

Negotiating Identities Across Filipino and Thai EFL Contexts: A Narrative Inquiry of a Filipino Teacher's Professional Identity Re-construction

CHATUPORN INSUWAN^{1*}

KENAN DIKILITAŞ²

¹Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Phranakhon Rajabhat University, Thailand

²Department of Education, University of Bergen, Norway

*Corresponding author email: chatuporn.i@pnru.ac.th

Article information	Abstract
Article history: Received: 24 Jul 2023 Last revised: 17 Sep 2026 Accepted: 18 Sep 2026 Available online: 23 Sep 2026	<i>Language learning is not only about achieving communicative purposes, but also entails investing in a second language and struggling with identity re-construction, which is shaped and positioned by sociocultural institutions and ideological structures. This study aims to investigate the factors that influence a Filipino teacher to invest in English language learning, and how she re-constructs her professional identity in the target community of Thai EFL context. The narrative inquiry was adopted to collect data from our only participant's stories, using semi-structured interview protocols. The data was transcribed using Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-phase approach to thematic analysis. To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, the internal validity was established by using triangulating analysts with two inter-raters and respondent validation. From the narratives, it was found that poverty and economic status, her goal of life, and the perception of English as a powerful language were major factors influencing the teacher's investment in English language learning. Additionally, her educational degree, teaching skills, institutional support, social network, and ability to adjust to the sociocultural norms, expectations, and language policy in the Thai EFL context were all pivotal tools contributing to her success in identity re-construction. These findings emphasize the significant relationship between language, power, investment, and identity from a sociocultural perspective.</i>
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INTRODUCTION

As the world becomes increasingly globalized through technological advancements and the movement of people, the issue of identity has garnered attention from scholars in various fields. One term that exemplifies identity in the context of globalization, colonization, and trans-culturalization is hybridity. This term refers to the emergence of new cultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization, resulting in the mixing and hybridization of cultures (Ashcroft et al., 2002). In this third space, identity conflicts arise, driving people to construct their identities. Identity conflict and identity re-construction in the mixed and

hybrid global society can be explored in second language learning. The learning and use of English, as one of the world's most spoken languages, have a direct impact on the identity construction of English language users and learners. Norton (2013) states that second language learning is closely related to identity and investment, where identity is defined as how a person understands their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future. Darvin and Norton (2015) have developed a model of investment that exemplifies the co-occurrence of identity, capital, and ideology, illustrating how power circulates in society and influences language in terms of inclusion and exclusion. The model has been employed to explore identity construction of language learners in multiple studies.

Two frameworks that have been widely employed in many studies to explore the identity construction of second language learners are The Douglas Fir Group's (2016) Transdisciplinary Framework for SLA and Darvin and Norton's (2015) Model of Investment. The former framework highlights the social activities of language teaching and learning, which are divided into three levels of micro, meso, and macro, while the latter focuses on learners' investment in a language and identity construction in three dimensions of ideology, capital, and identity.

While the framework proposed by The Douglas Fir Group's (2016) sheds light on how second language learners use their semiotic resources, such as linguistic, interactional, and artifactual resources in the micro-level to engage with sociocultural institutions and communities, such as family, school, and neighborhood, Darvin and Norton's (2015) Model of Investment helps exemplify how individuals, particularly second language learners, employ three main capitals, including economic, cultural, and social capitals to construct new identities in a community of the target language where they desire to be a member.

The model of investment created by Darvin and Norton (2015) has been employed to explore the identity construction of second language learners in multiple studies. For example, the relationship between imagined identity and investment of high-achieving EFL learners in Taiwan was explored in Wu (2017), indicating socio-cultural norms and expectations of the target language as major factors influencing second language learners' investment and identity. Investment and identity have also been found in adult learners, as seen in Duran (2016), which explored a lower-middle-class Karenni refugee's investment in the target language for social and economic survival. Apart from learners, the identity construction of language teachers is also found in a remarkable work by Barkhuizen (2016), who explored purposeful investment for professional identity construction of a high school teacher who immigrated from the Pacific Island of Tonga to live and work in New Zealand.

While most studies have explored the identity construction and investment of second language learners, few have explored the professional identity re-construction of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNEST) in non-native English-speaking countries. This study aims to explore how an NNEST, a female Filipino teacher in this study, invests her capititals for professional identity re-construction in a non-native English-speaking country of Thailand. The research questions for this study are:

- What factors influenced a Filipino language teacher to invest in English language learning and teacher education?
- How did a Filipino language teacher re-construct her professional identity in the target community of Thai EFL context?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language learning not only concerns the learners' desire to acquire the target language for their communicative purpose but also involves their investment in identity construction to be accepted as part of the target community where their desired language is situated. Many studies have explored the investment and identity construction of English language learners, most of which employ Darvin and Norton's (2015) foundational work on identity and investment. For example, Quan (2019) raised the issue of why learners studying abroad returned to their homelands with varying degrees of the second language (L2) and different attitudes towards the target language. This allowed for the exploration of how and why learners' investment in Spanish and learning opportunities shifted through the period of study abroad in Spain. Socio-cultural norms and expectations of the target language that make some impacts on the identity and investment of students who study abroad were also found in a study by Chang (2016). The researcher examined how two multilingual students studying at a U.S. community college invested in learning English. As members of multiple communities in the U.S., the two multilingual students struggled to find a balance between the school-based and their community-based discourses or the valued language forms, norms, and values of a particular social group.

Although socio-cultural norms and expectations of the target language were found to create a great impact on learners' investment and identity as evidenced in the two studies, students' ways of approaching English language learning in their homelands also influence students' goals of study abroad and identity construction in the second language. Hajar (2017) compared the learners from a disadvantaged background with those from a well-educated family. This finding revealed that those from a well-educated family were able to adjust themselves to a new discourse community of their second language more easily, which also supports the idea that linguistic resources of a second language learner are so pivotal. Additionally, the investment and identity of students desiring to acquire the second language in their homelands have also been largely investigated. Wu (2017) studied the English learning histories of three high achieving EFL learners in Taiwan to find the relationship between their imagined identity and investment. The researcher pointed out that social and personal factors determined learners' choices of investment and identity construction in different learning stages. The more their imagined identities were extended, such as English user and English teacher, the more they variedly invested in both formal and informal contexts.

Duran (2016) explored a multilingual Karenni refugee in the United States who invested in learning multiple languages throughout the movements across three different countries and used his multilingual capital for his transnational identities and economic security in the USA. He expected that his possessed multilingual skills could help him achieve social and economic

survival. In addition, Petraki (2019) explored investment in second language learning of Greek adult learners from families and described themselves as lower-middle or middle class. Similar to the previous study of adult learners, the findings revealed that investment in several foreign languages for proficiency and certification was significant for future career success and social class. Finally, the perspective of identity construction is salient in a study by Saito (2017). Perceiving English as a global language, Japanese adult learners as the participants had a strong belief that English could transform their identities of imagined English-speaking selves in an imagined global English-speaking community for advanced career and social and personal opportunities.

Even though learners' investment in a second language seems to be the central focus, the teacher's investment in a second language and construction of professional identities are also evidenced in many studies and have provided crucial implications for second language acquisition in applied linguistics. The teacher's identity and investment, narrated through the short story approach by Barkhuizen (2016), is recognized as the most recognizable study in the aspect of teacher's identity and investment. Adopting The Douglas Fir Group's Transdisciplinary Framework for SLA, which comprises three levels of social activities: micro, meso, and macro, Barkhuizen narrated the life story of a high school teacher of English who immigrated from the Pacific Island of Tonga to live and work in New Zealand. The investigation of her emerging teacher identity and future working life illustrated her purposeful investment in a university education and teacher training for herself, her learners, and her family and community.

The language teacher's investment and identity are also found in research conducted by Kayi-Aydar (2019), who explored a Hispanic female bilingual teacher's investment and exercised agency to develop her professional identities. The significant findings claimed racial and linguistic discrimination as the factors preventing her association and access to the community of the target language and leaving her as an incapable and unhappy teacher at different times. However, her past learning experience and the knowledge gained during her Ph.D. study helped her feel empowered and stronger and finally, she could escape from being marginalized.

The EFL/ESL teachers' narratives of investment and identities were not explored only in those living and working abroad but also in those living in their homelands. Salinas and Ayala (2018) indicated that investment in English does not only rely on economic purpose, but personal and environmental dimensions also play an important role in the teacher's investment and identity construction. The teachers' support and the learning environment gave EFL female student-teachers from an undergraduate program in Chile confidence and encouraged her to become a teacher

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, both The Douglas Fir Group's (2016) Transdisciplinary Framework for SLA in a Multilingual World and Darwin and Norton's 2015 Model of Investment were applied to shed

light on how a Filipino teacher constructed her professional identity in Thailand. The former framework was utilized to explain how a Filipino teacher's professional identity was shaped in individual, social, and ideological levels of micro, meso, and macro respectively, while the latter framework was employed to emphasize how identity, capital, and ideology were interconnected and how the Filipino teacher invested her capital for professional identity re-construction in the three particular levels.

The Douglas Fir Group's (2016) transdisciplinary framework for SLA in a multilingual world

This study employs The Douglas Fir Group's (2016) Transdisciplinary Framework for SLA divided into three major layers: micro, meso, and macro, all of which are considered significant to understanding SLA. This framework provides two main purposes of language learning and teaching. The first purpose is to emphasize L2 learners' diverse multilingual repertoires of meaning-making resources and identities in order to allow their engagement in social, cognitive, and emotional activities with networks and forms of communication and learning. The other purpose is to encourage the learners' awareness of their role and others' worlds that their actions have shaped (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p. 25).

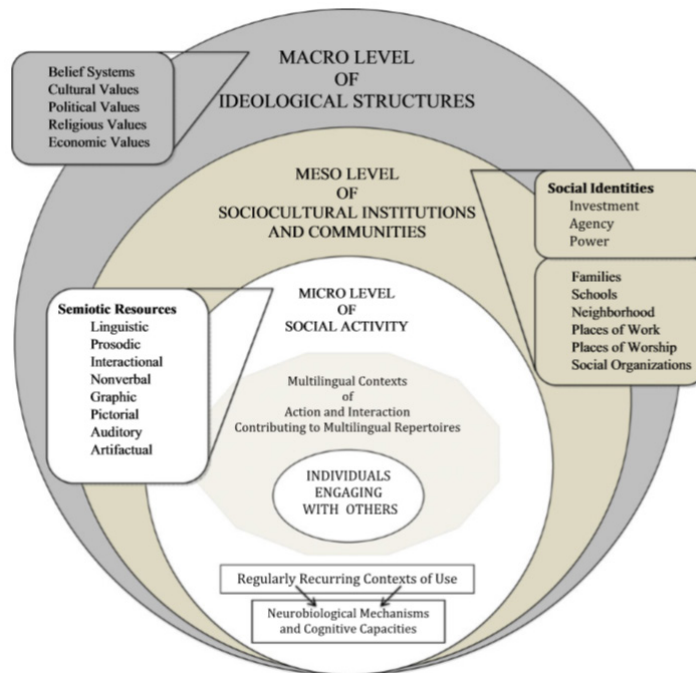


Figure 1 The multifaceted nature of language learning and teaching
(The Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p. 25)

The Douglas Fir Group (2016) explains that at the micro-level of social activity, which is the central part of the circle, semiotic resources such as linguistic, interactional, nonverbal, graphic, and artifactual resources are used in these contexts. At the meso level, which is in the middle circle, individuals are engaged with sociocultural institutions and communities such as family, school, neighborhood, workplaces, clubs, political parties, and so on. These institutions

and communities are shaped by economic, cultural, and political conditions, resulting in individuals' construction of social identities regarding their investment, agency, and power. Lastly, ideological structures concerning language use and learning play an important role at the macro-level, which is the largest circle. The ideological structures associated with belief systems and cultural, political, and economic values have a great influence in shaping and being shaped by sociocultural institutions and communities in the middle circle through the agency of individual members' action and interaction in the smallest circle of the micro-level (pp. 24–26).

The framework is also related to language norms and language choice. The former concerns language use, form, and function, while the latter involves new meaning-making. It is argued that both language norms and language choice must be developed through experience and recognized by a given community of users or co-interlocutors if language learners desire to be members of discourse communities or wish to be legitimate speakers with the right to create meaning and locate themselves in such communities. On the other hand, these flexible competencies allow the speakers not only to achieve their communicative purpose, but also to present themselves and reflect their identity (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p. 26). In sum, at the micro-level, the experience and semiotic resources of L2 learners play a crucial role in L2 learning in a variety of social, economic, cultural, political, and religious conditions. At the meso-level, L2 learning is directed by learners' relation to specific contexts and cultures where they attempt to access real and imagined memberships in various groups of social institutions. Finally, at the macro-level, ideologies concern systems of beliefs, evaluations, and feelings that influence identity, agency, language learning, and language policies and that assimilate in all levels of social activity. They, therefore, conform to individuals' worldviews and how they act and interpret the actions of other people. In terms of language learning, ideologies play a vital role in learners' primary language or academic achievement and how their proficiency should be evaluated, as well as their educational opportunities.

Darvin and Norton's (2015) model of investment.



Figure 2 Darvin and Norton's 2015 model of investment

Figure 2 illustrates Darwin and Norton's (2015) Model of investment, which highlights learners' investment in a language in three dimensions: ideology, capital, and identity. Darwin and Norton (2015) claim that this investment aims to acquire a wide variety of symbolic and material resources, which will later render them cultural capital and social power. They argue that ideology influences the determination of language policies and the construction of ethnolinguistic identities. Therefore, investigating how ideology operates not only helps to understand the dynamic power in communicative events but also helps to understand the relation of power that prevents entry into communicative spaces. In other words, ideology is a site of struggle that determines individuals' identities and shapes the way they act and think. Also, ideology has a dominant power in determining inclusion and exclusion, as well as privileging and marginalizing ideas, people, and relations (pp. 43–44).

In the aspect of capital, Darwin and Norton (2015) assert that understanding ideology helps understand the role of capital in investment. Cultural and social capitals are transformed from material and economic capitals. According to Bourdieu (1986), there are three main types of capital. First, economic capital refers to wealth, property, and income. Second, cultural capital refers to knowledge, educational credentials, and appreciation of specific cultural forms. Finally, social capital refers to connections to the network of people (as cited in Darwin & Norton, 2015, p. 44). They also explain that when capital is recognized as legitimate, it is called symbolic capital. When learners operate across transnational contexts, they bring their capital such as material resources, linguistic skills, and social networks to these spaces. Later, in these spaces, they transform the capital they have brought into new valuable things. However, this phase is regarded as a site of struggle, as their new values are measured by a value system filled with biases and assumptions of a larger sociocultural context possessing the power of imposing the ways of speaking of transnationals (p. 45).

Finally, in terms of identity, Darwin and Norton (2015) argue that identity is a site of struggle of competing ideologies and imagined identities. Under varying degrees of ideologies and capital, learners position themselves and are positioned by others in different contexts. That is, under dominant ideology, they are positioned by others in terms of gender, race, social class, and so on, and in turn, position others or resist their power. Whatever reasons learners have for wanting to be part of a community or to be financially secure, they invest since they have their own desire and imagination called imagined identities, where they can express their desire and re-visualize how things are or what they want them to be.

METHODOLOGY

Among the five major qualitative research approaches, this study was conducted using a narrative inquiry aiming to explore an individual's experience of identity re-construction and social investment. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), to conduct narrative research, narrative researchers collect stories and lived experiences from individuals, so narrative stories tell individuals' experiences and focus on the identities of individuals within specific places or situations. More importantly, narrative stories focus on identities of individuals and how they see themselves (p. 112). Accordingly, narrative inquiry was considered the most appropriate to shed light on how the participant constructed her professional identity.

Participant and context

The participant of this study is a female Filipino teacher with teaching experiences in the Philippine and Thai contexts. The reason that only one participant was selected for this study was because she had experience in many educational levels in Thailand and also had a rich story of how an NNEST re-constructs his or her identity in a non-native English-speaking country. Additionally, with the purposive sampling method according to Creswell and Poth (2018), the selected participant could provide consistent information to help answer the research questions based on the central phenomenon of Thai and Philippine EFL contexts. To protect her privacy, we decided to use a pseudonym, Ligaya, in this study. The first researcher has known Ligaya for two years as a colleague at a government university in Bangkok, Thailand. Ligaya is a female Filipino teacher who has been teaching English for 15 years, eight years in the Philippines and seven years in Thailand.

In the Philippines, Ligaya grew up in a family with low socio-economic status since her father was the only one providing for the whole family. Ligaya has three siblings, and all of them went to university; however, she reported that her family was in the low class. In the Philippines, she lived in a city called Iloilo City, the capital of Iloilo province. This city is in the central-western part of the Philippines and is regarded as one of the centers of education in the Philippines, aside from the capital.

After receiving a bachelor's degree in Engineering and a master's degree in English as a Second Language, Ligaya came to Thailand to work as a teacher. Ligaya is among a large number of Filipino teachers who teach in many educational levels from kindergarten to university in Thailand. According to Derrah et al. (2024), Filipino teachers stand at the top of the number of English-speaking teachers in Thailand, totaling 2,667, among a total of 6,129 foreign teachers working in 922 public and private schools and educational institutions across the country, followed by British (558), and American (465). However, despite their highest and increasing number, Filipino teachers are not regarded as native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) due to their accent. The Filipino teachers have found themselves relatively inferior; they are paid lower, discriminated by the workplace, and are not preferred by Thai learners when compared to the NESTs (Ulla, 2021).

However, despite her recognition as an NNEST, Ligaya managed to get a good job position as a lecturer at two universities in Thailand. The first university she worked for was a private university in the north of Bangkok, Thailand. The university is regarded as an international institute of higher education, where teachers are demanded of high English-speaking ability. Most of the subjects she taught were related to English speaking and listening courses with approximately more than twenty hours per week. Then, her second and current university is a government university in Bangkok. However, her current university is among the group of thirty-eight Rajabhat Universities in Thailand, the mission of which is to promote local development. Nevertheless, since her expected skills are speaking and listening, all of the subjects she teaches are thus based on speaking and listening practices under the workload of approximate twelve hours per week.

Data collection

In this study, semi-structured interview protocols (see Appendix A) were used to collect oral narratives from Ligaya, where she was requested to narrate her life story, focusing on her experiences as an EFL teacher in the Philippines and particularly in Thailand. The interview which lasted 130 minutes was conducted by the first author using Zoom video communications technology, allowing for high-quality audio recording and observation of Ligaya's emotional reactions expressed through facial expressions and discourse markers. Ligaya read our consent form and the interview protocol before she agreed to contribute to our study. The semi-structured interview questions were created in a way that allowed for adjustment and additional questions during the interview. All data collected from the interviews which were divided into 5 sections and lasted 25 minutes approximately for each section were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, content validity and reliability were determined through various methods. The internal validity of the study was ensured through triangulating analysts, where two coders, including one of the researchers of this study and the other coder, independently analyzed the transcripts, coded them, and compared the similarities of the codes created. Member checks or respondent validation were also adopted, where the analyzed data was returned to the participant for examination in order to eliminate misinterpretation. Our participant suggested no revision and correction. Ligaya was very cooperative when we asked her to review and validate our interpretations, which helped us narrate her story with rich and relevant descriptions. The data was then reviewed by the researchers until the researchers became satisfied with the data analysis.

Data analysis

The data collected from the interviews were transcribed using Microsoft 365, and thematic analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-phase approach. The analysis began with familiarizing with the data by listening to the audio data once and then rereading the transcript. Systematic analysis was then conducted by coding the data focusing on the theme of professional identity re-construction. Themes emerging from the data were identified by reviewing the codes and identifying similarities to create themes. Potential themes were then found and examined for relevance to the data and usefulness in answering the research questions. Finally, themes were rearranged to connect them logically and meaningfully, and a report was produced using frequent first-person active voice to tell the story.

In this phase of data analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-phase approach, The Douglas Fir Group's (2016) Transdisciplinary Framework for SLA and Darwin and Norton's (2015) Model of Investment play crucial roles as a guide to enter the data, providing insight for coding, particularly when answering Research Question 2, which examines how the participant constructs her professional identity in the target community within the Thai EFL context. In this respect, Darwin and Norton's three investment dimensions – ideology, capital,

and identity – were employed as an important lens to explore what resources the participant possessed and how she applied those resources to construct her identity in this target community, situated across the Douglas Fir Group’s three levels of second language learning: micro, meso, and macro. Regarding the narrative inquiry, we analyzed the participants’ stories by reorganizing them, or “restoring” them. Therefore, when telling the story, we needed to immerse ourselves again in Ligaya’s story to gain insight and cover all the important points expressed. Then, we narrated the participant’s story mainly in chronological order, following the three levels of second language learning: micro, meso, and macro, trying to link the emerging themes to each of these three levels (See Table 1).

Table 1
Themes emerging from the data analysis

Research Questions	Themes
1. What factors influenced a Filipino language teacher to invest in English language learning and teacher education?	1. Poverty and economic conditions 2. Her background and goal of life 3. Perceptions towards English
2. How did a Filipino language teacher re-construct her professional identity in the target community of Thai EFL context?	4. Capital to access the target community 5. Community belonging 6. Ideological becoming

FINDINGS

This section focuses on the six themes that emerged from the data analysis. The first three themes are the answers to Research Question 1, regarding the factors that influenced Ligaya to invest in teacher education, while the other three themes portray how Ligaya constructed her imagined identity as an EFL teacher in Research Question 2, based on Ligaya’s collected stories and lived experiences. The findings are reported in the order of the six themes, including the categories in each theme, for a detailed description and narration of her stories. The narration of themes 1 to 3 is mainly based on her story in the Philippines, while themes 4 to 6 focus on her identity re-construction in Thailand.

What factors influenced Ligaya to invest in English language learning and teacher education?

The influential factors that drove Ligaya to invest in English language learning and teacher education and thus constructing her teacher identity are her awareness of the socio-economic condition of her neighborhood, her goal of life, and her perception towards the English language as found in Theme 1, Theme 2, and Theme 3, respectively.

Theme 1: Poverty and economic conditions

Ligaya described the poverty and economic condition of people in the Philippines, particularly those in her neighborhood. Poverty in the Philippines is a major cause of people’s inability to access education. Although books and some other materials are free, people cannot afford to send their children to school, and education is perceived as a luxury as she said: “Philippine education can be considered a luxury. Those who are low earners cannot even send their

children to school, even though it is free.” Therefore, many children choose to help their parents earn money instead of going to school. In addition to poverty, Ligaya also indicated that the economic structure of the Philippines is a major cause of inequality, dividing people into clear distinctions of classes. She compared the Philippine economic system to a triangle with many poor people in her neighborhood and those from the middle class to the higher class. These people were very different in terms of the opportunities for education, as she said:

The people in the neighborhood are normally poor. So basically, all the people are studying in a government school. Those who can afford to attend private schools are from the middle-middle class to the high class. But in the Philippines, the economic system is like a triangle.

The poor socio-economic condition in her homeland became a powerful factor pushing her to utilize the economic capital she had possessed to escape from such poverty from which many people in her neighborhood were suffering. Although she identified her family as a low-class, compared to other people living nearby, Ligaya was slightly more financially secure as all of her siblings could gain education from universities. Despite such low economic capital, Ligaya perceived it as a crucial resource for her better life. Therefore, with few other paths available under these economic constraints, Ligaya viewed education and English language learning as her main way out of poverty, as she mentioned: “This is what Filipino people believe: education is the only way out of poverty. That is how we were taught. Education is the only way; there are no other ways to be out of poverty.”

Theme 2: Her background and goal of life

Another reason that she decided to invest in English language learning and teacher education was her background, and most importantly, her goal of life. Although she was not as poor as the people in her neighborhood since her father had a fixed income, she identified her family as a low-class family. Therefore, realizing that education was the only way out of poverty and with better support from her family compared to the people living nearby, she decided to study engineering for economic purposes. However, the more important factor that influenced her decision to invest in English language learning was her goal of life. That is, the community with which she was associated had reflected her identity and her preference for a career. When associating with the community of engineering profession she had once dreamed of as a good source of income, she realized that it was not the profession that could bring her happiness, although it was financially secure, as she explained:

It is a difficult and challenging job for a female in a career-wise, in reality, and then since I couldn't find a job, I realized I was not even good at engineering because I experienced in my experience working in the control tower. I was not as effective an engineer. I realized I was not born to be an engineer since the engineering job takes more on sitting in front of the computer.

Theme 3: Perceptions towards English

The final important factor that motivates Ligaya to invest in English language learning and teacher education is her perception towards career with the English language being able to promote her career advancement. In her view, English is expressed mainly through its significance as a pivotal tool to promote socio-economic status and better living conditions. She explained that even though all Filipinos were perceived to be able to speak English very well, in reality, they could not. Those who received education studying English as a profession could speak English very well, and this English-speaking ability played an important role in promoting one's social and economic status, as she said:

I will be earning higher, so I will have better opportunities. I will have a higher salary and better opportunities to work in other English-speaking countries. I could also have the chance to become an international speaker, which would open bigger doors of opportunities. Actually, personally, teaching doesn't offer me much except for financial gain.

Therefore, under the poor socio-economic conditions of the Philippines, in Ligaya's opinion, there were narrow ways to escape poverty, and receiving education and studying English for well-paid jobs was the solution.

How did Ligaya re-construct her professional identity in the Thai EFL context?

This section highlights how Ligaya invests in re-constructing her professional identity as an EFL teacher in the target community of the Thai EFL context, largely based on The Douglas Fir Group's (2016) Transdisciplinary Framework for SLA in a Multilingual World and Darwin and Norton's (2015) Model of Investment.

Theme 4: Capital to access the target Community

According to Bourdieu (1986), there are three main kinds of capitals: economic capital, which includes wealth, property, and income; cultural capital, which includes knowledge, educational credentials, and appreciation of specific cultural forms; and social capital, which includes connections to the network of people (as cited in Darwin & Norton, 2015, p. 44). From the data analysis of the interview transcription, four salient capitals that Ligaya has used for identity re-construction include educational degrees, teaching skills, institutional support, and social network. The first two capitals, including educational degrees and teaching skills, can be categorized as cultural capital and institutional support and social network are directly related to social capital. Ligaya's capitals are aligned with the micro-level of social activity in second language learning introduced by The Douglas Fir Group (2016). It is stated that in the micro-level of social activities in second language learning, which is the smallest circle, second language learners bring their cognitive and emotional ability to associate with others in particular multilingual contexts to develop their multilingual skills. In addition, they also bring all their semiotic resources, including linguistic, interactional, nonverbal, pictorial, and artifactual resources for second language learning in multilingual contexts. Therefore, with the application of the framework introduced by The Douglas Fir Group, it is worthwhile to

investigate the capitals she has brought from the Philippines to construct her identity in a larger circle of meso-level engaged with sociocultural institutions and communities.

Micro-Level.

As can be seen in Table 1, the educational degree in Category 7 (see Appendix B) emerges as a salient capital for Ligaya to invest in for her professional identity and access to the target community of the Thai EFL context. From the interview, when asked what capitals she had brought to a new settlement in a new country of Thailand, she admitted that her passion and her master's degree in English as a Second Language were those two capitals that helped her to understand language. Also, planning to study a Ph.D. in English Language Teaching, Ligaya expressed precisely that the Ph.D. was a bigger door to opportunities and financial gain:

I will be earning higher. I will have better opportunities. I will have a higher salary. I would have better opportunities. I will have the chance to work in other countries, you know. It could be an English-speaking country. I would have the chance to do that, or I would have the chance to be a speaker, international speaker. It would open it; it would open a bigger door of opportunities.

Another piece of evidence that emphasizes Ligaya's perception towards the Ph.D. as capital is her viewpoint of the Ph.D. as a way of financial gain in terms of salary rather than the focus on teaching: "Actually, personally, OK, in teaching nothing much for me in teaching. Nothing much in teaching. Nothing much, but for of course, financial gain."

Ligaya's degree in ESL and certificates also contribute to her teaching skills, which are valuable resources that help her access a new community in the meso level of social activity in second language learning. She expresses her confidence in her teaching techniques, which were validated through her master's degree in ESL, as it enables her to use effective techniques. In addition to educational degrees and teaching skills, institutional support and social networks are also essential social capitals that support Ligaya's professional identity re-construction. As Bourdieu (1986) explains, social capital includes connections to a network of people (as cited in Darvin & Norton, 2015). Ligaya reveals her effort to maintain social connections by staying in harmony with her fellow Filipino teachers in Thailand. Moreover, institutional support offered by an elementary school when she first arrived in Thailand is also considered social capital, which contributes to her identity re-construction as an instructor in both private and government universities, as she mentioned in the interview:

I mean the opportunity came, but if it weren't for the first time I came to Thailand, where I was given a chance to work as an elementary teacher, I wouldn't have been able to work in private and government universities.

Theme 5: Community belonging

The emerging information in Theme 5 could be claimed as the highlight of Ligaya's identity re-construction in the target community. It portrayed how she employed all the capital she had accumulated to access a new community of the Thai EFL context.

Meso-Level.

As learners' identities are under the influence of sociocultural norms of institutions and communities, much evidence demonstrated Ligaya's attempt to be a part of the new institutions and communities. Supporting this, she said:

I have to adapt to the policy that you have, even though some of the policies I personally [disagree with]. For example, in some workplaces, there is some policy that doesn't match your own personality. Then you have to adopt as a professional. You have to do that, or else you have to go back to your country and adopt your own policy.

The above excerpt clearly illustrated her willingness and realization to adjust herself to the policy of the workplace, although she might disagree with some aspects of the policy. Otherwise, as she said, she had to go back to her homeland. Besides, her adjustment to the expectations of different institutions can also be seen through her adjustment in her teaching:

They have different levels of students. Uhm, so I have to adjust. It's my standard. I had to adjust my techniques, my teaching, and my teaching techniques, and even my, uh, even the book, for example, if I am using the same book, I have to adjust how to deliver those lessons in a different institution.

The excerpt has reemphasized the notion of Darwin and Norton (2015) claiming that second language learners transform all capitals to create new valuable things. Although she is confident in her teaching techniques from the degree in ESL, as mentioned in the micro-level, in this meso-level, she is ready to adjust her teaching to suit the institutional expectation for new practices. Additionally, Ligaya also used an understanding strategy as her selective identity. As claimed by The Douglas Fir Group (2016), learners may rearrange their relationships with others using their alternative identities to change their access and opportunities to use resources. In this respect, Ligaya tried to rearrange her relationship, particularly with her students, to change her access to the target community:

I don't have a high standard in language learning, but because I see them as an EFL or ESL learner, so my standard for them is not just that high. Because if you are going to take them as a normal group like Filipino group of students, they cannot pass.

The excerpt indicates that Ligaya perceived the Thai students as EFL or ESL learners living in the target community she was accessing. Therefore, sharing the same background as a second language learner, she expressed her deep understanding of the nature of EFL or ESL learners. That is, she did not have high expectations for her students' academic achievement, particularly in terms of English language learning. Finally, as learners' success is determined by how their participation in the target community and social networks is perceived by others, Ligaya achieved her goal of becoming part of her target community through a successfully re-constructed identity, as she expressed in the following excerpt:

I have become a part of Thai society because I belong to a Thai institution. These institutions have given me an identity that I like. For example, I am a lecturer and it gives me the identity of being a lecturer in a Thai university. This identity gives me the privilege of being a member of Thai society, such as being a member of the government or paying taxes. It also gives me the opportunity to discover Thai culture in general.

Theme 6: Ideological becoming

Even though Ligaya was able to achieve her professional goal within the community of the Thai EFL context, she could not avoid the influence of ideology having a direct impact on the language at the macro-level of social activity in second language learning.

Macro-Level.

As argued by The Douglas Fir Group (2016), ideologies have an impact at all levels of language learning, influencing language policy at various levels, including the individual, family, community, and national levels. Ligaya is unavoidably an agent influenced by the impact of Thai educational policy. From the interview, as she used to work in an elementary school in Thailand, she criticized the 'no-fail' policy that did not allow teachers to give an F to their students' grades:

No-fail policy. I don't know if it's really a policy, but many school practices. If I were to change one part of the education system in Thailand... that policy students are not scared to skip school because they will graduate anyway.

This no-fail policy can be linked to her identity re-construction as previously explained in the meso-level because ideologies influence all levels of social activity. Hence, instead of being strict with her standards, she decided to choose an alternative identity as an understanding teacher perceiving the achievement of her students with quite low expectations:

Success if you were able to do the formative skills, be able to write English language. You're able to write English. Speak English in a manner that 80% of your listeners can understand your 80 percent. 90% of your listener could understand you. So, if 80% of your listeners could understand you, that is success for me.

Finally, according to The Douglas Fir Group (2016), there are several negative language ideologies, particularly the ideology of the standard language that considers native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) as more prestigious than non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). In the Thai EFL context, there are two major groups of foreign teachers: the native speakers and the Filipino teachers. The former are well-paid and widely accepted in the perception of Thai learners, while the latter represent the opposite side with lower salaries and much lower acceptance. Therefore, although most Filipinos speak English as their first language, their English is not recognized as standard as that of the native speakers. Consequently, as Darwin and Norton (2015) assert, ideology has its power in determining

inclusion and exclusion as well as privileging and marginalizing ideas. Ligaya, therefore, expressed her sense of inferiority and positioned herself as the underprivileged when comparing herself with the native speakers:

Why the white supremacy? Uh, many supremacy things like this. Yeah, and even, salary, opportunity it is there is a line drawing, drawing a separation. You know there's a line drawing a separation NEST, English native speaker, and they put NEST, Canada, New Zealand is not even an English speaker. They speak Kiwi. In the Inner Circle. Canada how? I am not sure, not sure?

Her feelings of inferiority from discriminatory practice due to the perceived non-standard Filipino English at the macro-level led to her identity re-construction in the meso level because ideologies have the power to shape sociocultural institutions and communities in the middle circle.

DISCUSSION

This study addressed two questions: what led Ligaya, a Filipino teacher, to invest in English language learning and teacher education, and how she reconstructed her professional identity within the target community of the Thai EFL context. The findings suggest that the conditions that drove her initial investment in English also shaped how that investment was later received, and often contested, once she entered the Thai context. Addressing the first research question, poverty and family circumstance were the immediate drivers of Ligaya's investment in English, but according to Darwin and Norton's (2015) model, this is better understood as ideologically shaped necessity than individual aspiration. Under the ideological positioning of English as a language of progression and better living, Ligaya's investment reflects less a freely chosen goal than an ideological response to limited alternatives. This resonates with and extends Salinas and Ayala's (2018) argument that investment in English is rarely purely economic. It also points toward what Darwin and Norton (2015) describe as imagined identity. Ligaya was not only investing in English as it stood, but in an imagined future professional self made possible by English, which helps explain why her investment continued well beyond the point of economic necessity, including her ongoing plans for further study.

With regards to the second research question, we found that Ligaya drew on economic, cultural, and social capital to construct her professional identity, consistent with Darwin and Norton's (2015) model but the more specific finding is that this capital did not hold stable value once it moved from the Philippines into the Thai context. Following Bourdieu's (1986) notion of symbolic capital, capital only counts when it is recognized as legitimate by the receiving context. However, Ligaya's credentials and confidence were not well received within the Thai hierarchy that privileged native-speaker status and, within the non-native category itself, ranked some varieties of English above others. Her discontent reflects this misrecognition rather than any deficiency in her actual capital, and it illustrates Darwin and Norton's (2015) claim that identity is a site of struggle between self-positioning and being positioned by others. Her professional persistence despite this misrecognition can be read as a small but

real act of resistance against that positioning. A related dimension, drawing on The Douglas Fir Group's (2016) meso-level, is Ligaya's simultaneous membership in two communities. She was both part of a Filipino-teacher network and the Thai institution whose norms did not always align. This meant her identity re-construction involved negotiating both belongings at once rather than assimilating into a single target community. Her professional persistence within this tension can also be seen as agency that helped on macro-level ideology rather than being purely shaped by it (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016). For example, similar to Sela in Barkhuizen (2016) and Paloma in Kayi-Aydar (2019), Ligaya shows that capital investment alone does not guarantee smooth identity re-construction. What distinguishes Ligaya's case is that the discrimination she faced was not simply NNEST-versus-NEST, but operated within the non-native category itself, with Filipino English positioned as less legitimate in the Thai EFL hierarchy. The study also points to several further contributions. Identity here was constructed largely instrumentally with Ligaya explicitly describing teaching as offering her 'nothing much... but financial gain'. This complicates the assumption that professional identity re-construction depends on affective commitment to the profession itself. She also suffered from the standard-language ideology that marginalized her, which suggests these two positions are not mutually exclusive. Her compliance with institutional policies she in fact disagreed with was also related explicitly to the precarity of her status as a foreign teacher. For Ligaya, this struggle was not only between herself and the ideology that positioned her as inferior, but also was related to the instrumental motive, belonging, contradictory attitudes toward language varieties, and vulnerability as a foreign worker.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to understand what drives a Filipino teacher's investment in English and how she (re)constructs her professional identity in a Thai EFL context. Ligaya's story shows identity (re)construction as a fluid, ongoing process, shaped by instrumental motive as much as professional commitment, by belonging as much as professional recognition, and by the precarity of her status as a foreign teacher as much as by ideology. It also shows that individuals can simultaneously be positioned by a language ideology and reposition themselves within it, which might reveal that these are not mutually exclusive stances. This study also draws practical implications. Teacher education programs, particularly those preparing teachers for work abroad, should address not only pedagogical skills but also the ideological and institutional realities NNESTs are likely to encounter, so that teachers like Ligaya are better prepared to navigate the hierarchies they meet. Institutions employing foreign teachers might similarly reflect on how policies presented as professional expectations can, in practice, function as conditions of precarity that shape whose identity is allowed to stabilize and whose remains a site of ongoing negotiation. Ultimately, Ligaya's case shows that identity (re)construction for NNESTs is a story of a continual, and at times, contradictory negotiation.

THE AUTHORS

Chatuporn Insuwan is a lecturer in the Business English for International Communication Program at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Phranakorn Rajabhat University, Thailand. His research interests include second language writing, critical pedagogy, language and identity, and post-colonial literature. His work primarily focuses on empowering Thai EFL learners through innovative pedagogical approaches and genre-based academic writing instruction, supported by a consistent record of publication in peer-reviewed journals.

chatuporn.i@pnru.ac.th

Kenan Dikilitaş is a Professor of University Pedagogy at the University of Bergen, Norway, where he teaches and develops professional learning for university teachers. His research interests include university pedagogy, doctoral supervision, teacher and researcher identity, and teacher action research. His work mainly focuses on building connections between research, theory and professional practice and on supporting academics as reflective, research-engaged professionals.

kenan.dikilitas@uib.no

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Appendix A

Interview Protocols

Micro insights

1. Can you tell me briefly about yourself and the socio-economic circumstances in the Philippines and in the place where you lived?
2. Can you tell me about your educational background and why you shifted your career path from the early-expected engineer to an English teacher?
3. What are your perceptions of being a Filipino/resident of the Philippines in English language learning and the use of English?
4. What do you think helped you the most to understand, use, and learn English language in your master's degree?
5. Why did you study ESL/EFL for your master's degree and plan to pursue your PhD in this related area? How will both degrees help you?
6. Do you think being a teacher in Thailand can support your family and/or nearby community in the Philippines? How?

Meso insights

7. How do you position yourself as a native speaker in Thailand and how do you feel when talking to Thai people and Thai students?
8. What 'capital' do you think you have brought or have entailed you in a new country of Thailand where you are now living and how did you apply them for your teaching and living in Thailand?
9. Can you tell me about your teaching methods/approaches?
10. Have you ever tried to learn Thai language and do you think it is necessary to learn it?
11. Do you feel some sense of belonging in Thai society/workplace and what did you do to become part of the Thai society?
12. What do you think helped you become blended or fit in the Thai society?
13. What helped you become part of Thai society and were there any obstacles that prevented you from being part of the Thai society or your workplace?
14. How are you associated with your colleagues or fellow teachers in Thailand?
15. Do the institutional policies affect your teaching (and identity)? How?
16. Do you think you gain a certain amount of support from your current workplace?
17. Why did you decide to teach in undergraduate level in the universities after you taught at schools?
18. How is your former workplace in the private university different from the government university you are working such as policy, curriculum, working condition, and colleagues?
19. What are your expectations in your future career as an EFL teacher in Thailand or elsewhere?

Macro insights

20. What do you think about the EMI and educational policies in the Philippines and Thailand?
21. How do those policies have some impacts on your teaching career?
22. How does Thai socio-political contexts have some impacts on your life and teaching?

Appendix B

Themes and Categories

Research Questions	Themes	Categories
1. What factors influenced a Filipino language teacher to invest in English language learning and teacher education?	Theme 1: Poverty and Economic Condition	Category 1: Poverty and Social Class in the Philippines
		Category 2: Why People Cannot Access Education
	Theme 2: Her Background and Goal of Life	Category 3: Ligaya's Background
		Category 4: Self-Realization to the World
	Theme 3: Perception towards English	Category 5: Importance of English
		Category 6: Degree in English as a Second Language (ESL)
2. How did Filipino language teacher re-construct her professional identity in the target community of Thai EFL context?	Theme 4: Capital to Access the Target Community	Category 7: Educational Degrees
		Category 8: Teaching Skill
	Theme 5: Community Belonging	Category 9: Institutional Support and Social Network
		Category 10: Adjustment to a New Community
		Category 11: Understanding Strategies
	Theme 6: Ideological Becoming	Category 12: Opinions on Educational Policy
		Category 13: Opinions on Institutions