

Shaping professional identity: A narrative inquiry into Filipino English teachers' experiences with the talk in English policy

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Abstract

This qualitative narrative inquiry research investigates how the Talk-in-English (TIE) policy shapes the professional identity of Filipino English teachers in a private school in Lucena City. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with three English teachers. The thematic analysis revealed three major themes: (1) Redefining Classroom Communication - the TIE policy redefined classroom communication by encouraging sustained English use and deliberate language modeling, although inconsistencies in implementation created challenges; (2) Identities in Negotiation - teachers' identities were placed in negotiation as they balanced institutional expectations of English-only communication with their Filipino linguistic and cultural repertoires, resulting in both tensions and adaptive strategies; and (3) Becoming the Teacher They Expect - the policy fostered professional growth by enhancing teachers' confidence, authority, and alignment with institutional goals of academic excellence and prestige. The study concludes that while the TIE policy imposes limits on pedagogical flexibility, it simultaneously fosters teacher development and recognition. The study contributes to the wider discourse on language policy and teacher identity in the Philippine context.

Keywords: *language policy, linguistics, pedagogy, translanguaging, instruction, teaching*

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1. Introduction

Language is far more than a tool for communication; it profoundly shapes identity, especially in education, where the medium of instruction influences how teachers and learners view their roles and exercise agency. For English teachers, classroom language becomes inseparable from their professional self-concept, encompassing authority, legitimacy, and cultural alignment. These dynamics grow more intense in settings with strict language policies, where teachers must embody ideals of fluency and prestige while reconciling them with their personal linguistic repertoires (Pennington & Richards, 2016).

Globally, English holds a privileged status as the dominant second language because it is associated with career opportunities, and international mobility. Many institutions adopt English-dominant or English-only policies, assuming immersion boosts proficiency and global competitiveness. In the Philippines, national policies promote bilingualism by designating Filipino and English as official languages while also supporting mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in early grades to preserve linguistic diversity (Tupas & Martin, 2017). Nevertheless, English continues to carry strong prestige as a medium of instruction and marker of social status because of colonial history and postcolonial ambitions. Consequently, private schools often enforce stricter English-dominant rules to project academic excellence and global readiness (Borlongan, 2022).

Filipino English teachers commonly draw on multilingual strategies like code-switching to clarify ideas, build rapport, highlight key points, and create emotional bonds with students. Rigid English-only mandates, however, can restrict these flexible, culturally relevant practices, forcing adaptation or suppression of valuable resources. Recent studies on Filipino English teachers (FETs) further show that such environments complicate identity negotiations because teachers are positioned as language experts, caretakers, and global educators while simultaneously confronting native-speaker hierarchies (Jung & Choe, 2024).

As practicing English teachers in a private school, the researchers bring an insider perspective that offers nuanced insight into how such policies like Talk-in-English shape daily practices and interaction, and identity formation in such environment. This position allowed the researchers to see teachers' dual role: enforcers of institutional expectations and individuals whose identities are continually molded by those demands. Professional identity, in this view, is a dynamic, ongoing process of role interpretation, contextual meaning-

making, and adaptation to external pressures (Rushton et al., 2023; Ivanova & Skara-Mincāne, 2016).

English immersion preferences often align with native-speakerism, privileging certain norms and marginalizing non-native speakers in global hierarchies. This places FETs in complex negotiations: valued for contextual expertise and affordability, yet frequently compared unfavorably to idealized native models, resulting in "discounted nativeness" where their proficiency is exploited without full recognition or reward (Panaligan & Curran, 2022; Perry, 2025). Such dynamics can undermine perceived legitimacy.

This study arises from the understanding that teacher professional identity is fluid and contextually constructed, shaped by institutional cultures, policy demands, and sociocultural realities, and narrative inquiry is particularly suited to capturing these lived negotiations in multilingual settings, where teachers balance competing linguistic expectations. In Philippine private schools, however, the specific effects of English-dominant policies like TIE on teachers' professional identities remain underexplored, especially through the authentic voices of the teachers who enact these policies daily.

Against the backdrop of rising international interest in translanguaging pedagogies which treat multilingualism as a rich resource rather than a deficit and promote inclusive, empowering classroom practices by affirming learners' and teachers' full linguistic repertoires (Vogel & García, 2017), the continued use of restrictive English-dominant policies such as the Talk-in-English (TIE) policy in Philippine private schools remains especially timely to examine. While translanguaging challenges monolingual assumptions and highlights the pedagogical and identity-affirming potential of fluid language use, institution-specific mandates like TIE deliberately prioritize sustained English immersion, creating a productive tension that this study explores through the lived narratives of Filipino English teachers.

This narrative inquiry explores how Filipino English teachers in a private school in Lucena City that implements the Talk-in-English (TIE) policy make sense of their experiences, negotiate institutional expectations with their linguistic and cultural resources, and construct their professional identities in a multilingual educational setting. Specifically, the study seeks to examine how the Talk in English policy shapes the professional identity of these teachers as they navigate the demands of English-only communication alongside their lived realities as multilingual educators.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptualizing Teacher Professional Identity

Teacher's professional identity refers to how educators understand and position themselves within their roles, shaped by personal beliefs, professional experiences, and social interactions. Contemporary research emphasizes that identity is not fixed but continuously constructed and reconstructed over time through engagement with institutional contexts and evolving professional demands (Rushton et al., 2023). Recent systematic reviews further confirm that teacher identity is now widely understood as dynamic, multifaceted, and context-dependent, reflecting ongoing processes of interpretation and reinterpretation of experience (Semjonova, 2024).

Earlier conceptualizations of teacher identity have remained influential, particularly in defining identity as shaped by the interaction between personal and contextual factors. However, more recent studies extend these ideas by emphasizing that identity is not only shaped by experience but also continuously negotiated within specific sociocultural and institutional environments (Liu & Li, 2025). Research shows that identity develops through participation in professional communities and is influenced by expectations, relationships, and power structures within educational settings, reinforcing its relational and socially constructed nature. In language education, teacher identity is increasingly examined as situated and responsive to contextual demands. Recent studies highlight that language teachers constantly negotiate their professional identities in response to institutional expectations, language policies, and multilingual realities (Jung & Choe, 2024; Liu & Li, 2025). These negotiations often involve balancing personal linguistic resources with externally imposed norms, particularly in English-dominant environments. As a result, identity becomes a site of tension, adaptation, and ongoing meaning-making.

Recent research also foregrounds the role of agency and adaptation in identity development. Teachers actively construct and reconstruct their identities as they respond to policy changes, professional challenges, and evolving educational contexts (Lawrent, 2024; Solari & Ortega, 2022; Gholami et al., 2021; Groenewald & Arnold, 2025). Studies show that identity development is shaped by both internal factors, such as beliefs and self-perception, and external conditions, including institutional structures and policy expectations (Van Heijst et al., 2025). This reinforces the view that teacher identity is not a

fixed attribute, but a continuous process shaped through interaction between the individual and the environment.

Narrative inquiry has become a key approach in capturing this complexity. Recent studies demonstrate that teachers' narratives reveal how identity is formed through lived experiences, emotional engagement, and reflective meaning-making within specific contexts (Neupane & Gnawali, 2023; Liu & Li, 2025). Through storytelling, identity is understood as evolving and situated, making narrative inquiry particularly appropriate for examining how teachers navigate institutional policies and reconstruct their professional selves.

2.2. Teacher Identity in Language Education and Policy Contexts

In English language teaching, identity intersects with ideologies like native-speakerism, which privileges certain linguistic norms and marginalizes non-native speakers (Ozaki, 2021; Panaligan & Curran, 2022). Filipino English teachers often face "discounted nativeness," valued for affordability in global markets but undermined in legitimacy compared to idealized native models (Panaligan & Curran, 2022). This positioning can erode confidence and authority, as learners' perceptions favor native-like accents or norms (Ozaki, 2021; Perry, 2025). Perry (2025) analyzes websites of Philippine English teaching companies, revealing contradictions where FETs are marketed as "native-like" yet paid less, reinforcing hierarchies that discount their expertise despite their contextual advantages, such as cultural relevance and bilingual skills.

English-only policies exacerbate these tensions. Such policies assume immersion enhances proficiency but can heighten anxiety, limit authentic interactions, and restrict pedagogical flexibility (Yang & Jang, 2022; Shvidko, 2017). In multilingual settings, teachers negotiate institutional expectations against their full linguistic repertoires, leading to identity conflicts (Hersi, 2018; Sung, 2022). Hersi (2018), in a narrative inquiry of five non-native teachers in Saudi Arabia, found that rigid policies forced identity reconstruction, balancing cultural heritage with professional demands, often resulting in emotional strain but also adaptive strategies. Sung (2022) examined international students in Hong Kong's EMI universities, showing how English-only ideologies marginalize multilingual practices, affecting students' and teachers' identities by privileging monolingual norms. Code-switching emerges as a natural strategy for clarification, emphasis, and emotional connection, yet rigid monolingual rules constrain it (Mangila, 2018; Villarin & Emperador, 2023). Mangila

(2018), through a case study of two Filipino teachers, identified pedagogic code-switching functions like explaining concepts and building rapport, which enhance learning but clash with English-only mandates. Villarin and Emperador (2023) surveyed Grade 11 students and found that code-switching factors (e.g., vocabulary gaps) and forms (e.g., intra-sentential) positively impact English achievement by making content accessible. Meanwhile, Trent (2016) explored early-career teachers in Hong Kong, and revealed how policy-driven expectations create "practical realities" that conflict with "great expectations." Language policies shape teacher identities by imposing monolingual ideals, often at the expense of multilingual resources, yet teachers resist through adaptive practices that affirm their professional legitimacy.

2.3. Philippine English and Language Policy Contexts

In the Philippines, English enjoys enduring prestige as a language of education, mobility, and economic opportunity, rooted in colonial history and postcolonial realities (Borlongan, 2022; Tupas & Martin, 2017). Borlongan (2022) synthesizes years of research on Philippine English, detailing its nativization through features like innovative vocabulary and syntactic structures influenced by Tagalog, while noting its sociological role in elite domains. Tupas and Martin (2017) trace bilingual policy evolution, highlighting how national frameworks promote Filipino and English as official languages alongside MTB-MLE in early grades to preserve diversity, yet implementation challenges persist due to resource shortages.

Private schools frequently prioritize English to signal academic excellence and global readiness (Tupas & Martin, 2017). This creates school-specific policies, like TIE, that enforce sustained English use, reflecting ideologies of immersion and prestige. Filipino English teachers navigate these dynamics uniquely. Choe (2016) examined FETs teaching Korean students, finding identities shaped by positive (e.g., cultural empathy) and negative (e.g., non-native stigma) constructions, with teachers leveraging bilingualism for rapport. Jung and Choe (2024) studied FETs in Bonifacio Global City, Philippines, identifying roles as ELT experts, caretakers, and international teachers, where globalization contexts foster multiculturalism and challenge native-speakerism. Perry (2025) critiques contradictions in Philippine ELT, where policies promote English prestige but undervalue FETs, leading to tensions between policy-driven English dominance and local multilingual practices that

influence professional growth and legitimacy. These contexts highlight how colonial legacies and global aspirations shape language policies, positioning FETs in negotiations between institutional demands and cultural resources, often resulting in hybrid identities that blend prestige with adaptation.

2.4. Research Gap and Role of Narrative Inquiry

Despite growing scholarship on teacher identity (Rushton et al., 2023), much of it focuses on general or Western contexts, with less attention to how specific policies like TIE shape identities in Philippine private schools. Rushton et al. (2023) reviewed 184 studies and found gaps in Global South representation and called for more qualitative explorations of identity amid policy pressures. Narrative inquiry addresses this by privileging lived stories to offer insights into negotiations, tensions, and adaptive strategies (Neupane & Gnawali, 2023; Liu & Li, 2025). Neupane and Gnawali (2023) revealed multilingual teachers' resistance to monolingual norms while Liu and Li (2025) uncovered how cross-border experiences foster resilient identities through reflection on power and agency.

Emerging alternatives like translanguaging challenge monolingual frameworks by valuing full repertoires as resources, not deficits (Vogel & García, 2017). Vogel and García (2017) define translanguaging as leveraging bilinguals' unitary linguistic system for meaning-making to promote inclusive pedagogies that empower multilingual identities. This lens highlights empowering possibilities amid restrictive policies, its application to Filipino English teachers has to be further explored. Norton (2016) emphasizes identity as investment in imagined communities, where narratives expose how policies limit or enable agency in multilingual settings.

Teacher's professional identity is dynamic, negotiated, and contextually situated, particularly in language education where policies intersect with power, culture, and ideology. Philippine-specific studies reveal unique tensions in English-dominant environments that underscored the need for narrative explorations of teachers' experiences under policies like TIE. This study contributes by addressing this gap through Filipino teachers' narratives in a private school context, building on calls for more localized, qualitative research.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative approach using narrative inquiry as it allows teachers to reflect on and articulate their experiences on how professional identities evolve within institutional contexts that enforce language-related policies such as the TIE. Narrative inquiry is particularly effective in examining teacher identity, as it captures the dynamic interplay between personal reflections and institutional expectations through teachers' own stories. In this study, professional identity is best understood through the lived accounts of educators navigating a language policy that shapes their sense of self and practice. Since identity is shaped by both internal reflections and external circumstances, using stories as data enables a more meaningful exploration of how language policies affect teachers' sense of professionalism.

3.2. Participants of the Study

The participants in this study are three English teachers working in a private school in Lucena City that implements a TIE policy. The number of participants allowed the researchers to focus on an in-depth understanding of a particular context, which may not be possible when studying larger samples. They were selected through purposive sampling, with specific attention to teachers who are currently employed in a private educational institution that implements a TIE policy. The inclusion criteria required that the participants were already employed when the policy was implemented and were willing to openly share their reflections on how such policies influence their identity as educators. This sampling technique was appropriate for the study as it ensured that participants had direct experience with the phenomenon being investigated, allowing for richer and more meaningful narratives.

Table 1

Demographic profile of the participants

Participant Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Years of Teaching in the Present School
Melvin	26	Male	5
Dina	50	Female	18
Roxane	31	Female	4

3.3. Instrumentation and Data Gathering Process

The data for this research were collected primarily through semi-structured interviews. Before the interview, the participants were asked about their demographic information, such as age, gender, and years of teaching. Recruitment was done through direct contact with the school principal. After gaining consent, participants were informed of their rights and the nature of the research. They were also encouraged to withdraw at any point if they chose to, in line with ethical research practices.

Each participant took part in individual interviews that were conducted face-to-face in a private and quiet setting. The interviews focused on a range of topics, including the co-researchers' experiences under the Talk in English policy, how they see their role in the school, how language policies affect their confidence, classroom practice, relationships with students and peers, and how they see themselves as Filipino English teachers under the TIE policy. To ensure the depth and accuracy of the narratives, member checking was employed, where interview transcripts were sent back to the participants for verification and further clarification.

3.4. Data Analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed manually verbatim and analyzed using thematic narrative analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step methodology: (1) familiarizing oneself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report.

Immediately after the interviews, the researchers immersed themselves in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts. Initial codes were generated by identifying recurring statements or phrases related to identity, language use, and cultural and linguistic realities. Themes were then developed from these codes. The thematic analysis allowed the researcher to draw connections between stories while still respecting the uniqueness of each participant's experience until the final report was produced.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the emerging themes were revisited and compared across participants, and interpretations were validated through member checking and careful review of the transcripts to confirm that they accurately reflected the participants' intended meanings.

3.5. Research Ethics

This study followed ethical guidelines consistent with the principles of qualitative research. Before interviews began, participants signed informed consent forms. They were informed about the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and their voluntary participation, including their ability to withdraw at any point without any consequences.

Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used in all transcripts and written reports to protect their identities. Audio recordings and transcripts were stored securely and accessed only by the researchers to ensure data protection.

The study prioritized the safety and welfare of the participants by creating a respectful and non-threatening environment during the interviews. Participants were also informed that they could skip any questions they were not comfortable answering. The overall aim was to provide a safe space where teachers could openly share their experiences without fear of judgment or risk.

4. Findings and Discussion

In this narrative inquiry, the teachers' stories, lived and retold through semi-structured interviews, provide rich and contextualized insights into how TIE Policy intersects with their professional lives. Their narratives do not present isolated events. Instead, they unfold as experiences that develop across time, from early career struggles to sustained confidence; social relations with students, colleagues, and the institution; and places like classrooms, corridors, and online chats. Three interwoven themes emerged from these stories: redefining classroom communication, identities in negotiation, and becoming the teacher they expect.

Theme 1: Redefining Classroom Communication

The teachers' accounts show how the TIE Policy reshaped communication. It moved from fluid, multilingual exchanges to intentional and sustained English modeling. This change reached beyond formal lessons and entered the informal fabric of school life. It required persistence in the face of various challenges.

Adapting classroom practices. Melvin, who taught Oral Communication classes, aligned the TIE policy naturally with his Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. He emphasized gradual, consistent practice over perfection, framing non-fluent student contributions as valid steps in language development:

“Since I was teaching Oral Communication, my approach, I was using the approach of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching), encouraging the students to somehow speak in English, not fluently, if they are not fluent in the second language, but somehow to practice using the language consistently in recitation and speeches in every activity that we are having inside the classroom so they could be able to maximize the use of the TIE itself.”

Melvin's words show a clear focus on helping students practice English step by step. By accepting strange or wrong sentences as normal parts of learning, he turns possible frustration into chances for growth. His method helps bridge the gap between strict rules and everyday language habits. It also shows the emotional work teachers do, which shows balancing support with the need to follow school expectations.

In contrast, Dina's narrative revealed the emotional labor involved in navigating inconsistent enforcement across departments, which placed disproportionate responsibility on English teachers:

“It was difficult kasi only the English teachers are strict on that. And the other teachers are not. Kasi... they find it hard in practical application to use English all the time, strictly and religiously.” (It was difficult because only the English teachers are strict on that. And the other teachers are not. Because... they find it hard in practical application to use English all the time, strictly and religiously.)

The use of "difficult" underscores not merely logistical challenges but a deeper emotional weight like feelings of isolation and burden in upholding the policy single-handedly. This experience illustrates how policy inconsistencies can generate identity strain, as teachers negotiate their professional selves amid conflicting institutional realities (Rushton et al., 2023). External changes such as policy shifts or uneven implementation often disrupt identity coherence, challenge resilience, and require teachers to renegotiate their sense of agency and belonging within the school community. Similarly, the emotional toll Dina describes aligns with Zembylas's (2003) poststructuralist framing of teacher identity, where emotions are not peripheral but central to self-formation: they emerge from power-laden discourses and practices, prompting resistance, adaptation, or internalized strain as teachers work to sustain a coherent professional self. Such departmental divides risk positioning English teachers more as policy enforcers than collaborative educators, potentially eroding collegial trust, morale, and long-term professional sustainability.

Roxane's narrative further illustrates adaptive practices amid initial resistance, highlighting the emotional persistence required to enact the TIE policy effectively. She recalled her early struggles with students defaulting to their mother tongue despite teacher modeling:

“My first experience was second year of my teaching. Actually, the students were not following the TIE policy, even though the teachers were talking to them in English, most of them were answering in Tagalog. But I continue to implement it inside our class. And then I ask my students to ask me because most of them speak their mother tongue. So, I encourage them na lang to talk to me in English.” (My first experience was second year of my teaching. Actually, the students were not following the TIE policy, even though the teachers were talking to them in English, most of them were answering in Tagalog. But I continue to implement it inside our class. And then I ask my students to ask me because most of them speak their mother tongue. So, I encourage them instead to talk to me in English.)

This account reveals the emotional labor inherent in transforming student resistance into engagement through steady, empathetic effort. Roxane's choice to "continue to implement" despite pushback underscores a form of internalized strain which is balancing institutional mandates with relational sensitivity to students' linguistic comfort in a Tagalog-dominant locale. By framing encouragement as a gentle, shared process rather than authoritarian enforcement, she mitigates potential conflict and fosters collaboration, effectively sharing classroom agency. This approach not only respects cultural repertoire but also demonstrates resilience in the face of pedagogical challenges.

Moreover, Roxane's persistence can be viewed as pivotal to teacher identity formation, where the frustration of non-compliance could evoke vulnerability or doubt, yet it becomes a site of resistance and growth that enables her to reconstruct her professional self as an empathetic guide rather than a rigid enforcer. In Philippine contexts, where multilingualism is normative, such strategies affirm teachers' cultural expertise and counteract native-speaker hierarchies, promoting inclusive practices that enhance both teacher authority and student participation (Jung & Choe, 2024).

Extending English beyond the classroom. The TIE policy extended its influence beyond the confines of the classroom, reshaping informal school interactions into additional sites for deliberate English modeling and reinforcement. This broader application required

sustained teacher effort and transformed everyday encounters into opportunities for language normalization. Dina maintained unwavering consistency, even in casual or hybrid-language settings, to underscore the policy's priority:

“Even if it’s just chika or they mix some Tagalog or something, still, yun pa rin... Even in casual chat in the messenger, still in English para alam nila that I am encouraging them to use English.” (Even if it’s just casual conversation or they mix some Tagalog or something, still, that is still it... Even in casual chat in the messenger, still in English so they know that I am encouraging them to use English.)

By applying English to informal online chats and conversations, she turned routine moments into extensions of learning, reinforcing the school's emphasis on sustained use. Melvin similarly integrated English into non-academic spaces, presenting it as a natural element of daily school life:

“Even outside the classroom, like when I meet them in corridors or during breaks, I make sure to still converse with them in English, so they don’t see it as limited only to classwork but part of daily communication.”

Melvin's choice to use English in hallways and breaks shows he sees language as part of daily life, not just lessons. This helps students view English as normal and useful. Brief chats in these places may build student confidence more naturally than in class, as they feel real and relaxed.

Roxane's narrative captured a more introspective dimension of this extension. She initially hesitated to speak English consistently in informal areas, driven by self-consciousness about possible errors:

“At first, I was hesitant to speak in English all the time outside class, like sa canteen or sa corridor, kasi baka mali grammar ko.” (At first, I was hesitant to speak in English all the time outside class, like in the canteen or in the corridor, because maybe my grammar is wrong.)

Later she reflected:

“But eventually, I realized na it helps me also gain confidence, and when students see me speaking English kahit saan, they also try to follow.” (But eventually, I realized that it helps me also gain confidence, and when students see me speaking English anywhere, they also try to follow.)

This progression from reluctance to empowerment highlights the emotional investment required by the policy. Roxane's early anxiety over grammar mistakes reflects a form of internalized strain, where fear of imperfection could challenge her sense of linguistic legitimacy as a non-native teacher. Through persistent compliance with TIE expectations, however, this emotion shifted into a resource for growth. Zembylas (2003) describes emotions as central to teacher identity formation which arises within institutional demands and serves as a site for resistance and self-reconstruction. Roxane's realization that modeling English publicly strengthened her own confidence while prompting students to imitate her exemplifies this transformative process, fostering a more assured professional self and creating reciprocal encouragement.

These informal extensions align with patterns observed among Filipino English teachers, where visible, consistent language use builds mutual confidence and supports growth in multilingual school environments (Jung & Choe, 2024). The participants' accounts show how the TIE policy, by permeating everyday spaces, not only redefined communication but also deepened teachers' integration of English into their professional presence and relationships.

Theme 2: Identities in Negotiation

The teachers' narratives reveal a dynamic process of identity negotiation, where the TIE policy's mandate for sustained English use intersects with their deeply rooted Filipino linguistic and cultural selves. This encounter generates tensions, hybrid forms of acceptance, and enduring markers of Filipino identity, which illustrate how institutional demands prompt ongoing reconstruction of professional selves without fully erasing local repertoires.

Dina expressed a subtle yet poignant sense of linguistic and cultural distance:

“[Ang struggle ko] only when it comes to decoding malalim na Filipino. Because... I’m used to using English in communication, I find it hard to decode Filipino... Filipino pa rin naman ako. Hirap nga lang.”

“[My struggle] only when it comes to decoding deep Filipino. Because... I’m used to using English in communication, I find it hard to decode Filipino... I am still a Filipino. Struggling only.”

Her words capture a real tension which is that heavy professional reliance on English creates difficulty accessing "deep" or nuanced Filipino expression, evoking a quiet struggle

despite her affirmed Filipino core (I am still a Filipino). This reflects a common postcolonial dynamic where English proficiency enables institutional success but can subtly erode intimacy with the first language and cultural depth (Perry, 2025). The emotional acknowledgment of "hirap" (difficulty) points to identity strain, negotiating a professional self that aligns with school prestige while preserving personal cultural rootedness.

In contrast, Melvin framed English as seamlessly integrated into Filipino heritage rather than an imposed threat:

"I think it doesn't have that much impact since we are really familiar about the second language itself already. Since even before, we have been creolized of this language since our language itself is not purely Filipino but rather a mix of different culture. That familiarization from the language has been lost since we are no longer practicing it consistently but rather we have that knowledge to the language if we were just simply going to practice it in everyday use."

Melvin's perspective positions the TIE policy as a restorative force, reviving and strengthening an already hybrid linguistic identity shaped by historical creolization and cultural mixing. This positive negotiation views English not as alien but as part of a longstanding Filipino multilingual repertoire, allowing him to embrace the policy with minimal tension and see it as enhancing professional fluency without compromising cultural authenticity.

Roxane described compliance as straightforward yet acknowledged persistent traces of her Filipino self. Roxane expressed ease in compliance:

"Like, I don't feel naman any tension because when it was implemented [Talk in English Policy], I followed it right away because when I do, I follow the rules for me." (Like, I don't feel any tension because when it was implemented [Talk in English Policy], I followed it right away because when I do, I follow the rules for me.)

Yet she also observed persistence:

"Even though talking in English, sometimes hindi naiwasan yung mag-Tagalog ng konti and then meron pa rin yung accent, ganon ako... nagre-reflect pa rin yung [Filipino] identity ko." (Even though talking in English, sometimes it cannot be avoided to speak a little Tagalog and then there is still the accent, that's how I am... my [Filipino] identity still reflects.)

Her ease in following the rule ("no tension") reflects adaptive alignment with institutional expectations, yet the unavoidable "little Tagalog" slips and enduring accent serve as resilient markers of Filipino identity. These elements persist despite surface-level English dominance, suggesting the policy reshapes communicative behavior but does not fully suppress deeper cultural-linguistic traces. Such persistent markers and occasional fluid switches align with translanguaging as a means of negotiating hybrid identities, leveraging multilingual resources for self-expression and relational warmth, and even resistance to complete assimilation under restrictive policies (Vogel & García, 2017). This hybridity aligns with poststructuralist views of identity as fluid and contested, even under restrictive policies, traces of the original self-endure and assert themselves, maintaining coherence amid external demands (Zembylas, 2003). Here, Roxane balances rule-following professionalism with unerasable Filipino expression.

These accounts portray identities in negotiation as neither wholly constrained nor unchanged by the TIE policy. Instead, they emerge as hybrid constructions: tensions arise where English use distances teachers from cultural depth (Dina), acceptance flourishes where English is seen as culturally familiar (Melvin), and resilience manifests in persistent local markers amid compliance (Roxane). This process underscores the policy's role in prompting ongoing identity work, which is balancing institutional alignment with cultural continuity in a multilingual, postcolonial Philippine educational context.

Theme 3: Becoming the Teacher, They Expect

Across the participants' stories, the TIE policy emerges as a powerful catalyst for professional transformation. By requiring consistent English performance, it demands alignment with institutional expectations yet simultaneously fosters greater confidence, authority, and recognition as educators who embody the school's ideals of academic excellence and global readiness.

Building confidence and growth. Roxane vividly described her personal evolution under the policy:

"It helped my professional growth because on my first year of teaching, I am not that confident when I'm talking in English because I'm always confused. Like 'is my grammar correct?'. But I feel more confident because it's just me. And I can talk na rin in English the way I want. Or anywhere I want. Not just in the classroom."

Her shift from early-year anxiety and self-doubt about grammar to natural, unrestricted expression illustrates how repeated policy-mandated practice builds self-efficacy. Initial confusion gives way to ownership ("it's just me"), allowing her to speak authentically across contexts. This growth through immersion and habituation reflects how structured language expectations can enhance teachers' linguistic confidence over time, particularly for non-native speakers who integrate personal and professional dimensions of identity through experiential reinforcement.

Melvin echoed this developmental benefit on a broader scale:

"I think the policy helps to provide growth to every individual, especially professionals, since it will make us practice the second language itself and also this will provide a more consistent way of communicating our ideas and of course to be fluent in the language itself even more."

He positions the TIE policy as a consistent practice mechanism that sharpens fluency, clarity of expression, and overall professional capability. This view aligns with systematic insights into teacher identity development, where ongoing contextual demands such as policy-driven language use support adaptation and positive identity reconstruction amid professional challenges.

Projecting professionalism and authority. Dina highlighted how English dominance elevated her presence and the school's image:

"Scholarly, I look more professional. In the eyes of the teachers, with the students, I'm more fearful. When they hear me, saying things or announcing things in English, it would be more formal. Tapos, mas authoritative. Parang nakakaangat ang school 'pag ganon." (Scholarly, I look more professional. In the eyes of the teachers, with the students, I'm more fearful. When they hear me, saying things or announcing things in English, it would be more formal. Then, more authoritative. It seems the school is elevated when it's like that.)

Her use of "scholarly," "fearful", implying respected or intimidating authority, "formal," and "authoritative" underscores the policy's role in projecting legitimacy and elevating status. English becomes a marker of professionalism that commands respect from students and colleagues while enhancing the institution's prestige in a Philippine private school context focused on global competitiveness.

Melvin reinforced this expectation of formal delivery:

“It’s not about the saying that the language showcases our intelligence but rather, more likely, since we are professionals, we are somehow expected to deliver an English language confidently or somehow we’re able to communicate properly in formal manner with the admins, with the students, since we are educated individual.”

He frames confident, proper English use as an inherent professional obligation for educated individuals, aligning personal performance with institutional and societal norms of expertise. This negotiation of authority through language reflects how Filipino English teachers in prestige-oriented settings leverage policy compliance to affirm their roles as credible educators.

These interwoven narratives portray the TIE policy as a dual mechanism that imposes performative demands that could constrain flexibility, yet it simultaneously scaffolds professional becoming that enhances confidence through practice, projecting authority and formality, and aligning teachers with institutional goals of excellence and prestige. In doing so, it enables participants to "become the teacher they expect," embodying a more assured and institutionally valued and recognized professional self within the landscape.

5. Conclusion

The implementation of the Talk in English (TIE) Policy redefined classroom communication by shifting from flexible code-switching to deliberate modeling of English. Teachers adjusted their practices to ensure consistent use of the language in both formal lessons and informal interactions, though uneven enforcement across departments created gaps that placed heavier responsibility on English teachers.

The policy also positioned teachers in active negotiations of identity. It did not erase Filipino cultural identity but reshaped it into hybrid forms that combined English proficiency with local expression. Teachers experienced empowerment through increased credibility and authority, but also pressure to meet institutional standards, reflecting the complex relationship between language, culture, and professional identity.

Finally, the policy influenced professional development by reinforcing confidence, authority, and institutional prestige through consistent English use. The policy, therefore

acted both as a constraint that limits pedagogical flexibility and as a resource that fosters growth and recognition.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines set by the Calayan Educational Foundation, Inc. (CEFI). The conduct of this study has been approved and given relevant clearances by the CEFI Research and Publication Office.

AI Declaration

The author declares the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in writing this paper. In particular, the author used Notebook LM in reviewing the literature, ChatGPT for improving clarity of expression, Quillbot for paraphrasing ideas, and Grammarly for grammar and language checking. The author takes full responsibility for ensuring proper review and editing of the content generated using AI.

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