These experiences have profoundly influenced his teaching identity, fostering growth in both his professional and personal life.

Spatiality

Teaching in a private, more relaxed environment in an Eikaiwa (English conversation school) in Japan, as opposed to university classrooms in the Philippines, has significantly changed the participant's approaches and environment. In the Philippines, students from comparable linguistic and cultural backgrounds attended larger university classes. The focus of the academically oriented lessons was formal writing, literature, and grammar. With the use of organized PowerPoint presentations and thorough lesson plans that followed a curriculum aimed at academic objectives, his materials were frequently lecture-driven.

However, in the Eikaiwa context, the environment is far more dynamic and adaptable, and the emphasis is on conversation. Students range in age from active kindergarteners to senior adults keen to travel or interact with the world community, and classes can be one-on-one or small groups. His field notes, for instance, show how he changed from lecturing on intricate language principles to using participatory games and storytelling with young audiences. One of his best sessions was teaching a group of preschoolers simple conversational phrases using flash cards. He used gestures and visuals to make sure the kids understood and were interested.

His approach for adult learners is to real-world situations. Recently, students practiced using words like “Let’s circle back to that idea” and “Could you clarify your point?” during a business meeting role-playing exercise with a group of professionals. The relaxed atmosphere of the Eikaiwa gives him the freedom to modify each class to meet the particular requirements of his students. Because every class is different in this setting, he frequently stressed in his journal entries the value of this flexibility.

Additionally, this setting has prompted him to rethink who he is as a teacher. The Eikaiwa challenges him to constantly demonstrate his relevance as a teacher to students who could initially perceive him as less capable because of his non-native English background, in contrast to the organized university setting where his authority as an instructor was rarely questioned. However, this difficulty has strengthened his determination and ingenuity, turning the Eikaiwa into a place for understanding and mutual growth.

The institutional requirements for English instruction in Japan are distinct and occasionally demanding. Conversational fluency in English is highly prized, as demonstrated by government initiatives such as the “English Education Reform Plan Corresponding to Globalization.” However, this focus frequently leads to conflict between the expectations of the institution and the realities of the classroom. This discrepancy is often emphasized in his journals, as parents and schools demand that students speak fluently. Still, the learners themselves have a variety of goals, from passing admission tests or Eiken (English proficiency test in Japan) to getting ready for a trip abroad.

There is an additional level of complexity while navigating this environment as a non-native English teacher. Native English speakers are frequently given preference in policies and recruiting procedures (not to mention the economic disparity), which establishes an implicit hierarchy in English instruction. This dynamic is reflected in his experiences, which range from being questioned at interviews about how his “accent” is different from that of a native speaker to seeing kids initially choose native teachers. In one particularly memorable story, a parent who had been hesitant to sign up their child for his class later expressed thankfulness after the youngster’s confidence in speaking English grew dramatically under his instruction.

Despite these obstacles, he has managed to succeed within the institutional structure. To celebrate multilingualism and highlight that proficient English communication is not just for native speakers, he has, for example, integrated aspects of his Filipino heritage into his courses. To help students develop a global perspective, one activity compared the ways that English is used in the Philippines, Japan, and other nations. His materials include lesson plans in which students considered how language is shaped by cultural interchange and examined English terms borrowed into Japanese (such as “bukukabaa” for book cover, “donmai” for don’t mind, “eakon” for air conditioner, and many more).

His experiences also highlight the need for multicultural and multilingual educators to be given more credit. He often writes in his journal about how his knowledge of learning English as a second language allows him to relate to his students’ difficulties in a special way. He tells them about his own experiences, such as how he worked on his

vocabulary or how he practiced speaking English with classmates in the Philippines. Students find resonance in these experiences, which illustrate that language acquisition is a process rather than a final goal.

In summary, the spatial dimensions of his teaching journey—the dynamic environment of the Eikaiwa and the institutional contexts of Japan’s English education system—have profoundly shaped his teaching philosophy and practice. They have challenged him to adapt, innovate, and advocate for the value of diverse teaching perspectives in an increasingly interconnected world. These experiences are a testament to the resilience and adaptability required to navigate the intersection of cultural, linguistic, and professional identities.

DISCUSSION

As a Filipino English teacher adjusting to living and teaching in Japan, the results of this autoethnographic study, which was organized using the three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework (temporality, sociality, and spatiality), show the many levels of professional and personal adaptation. These observations support discussions concerning multilingual identity, intercultural teaching methods, and the evolving paradigms of English language instruction in international settings.

Temporality

The temporal lens emphasizes the continuity of experiences that mold a teacher’s identity and the significance of past, present, and future occurrences for professional and personal growth. The participant’s path, which started with philosophical and theological foundations, is consistent with transformative learning theory (Schneppfleitner & Ferreira, 2021), which holds that critical reflection on life experiences leads to meaningful learning. The “disorienting dilemmas” at the heart of transformative learning are best shown by the shift from teaching in the Philippines to adjusting to the Japanese educational setting, where pedagogical and cultural variations required a reassessment of previous teaching methods.

Recent studies emphasize how crucial flexibility is to education in a globalized world. Yetti (2024) implies that teachers must balance their pedagogical approaches with local expectations when navigating cross-cultural settings. His transition from a discussion-based, participatory method in the Philippines to a more hierarchical, respect-based approach in Japan reflects this need for flexibility. Llurda & Calvet-Terré (2024) also challenge the predominance of native-speaker norms in English language instruction, affirming the need to deconstruct the idea that native speakers are linguistically and pedagogically superior to their non-native counterparts. This supports the participant’s initiatives to help non-native English teachers and question conventional ideas of “nativeness” in the classroom.

The participant's goal to support English language instruction in Japan by researching and developing training materials for non-native instructors is also reflected in the temporality dimension. This is in line with the increasing demand for culturally responsive pedagogy (Monyai, 2024), which highlights how crucial it is to incorporate teachers' and students' varied cultural backgrounds into educational practices.

Sociality

The social dimension encapsulates the interaction of personal, social, and cultural factors that influence the participant's identity and teaching experiences. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Crawford, 2020; Guy-Evans, 2020), which shows how connections within and across different social systems impact individual development, is embodied in the participant's journey, as his reflections indicate. Personal identity and social surroundings interact dynamically, as demonstrated by his experiences managing cultural expectations in the classroom and at work.

The difficulties faced by non-native English teachers in Japan, like overcoming prejudices related to "nativeness," are consistent with the results of Llurda and Calvet-Terré (2024), who stress that teacher identity is frequently challenged and negotiated in cross-cultural settings. Despite the initial skepticism from parents and children, his attempts to demonstrate his legitimacy and competence support their claim that good teaching is based on pedagogical skill and intercultural competency rather than linguistic background.

Furthermore, cultural humility (Foronda, 2020) provides a lens through which to view his interactions with Japanese coworkers and students. He was able to promote tolerance and understanding between people by embracing cultural differences with an open mind and a desire to learn. For example, his lessons that linked Japanese customs like "Omotenashi" with Filipino ideas like "Bayanihan" demonstrate how cultural interchange may enhance educational opportunities and bridge social gaps.

Spatiality

The educational environment and institutional frameworks significantly influence the participant's professional practices, as the spatial dimension makes clear. Significant pedagogical changes were necessary when conventional university classrooms in the Philippines were replaced with the dynamic and adaptable environment of Eikaiwas in Japan. This shift is consistent with sociocultural theory (Tzuriel & David, 2021), which highlights how social interaction and setting shape teaching and learning methods.

The participant's capacity to adapt lessons to a variety of learner demands, from business English roleplays for professionals to interactive activities for kids, exemplifies

the idea of differentiated instruction (Roberts & Inman, 2023). Fostering student engagement and success in the Eikaiwa environment has been greatly aided by this strategy, which promotes modifying teaching strategies to meet a range of learning objectives and styles.

Government programs like the "English Education Reform Plan Corresponding to Globalization," which place a strong institutional focus on conversational fluency, highlight the sociopolitical factors influencing English instruction in Japan. However, Llurda and Calvet-Terré (2024) contend that by prioritizing native speaker standards and undervaluing the contributions of non-native teachers, these policies frequently serve to maintain imbalances. This tension is reflected in the participant's experiences, but they also indicate how multilingual educators have special abilities that can be utilized to challenge these standards. For example, he showed the importance of varied linguistic and cultural viewpoints by incorporating Filipino cultural elements into his teachings, which also enhanced the learning process.

Additionally, new research supporting contextually relevant instructional materials is in line with use of storytelling and real-world applications, such as comparing idiomatic expressions in English and Japanese (Nikšić, 2024) and the development of contextually tailored instructional materials for third-age learners (San Jose et al., 2024a; San Jose et al., 2024b; San Jose et al., 2024c; San Jose & Madrigal, 2023). These techniques help students navigate a globalized society by fostering multicultural awareness in addition to improving language proficiency.

Implications for Practice and Future Directions

The findings of this study emphasize the necessity of giving non-native English teachers in Japan and other settings more recognition and support. Programs for professional development that enable multilingual teachers to capitalize on their distinct identities and experiences in the classroom ought to be given top priority by institutions. Furthermore, a more inclusive approach to English teaching that celebrates linguistic variety must replace ideas that are centered on native speakers.

This study also emphasizes how crucial it is to use culturally sensitive teaching methods that incorporate the cultural backgrounds of both teachers and students into the educational process. Future studies may examine how these approaches affect teacher effectiveness and student results over the long run.

Lastly, the opportunities and challenges of teaching English as a non-native teacher in Japan are shown by this autoethnographic journey. The authors have gained a sophisticated grasp of how teaching identity and practices are influenced by the interaction of past experiences, current environments, and future goals by overcoming cultural, social, and institutional barriers. These results add to more general conversations on multilingual

identity, intercultural teaching, and how English language instruction is changing in a globalized society.

CONCLUSION

The study sheds light on the complex challenges and life-changing events that come with navigating multiple roles as a teacher and a cultural outsider. It draws attention to the complex interrelationship between adjusting to the particular cultural dynamics of the host country and teaching English abroad. From a critical standpoint, this journey demonstrates how teaching involves immersion into sociocultural situations, where the teacher serves as both a conduit for world information and a participant in the local culture. By redefining education as a reciprocal process in which both the instructor and the students gain knowledge from cultural exchange, this dual role cultivates a profound sense of humility, empathy, and adaptability.

The narrative also emphasizes how resilient one must be to deal with the strict social structures and hierarchical rules deeply ingrained in Japanese culture. These frameworks may seem constrictive to a Filipino teacher, but they also provide an area for introspection, development, and eventual integration. From a philosophical standpoint, this journey shows how people can accept role fluidity and transcend preconceived ideas of identity. A deeper truth about human potential is revealed by the teacher's ability to adapt, flourish, and make a significant contribution to Japan's educational and cultural landscape: that learning to respect diversity and get over the discomfort of new situations are frequently the first steps toward both professional and personal growth.

The study also highlights the transforming potential of language as a cross-cultural bridge. A Filipino teaching English in Japan serves as a cultural ambassador, promoting understanding between two very different cultures. In this situation, language serves as more than just a means of communication; it is a potent instrument for promoting connection and dismantling barriers of bias and misinterpretation. This emphasizes the idea that teaching English in a multicultural context is fundamentally an act of fostering humanity.

Through the lens of autoethnography, the study also highlights the need of self-reflection as a way to discover more profound truths about professional practice, identity, and belonging. In addition to highlighting the distinctive contributions of migrant educators, the researchers advance a more comprehensive understanding of the systemic issues they encounter by recounting and evaluating personal experiences. In light of the fact that diversity benefits society at large as well as the classroom, this reflective process urges educational institutions to recognize and assist the varied identities of their faculty.

The experience of the Filipino teacher is ultimately placed within the worldwide dynamic of globalization and migration, which necessitates a greater level of intercultural

competency. It questions conventional ideas of what it means to be an "English teacher," supporting an inclusive viewpoint that honors the diversity of perspectives and experiences in the classroom. By doing this, it stimulates philosophical thought about how intertwined all people are and how educational institutions should value the diversity of cultural interchange. Through this journey, the Filipino teacher's experience serves as a testament to the enduring importance of resilience, adaptability, and the transformative power of education in building bridges across cultures.

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