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Filipinos and Indians as English Language Teachers in the Emirates: A Phenomenology

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ABSTRACT

Non-native English speakers, venturing abroad to work as English teachers, have drastically grown in number. In the United Arab Emirates, a country that regards English as a vital aspect of progress and sustainability and a home to more than 200 nationalities, Filipino and Indian teachers have found their platform to practice their profession, while facing the reality that such a country openly prefers to hire native speakers over non-native ones. Hence, this study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of 12 non-native English speakers (six Filipinos and six Indians) in the context of working as English language teachers in the UAE. Responses, collected through in-depth interviews, were analyzed to shed light on the overarching question. Findings revealed that informants came to the UAE to earn a bigger salary, grow personally and professionally, and enhance their communication skills. Furthermore, issues and challenges experienced by these teachers were clustered into personal matters (homesickness, new environment adjustments, and language barriers) and professional matters (preference for native speakers, curriculum adjustment, classroom environment, and teacher-parent connection). Data also unraveled the coping mechanisms of the informants: recalling motivations, building connections, utilizing various teaching approaches, and practicing cultural sensitivity. Finally, this study reflected the insights of the teachers, categorized in themes of unlimited learning, native vs. non-native speakers' salary difference, uninterested learners, and the importance of understanding the work contract. Based on the findings, implications on administrative and pedagogical practices were explicated, leading to recommendations for future research on the phenomenon of teacher migration.

INTRODUCTION

English is considered to be the world's lingua franca, i.e., a common means of communication among people with different tongues, enabling people to converse with one another regardless of their ethnical or cultural backgrounds (Crystal, 2003; Lyons, 2021). It is undoubtedly in just about every sector resulting in the worldwide acceptance and usage of the English language as an extremely essential global language (Pachina, 2020). Hence, the increasing growth of learners of English creates an increasing demand for English teachers in countries whose first language is not English (Floris & Renandya, 2020). While many schools prefer to hire native speakers in many countries, research shows that non-native English-speaking teachers

(NNESTs) are also massively wanted, resulting in the phenomenal exodus of many NNESTs from their home countries to various destinations.

Accounts of NNESTs' compelling reasons to pursue a teaching job abroad, their struggles and challenges encountered before and after getting hired, and overall lessons learned as teachers of English in a foreign land have been explored in an Asian study which reveals that the emigration of school teachers is driven by rising demand in the destination countries, their dissatisfaction with the education system and desire for a better life (Sharma, 2012; Ulla, 2018). Furthermore, a study in Colombia opined that educators are pursuing opportunities to travel abroad to achieve individual academic goals, obtain personal independence, and

gain intercultural understanding. Additionally, they have found an increasing demand to develop cultural sensitivity and the need to broaden their personal and professional lives (Ospina & Medina, 2020).

Other studies have shown that professionals opting to teach English in a foreign land, search for a 'greener pasture' with their families abroad, and to distance themselves from the chaotic governance in their countries of origin (Oloo, 2012; Collins & Reid, 2012). Furthermore, there have been studies on the migrant teachers' challenges posed by cross-national experiences (Hutchison & Jazzar, 2007). A study showed that the idea of native speakerism – an ideology that upholds the idea that so-called native speakers are the best models and teachers of English – are still widespread in the workplace (Floris & Renandya, 2020), and this has resulted in discriminatory practices towards non-native speaking teachers. Also, issues such as culture shock, logistics, unfamiliar structural and organizational arrangements, differing notions of assessment, communication gaps, and problems with teacher-student relations have been observed (Bailey, 2013; Abramova, 2013; Bense, 2014; Ospina & Medina, 2020). Meanwhile, studies also have presented a positive experience abroad, which is that of having been privileged to share with other international teachers their own culture and language and to appreciate more the concept of cultural differences in an international teaching environment (Dirou, 2016; Gu & Canagarajah, 2017; Ulla, 2018). Nevertheless, amid the turbulence of all these concerns, foreign teachers need to become active learners to embrace the changes and uncertainties of their new lives.

In the United Arab Emirates, home to more than 200 nationalities, English is considered to be an absolute necessity that is useful for the working environment (Dirou, 2016). Moreover, in the education field, it has become a staple subject in state schools of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, and it is now the primary second language. In this country, only about ten percent of the population is Emirati, i.e., the locals (Dorsey, 2018); the rest is a mix of other nationalities, who use English as a common language and as the international business language (Dirou, 2016). Hence, the demand to teach English in this Arab country is high, leading to hiring teachers for schools across the seven emirates to

teach English, though apparently prioritizing the natives over the non-natives (Dorsey, 2018).

To date, there is a growing number of migration studies that focused on non-native English-speaking teachers' experiences, challenges, and opportunities in different countries (Sharma, 2012; Oloo, 2012; Collins & Reid, 2012; Ulla, 2018; Floris & Renandya, 2020), I have not stumbled upon any study that centered on the lived experiences of NNESTs in the UAE, particularly those of Filipinos and Indians.

Thus, employing a phenomenological inquiry as an approach to research that seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it, it was essential to have this study conducted to address the gap in the published studies and related literature, and therefore paint a picture of reality in the context of teaching English as an NNEST in an Arab country.

This qualitative undertaking was anchored on the theoretical position of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), also known as the Bennett scale. Originally developed by Milton Bennett (1986), this grounded theory, which is an influential model in the fields of intercultural communication and engagement, describes the standard ways in which people experience, interpret, and interact across cultural differences, and it proposes a developmental continuum along which people can progress toward a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural variance, as well as greater social facility when negotiating cross-cultural dissimilarity (Bennett, 2004, 2013, 2017).

The model presents the first three stages (denial, defense, minimization) which are ethnocentric, i.e., one's own culture is experienced as central to reality in some way, followed by the last three stages (acceptance, adaptation, integration) which are ethno-relative, i.e., one's own culture is experienced in the context of other cultures. In essence, the underlying assumption of the model is that as one's perceptual organization of cultural difference becomes more complex, one's experience of culture becomes more sophisticated and the potential for exercising competence in intercultural relations increases. By recognizing how cultural difference is being experienced, predictions about the effectiveness of intercultural communication can be made and educational

interventions can be tailored to facilitate development along the continuum (Bennet, 2017). And so, the theoretical underpinnings of DMIS hold true to the experiences of Filipinos and Indians who work as teachers of the English language to intercultural groups of students in the UAE.

These teachers who carry with them their own backgrounds, beliefs, attitudes, values, and aspirations are bound to deal with learners who come from diverse countries and exhibit dissimilar backgrounds, beliefs, attitudes, values, and aspirations. Having those said, these teachers are expected to induce the learning in the learner considering the set of aspects encompassing the following, but not limited to, intercultural attitudes, general knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction (like the ability to discover information about another culture and the ability to communicate in real-time interaction), and critical cultural awareness. In general, DMIS guided me in understanding the lived experiences of Filipino and Indian NNESTs who are handling heterogeneous groups of students whose culture is different from theirs.

The general purpose is to explore the lived experiences of the Filipinos and Indians as non-native English-speaking English language teachers in the UAE in terms of their reasons behind pursuing a career in the UAE, experienced issues and challenges, considered coping mechanisms, and general insights for academia, the following overarching question was made: What are the lived experiences of the Filipinos and Indians as non-native English speakers about English language teaching in the UAE?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed the phenomenological approach to qualitative research. Researchers (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2007) express that a phenomenological approach aims to describe precisely the lived experiences of people, and not to create theories or models of the phenomenon being studied. Further, such a study relies on the participants' own perspectives to give insights into their views and motivations – both in terms of what was experienced and how it was experienced. Hence, this study used phenomenology, because it aimed to explore the

lived experiences of the Filipino and Indian teachers as non-native English speakers about English language teaching in the UAE. It specifically looked into the participants' reasons behind pursuing an English language teaching career in the UAE, experienced issues and challenges, considered coping mechanisms, and general insights for academia.

Research Informants

A total of 12 non-native English speakers who are teaching English in different private secondary schools in the UAE were involved in this study, consisting of six Filipinos (two from the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, two from Dubai, and two from Ras Al Khaimah) and of Indians (two from the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, two from Dubai, and two from Sharjah). These informants were purposefully selected so that the information needed to expedite the study would be the exact data necessary to answer the research question. They were determined according to the inclusion criteria set, indicating that an informant must have been a high school English teacher for not less than two years in any international school in the UAE, and must be a graduate of a college degree majoring in English. Furthermore, included in the selection was the willingness of the informants. In Laverty's (2003) criteria, as cited in Sumalinog (2020), there should be five to 25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. Likewise, Creswell (1998, 2007, 2009), opining that a minimum of six participants could be considered, addressed the issue of the appropriate number of informants in qualitative research participants that can provide thematic saturation.

All of the informants have satisfactorily met the selection criteria as needed in this study. A total of twelve individuals were subjected to in-depth interviews to shed light on the research question. All of these informants are well-versed in the use of the English language since they are English teachers themselves. Furthermore, each of them was assigned a pseudonym to uphold confidentiality.

Data Collection

To gather the necessary data, I primarily structured the interview guide questions and ensured that before conducting the interview, they were subjected to content validation for me to wholly explore the phenomenon considered in this study. Before the actual interview, a dry-run

interview was conducted to acquaint me with the process and proper conduct of the interview with the participants. Moreover, the pilot test gave me a chance to go over the questions and reflect on the points that should be added or removed to be able to capture sufficient and relevant data. In consequence, questions that were irrelevant to the topic and questions which did not yield a sufficient response to capture the lived experiences of the study's participants were revised to correct the interview guide. Then, I identified prospective teachers who met the qualifications in the inclusion criteria. Due to distance and Covid-19 restrictions, an initial interview was conducted online to inform the participants about the nature of the study and to ask them about their current teaching conditions, including their willingness to participate in this study.

After seeking for permission through consent letters via email, the in-depth interview proper was scheduled according to each of the participants' convenience. The interviews, which lasted between 35 to 60 minutes and were held via Google Meet, were recorded. Interviews were conducted in English and centered on the participants' reasons behind pursuing an English language teaching career in the UAE, experienced issues and challenges, considered coping mechanisms, and general insights for academia. Data collected from the interviews were treated in confidence, and only I had the access to them. During the transcription process, I made use of pseudonyms rather than the participants' real names, which means that the identity of the participants was concealed and coded to ensure anonymity as part of maximizing the ethical consideration that this research deemed important. After transcribing the responses and analyzing the data, the participants were asked to review the data to confirm the accuracy.

Data Analysis

In this study, I considered the procedure prescribed by Moustakas (1994), as cited in Creswell (2007). This method of organizing and analyzing phenomenological data is derived from the modifications suggested by Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen (1975). Using such a method of analysis, I transcribed all the data gathered, and carefully and repetitively read the data to be able to discern the significant statements. I marked the passages in the transcript which I

believed, using my value judgment and thorough reflection, were significant statements about the phenomenon being studied. The statements were then grouped into meaning units or formulated meanings from significant lines. Subsequently, I reflected on my descriptions to group the meaning units by varying frames of reference to construct the theme cluster. Themes were regrouped into theme clusters to form structural descriptions which answered the general question of this research on the lived experiences of Filipino and Indian teachers as non-native English speakers about English language teaching in the UAE. Furthermore, in coming up with the themes of this study, I focused my attention only on those important clauses and phrases that emerged from the transcripts. Adopting the process of numeration in determining the thematic statements in this study, a theme was noted when a particular idea or experience was highlighted by at least two informants. Those that occurred only once were not included in the thematic statements.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness is the basic concept in research that produces an effective and reliable output. Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited that trustworthiness should consist of the following: credibility (confidence in the truth of the findings); confirmability (degree of neutrality); transferability (proof that findings have applicability in other contexts); and dependability (assurance that findings are consistent and could be repeated).

In this study, I obtained credibility by properly observing rigor during the data collection, especially during the interviews. Recording and supplementing the interviews with anecdotes were utilized to ensure that verbal and nonverbal cues were aligned and consistent. The circular and iterative analysis of data was also ensured by listening and re-listening to the audio files, reading and re-reading the transcripts, and writing and re-writing descriptive data until saturation was reached. Member checking was also done, i.e., final results were shared with the participants of the study for validation.

To secure confirmability, the analysis in this study was based on factual data obtained directly from the interviews with the informants. This established the accuracy of the data information and the soundness of decisions and judgments in the

sequence of the research process from the commencement until the conclusion.

On the other hand, to attain transferability, there was an observance of proper labeling and keeping of the data for future references. Aside from that, the study does not claim anything that pertains to the generalizability of the results, owing to the fact that these perceptions are only based on the personal experiences of the informants.

Dependability of the data was also observed through collection carried out in different settings and time frames spread over a period that offered the same results. This will be found in offering information through the lenses of more than one participant from the same institution, and verifying perceptions offered by an individual through member checking (Cohen et al., 2011).

Lastly, to establish dependability, three peer examiners or external research reviewers were involved in attesting to the integrity and accuracy of the data. Moreover, on top of using an audit trail and reflective journal, I made sure that the analysis in this study was grounded on well-founded theories and published kinds of literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lived Experiences of Filipinos and Indians as English Language Teachers in the UAE

After a careful and extensive analysis of the transcripts, essential themes were generated to illuminate the lived experiences of Filipinos and Indians as English language teachers in the UAE about the following areas of concern: reasons behind pursuing an English language teaching career in the UAE, experienced issues and challenges, considered coping mechanisms, and general insights for academia. Providing multiple perspectives, quotations presented herein allow the informants to speak for themselves.

Reasons for Pursuing an ELT Career in the UAE

Financial aspect. One of the essential themes generated regarding the reasons of the informants for pursuing an English language teaching career in the UAE is the opportunity to earn more than what they used to earn in their home countries. All of the informants expressed that the very first purpose of working abroad is basically grounded on the monetary concern. According to them, they want to earn more, since they have families to support,

needs to meet, businesses to establish, and desire to reach financial stability. According to Marilyn when she was asked what drove her to pursue her professional teaching career in the UAE, she expressed:

Of course, it's always about higher salary and benefits. I know working abroad is not easy, but when my paycheck is in my hand, I can say that is all worth it because of the high salary I receive with the benefits that come with it. (Excerpt #1)

Aries, who was once a private school teacher in the Philippines for two years, highlighted one of the perks of teaching in the UAE – receiving a tax-free salary. He first mentioned that in the Philippines, he was not able to save money, because his salary for a month, after mandatory deductions and taxes, was just enough for his bills and necessities. He shared that working abroad was a wise decision to make when he said:

Mas malakisweldokumparasa Pilipinas at tax-free pa.” (The salary is bigger here than in the Philippines and it's even tax-free.) That makes me... think that leaving my family in the Philippines was a wise decision because I know that I did it just for them, for me to give them a better future, especially that I dream to start a business there soon. (Excerpt#2)

Meanwhile, Josephine accentuated the value of a Filipino breadwinner in her statement:

Number reason of leaving is...is to help my family and to perform my responsibilities as a breadwinner. You know, when you're the breadwinner of the family you have no choice but to work abroad for their needs, right? (Excerpt #3)

With the same ideas, extracts from Indian informants also show that the reason for choosing to work as a teacher in the UAE is grounded on financial growth and savings. Uma stated that:

This I want to say. Working abroad, in the UAE, is an opportunity to achieve financial stability. I can save money as much as I can support my family members to go to school and provide for the needs of my family. (Excerpt #4)

The following line from Ghazala also speaks about how she can help her family in India with the amount she receives as a teacher in the UAE:

See, here I get free accommodation or a housing allowance that keeps me very comfortable... Thank God! It is certainly because the situation here is better than back home. My salary is essentially my monthly savings...most of the money earned per month gets remitted to my family in India. (Excerpt #5)

Furthermore, Shardul said that he can put up with sacrifices abroad for the sake of his family back in his home country, as he conveyed:

For seven years I have been in the UAE, teaching English, despite the hard situations I am experiencing, because here, I can earn thrice or quadruple for my family who are living in India. I can give a better life to my family in India sacrificing my own comfort – family first, then me. (Excerpt #6)

Personal growth. Another essential theme, which emerged in response to reasons which informants had as to why they chose to pursue a teaching career in the UAE, is personal growth. Informants have shared that working abroad as a teacher can give them an avenue to experience and learn a new culture alongside enjoying a number of wonderful destinations in the country. In the following statement, Roxanne expressed that she wanted to teach abroad to strengthen her awareness of cultural diversity. She asserted:

Since I was young, I have always wanted to seek a job abroad. I feel that working in an international environment will raise my awareness of global differences. So, yes. I pursued my dream. (Excerpt#7)

Also, Shardul mentioned that he thought of teaching abroad, so he could compare the differences between his background with others, and so learn from them. In his statement, he verbalized:

Looking at my personal heritage, culture, and values, I also wanted to meet new people and essentially see how people live their life in a different country. (Excerpt#8)

In the same way, Vandhana averred the same thought in her statement:

I wanted to observe the local way of working and start to adopt certain habits of theirs, combining them with my own cultural practices. So, when I am back in India, I can share new and helpful stuff with others. (Excerpt#9)

On the other hand, Savithri shared that working in a promising country like the UAE enabled her to visit places she has never visited before. She disclosed:

Well, basically, I wanted to work abroad so I can be in places that I just usually see in books, magazines, or on the Internet. Who doesn't want to see the Burj Khalifa, the mosques, the desert landscapes? I wanted adventure, so I chose UAE because it can offer many surprises and wonders. (Excerpt#10)

Following Savithri's point, Marily also shared how excited she was to the UAE to see in person the famous sites in the country. "In the UAE, there are new adventures in life, new experiences, you know...plus, wonderful photos I can share on Facebook," she voiced out.

Professional Development. Teachers were able to highlight another reason for pursuing an ELT career in the UAE: to develop in their chosen professional field. From Dennis's perspective, being an English teacher in the UAE is a training ground, hence he decided to take a move and pursue a teaching career in the said country. He acclaimed:

Teaching abroad is not just an excellent resumé builder; it is an opportunity to immerse myself in a new environment and develop new skills and work experience. (Excerpt#11)

While for a Filipino like Lalaine, working in the UAE as a teacher, is an opportunity to prepare herself for bigger goals she has in the future, deeming the UAE as a springboard. She honestly purported:

I also have a dream to teach either in the US or in Canada. With that, I wanted first to get an international teaching experience in the UAE, because is easier to get in here, visa-wise, and get a job compared to the ones I mentioned... UAE is a preparatory country, a stepping stone, for me to be able to go to my ultimate country of destination. *Kasi di bapaggalingdito mas madalina?* (If you're from the UAE, isn't it easier to go to another country?) (Excerpt#12)

Enhancement of Communication Skills. Another reason why informants chose to work in the UAE as English teachers, was for them to enhance their communication skills. It has emerged in the analysis that Filipino and Indian professionals who are teaching English, desire to be in this culturally pluralistic country and teach in international schools, so they could practice using

the target language in a global avenue. Josephine expressed the following statement:

As a Filipino, I also wanted to work abroad so I could work with native speakers. I wanted to befriend them, so I can make them my “communication buddies.”(Excerpt#13)

Furthermore, Ghani shared her desire to be a better communicator, a reason to pursue a teaching career overseas. She said:

I wanted to be exposed to different languages, cultures, and body language expressions to develop a strong capacity to decode and interpret ideas and various and points of view, and to build trust and respect in communication. (Excerpt#14)

Putting forward the same idea, Aries believed that to be abroad is to meet people who can help in enhancing his capacity to use English. In the following statement, he mentioned:

I thought that teachers abroad could make new friends and meet new people throughout their careers overseas. These relationships can provide emotional and social motivation to improve my English language skills. (Excerpt#15)

Issues and Challenges Faced by the Informants

Personal Matters. Based on the thematic analysis of the informants’ responses with regard to the issues and challenges experienced as English language teachers in the UAE, two essential themes emerged: personal matters and professional matters. Under personal matters, sub-themes have been identified, and these are homesickness, new environment adjustments, and language barriers. In terms of homesickness, informants have mentioned that it has been always part of their journey abroad. In one statement of Roxanne, she mentioned:

You are so being far from your loved ones in the Philippines. I have always missed my two sons, my husband, and my parents. That is the first thing I feel – I feel lonely. I miss the provincial food, the weather, you know, the rain! Nothing beats home, right? I feel I am always a stranger here, though I have stayed here for years now. *Naiiyakako.* (I want to cry.) (Excerpt#16)

In addition, some teachers also remarked on the difficulty they faced in separating from their families. When asked about their most challenging situations faced as teachers in the UAE, six of them talked about this situation. For example, Savithri

shared that despite being able to see her family yearly, she still feels homesick every time. She stated:

You know, I always use my two-month leave per year to see my family in India. I always allocate money to do that, and for many years, I have done that. Leaving them to go back to the UAE, it is always with a heavy heart. When I arrive here, I immediately feel the longing to see them again. (Excerpt#17)

Moreover, Ghani also mentioned that her biggest challenge is “being far away from the people I love, my family and my friends.” Marilyn’s response consisting of the line “being far away from my beloved ones, most especially my boyfriend” also showcases how she describes homesickness as a personal challenge while working abroad. Generally, informants’ answers illustrated the family ties these teachers have with their loved ones, which might be a cultural characteristic for both Filipinos and Indians.

In terms of new environment adjustments, teachers reported establishing new living conditions in the host community as one of the most important challenges they had to face when they came to the UAE. Filipino teachers mentioned the adjustment they had to make when it comes to intoxication. As Filipinos have been used to unregulated consumption of alcohol in the Philippines, three Filipino informants mentioned that in the UAE, it is a totally different story. Dennis shared:

Ahhh! Here, I have to abide by the rules. The Philippines is an open country; you can do anything you want there. Here in the UAE, no. You can’t drink anywhere; only authorized stores can sell alcoholic beverages. (Excerpt#18)

Some informants also shared about their adjustments during the Holy Month of Ramadan, because in the UAE, no eating and drinking are allowed in public during the hours of fasting, even though these days many restaurants and food courts have a covered area to allow non-Muslims to still eat for the whole month. As a sample, Lalaine expressed:

I remember one time, as I was in a grocery store. Mindlessly, I opened a bottle of juice and drank it in public. I was wondering why two locals were strangely looking at me. Then, one Filipino tapped me and reprimanded me, “*Huwag ka uminom in public. Ramadan Ngayon.*” (Don’t

drink in public. It's Ramadan.) *Diyos ko!* (Oh my God!) I was very nervous. *Akala ko makukulongnako.* (I thought I was going to be jailed). (Excerpt#19)

Furthermore, three informants also mentioned their experiences with photography in certain areas in the UAE. They shared that when they were still new in the country, they kept taking pictures anywhere. Until they were educated about a specific law. Uma conveyed:

See! In this country, it is unlawful to take photos of locals without their permission. There are even some government buildings that forbid you to take photos of the exterior. So, I keep my camera in my pocket in public places. (Excerpt#20)

Lastly, another personal issue or challenge for the informants as they work in the UAE is the language barrier. As per their accounts, it is noted that language is a common cause of misunderstanding among diverse nationalities in the United Arab Emirates. In the UAE, there are more than 200 nationalities living together. While Arab is the national language and English is a second language, not all nationalities are well-versed in using English as a medium of communication. Hence, informants shared that there they would have to resort to the deliberate breaking of the rules of English grammar and syntax, just to successfully communicate with one another. Josephine recalled:

People from other languages will not understand me if I speak normally. So, I need to break down my language. Like, the phrase "same-same" as a perfect line for any salesman who does not know the answer to my question. Well, it roughly means "similar, as usual" or "same-same but different" which corresponds to "seems similar but different in some ways". *Anggulo, noh?* (Chaotic, isn't it?) But yes, that's how it is here. (Excerpt#21)

Professional Matters. Emerging from the analysis of the responses, aside from personal matters, issues and challenges related to professional matters have also been identified. Under this essential theme, there are sub-themes to be discussed: preference for native speakers, curriculum adjustment, classroom environment, and teacher-parent connection.

Preference for Native Speakers. One challenge that the informants have experienced is the preference of some UAE schools for native speakers. Teachers were sharing that when they were in the process of hunting for a job, recruiters were looking for native speakers. Applications from non-native speakers, like Filipinos and Indians, were disregarded. Regarding this, Dennis expressed the following sentiment:

My experience is that in the UAE, native speakers are given more importance, salary and their workload is much less than non-native speakers. It is always native speakers being greater than the non-native ones, especially in the field of teaching English. (Excerpt#22)

Roxanne also shared his disappointing experience, while she was applying for a job:

When I was looking for an English teaching job, I gathered the phone numbers of all schools I wanted to apply to. I phoned them one by one. Sometimes, I would get disappointed because employers, after knowing I am not a native speaker, would end up telling me "we'll just give you a call". (Excerpt#23)

Savithri also described the same challenge she experienced, as she said:

I tried sending the application via LinkedIn, Indeed, and other sites. But, most of the time, schools that offer big salaries only accept native speakers. I've been encountering the same problem actually. (Excerpt#24)

Shardul expressed his frustration as to this challenge he experienced himself in looking for a job in the UAE:

It frustrates me a lot. Just being a non-native speaker automatically disqualifies me, discrediting my education and great academic knowledge. (Excerpt#25)

Curriculum Adjustment. Deduced from the responses of the informants is the challenge on curriculum adjustment. This refers to the shift in the curriculum they have to teach in the UAE which is different from the one they used to teach back in their home countries. Lalaine conveyed that the "Philippine curriculum is more work-demanding and congested." Hence, teaching the British curriculum was a lot easier for her. On the same note, Marilyn described her experiences by saying:

In the Philippines, I used to teach English to high school students, following the Philippine curriculum. When I was hired by an international school here in the UAE, I shifted to the British curriculum. As a teacher in the Philippines, I was used to speaking a lot in class. Everything was about how I can teach and teach. While in the British curriculum, things must be student-centered. I let them do their own learning. (Excerpt#26)

Uma also expressed that she needed to adjust her style of teaching. In India, she was a college professor for 17 years. When she arrived in the UAE, she was assigned as a high school teacher. She mentioned:

This I needed to do first. There was a huge difference in the curriculum I am teaching in the UAE compared to India's. Here are more student activities, and less teacher talk. No spoon-feeding approach. (Excerpt#27)

Classroom Environment. In the classroom, interaction among students and educators may become an issue when there are cultural differences regarding expressions, manners of speech, different accents, and differences related to the interpretation of body language. This was probably the case for Aries, since he came from a Southeast Asian country where personal space and physical contact with people may be perceived differently than in the United Arab Emirates:

A student who was asking for further explanations, I tried to explain everything to that student in detail, but the next day when I went to school, I got a note from my principal because the student's parents were very angry at me, because they said I had got too physically close to their kid. (Excerpt#28)

Similarly, Ghazala shared that it is also an issue she experienced. She recounted:

The first shock that I had when I began to teach was the way students had to be treated. I was warned about the physical distance that I had to keep with my students. (Excerpt#29)

Furthermore, professionally, teachers mentioned classroom management as one of the most difficult aspects to deal with in the new school systems. Despite having years of teaching experience in their home countries, they had difficulty properly addressing behavior problems in

their classes. This was evidenced in the following statement from Josephine:

One day in class, I asked one of my seventh graders to get out of the class because he was being disruptive. I called the office so security would come to get him...He continued talking back and yelling at me, telling me to shut up, as I was a Filipino like their housemaid. (Excerpt#30)

Additionally, Uma expressed:

I found it very hard to keep one student's head up. I called him by his name several times, but he didn't care. He even put his headphones on and cared about nothing around him. (Excerpt#31)

While Lalaineshared about a similar difficulty with student behavior:

While we were in class and after asking him to sit down, he started shouting . . . many other insults. The child didn't stop shouting and suddenly took a chair-throwing it to the floor. My reaction was to try to calm him and send another student for help. (Excerpt#32)

Teacher-Parent Connection. Teachers said that they did not know how to address their students' parents appropriately and that they found it complicated to deal with them. This difficulty is reflected in their responses. Dennis commented that it was challenging "to have a parent-teacher conference with a stubborn parent."Furthermore, Aries also shared how rude and inconsiderate some parents are:

Some parents think they are always right. What they want must be followed. For example, since it is pandemic time, my classroom can only accommodate a maximum of 15 students per day to observe social distancing. So, I have to make groupings of my class of 35 students, so everybody can have a chance to attend F2F classes. When I did the groupings, say 15 students will attend on Sunday, another 15 will attend on Monday, and so forth, the parents complained and demanded that their kids be given five days, as it was what they wanted. Horrible! (Excerpt#33)

Another scenario was shared by Vandhana. She was talking about parents, who after knowing their kids got low marks, would come to school to make a complaint to the teacher. The parents, despite knowing their kids did not submit the

requirements after having been reminded a couple of times, would still insist that their kids must be given high marks. She recalled that some parents tolerate their kids. They complain to her with the principal and make her appear she does not know what she is doing. She added that some parents want their kids to receive high marks despite being undeserving.

Coping Mechanisms of Teachers to Overcome Issues and Challenges

Recalling motivations to work. After having been asked about the issues and challenges that the informants experienced while working as English language teachers in the UAE, they were also asked about their coping mechanisms employed to deal with the shared issues and challenges. One of the deduced themes was centered on the informants' motivating factors. They expressed that when things are getting tough and draining, they have to remind themselves of the reasons why they opted to work in the UAE in the very first place. For example, Dennis was quoted saying, "After all, I am here for my family, my loved ones. I am here for the future of my kids. So, *kakayanin ko lahat para sa kanila*. (I will do everything for them.)" Roxanne was also firm in sharing that since in the beginning, she already knew, things would not be easy, but "I pushed myself because I wanted to send my kids to school, build a new house for my family...I have reasons to fight abroad." In the same way, Aries had the same thought when he said, "Challenges normally arrive to test me. But, I will stay strong for my family in the Philippines." Expressing the same idea was Vandhanasaid:

This I do for my kids. I keep thinking of them to get inspired to work away from them." Moreover, Ghazala conveyed that no matter what challenge may come to her, "I will survive because I have dreams for my family and myself. (Excerpt#34)

Building connections with others. Some of the informants also shared how significant it is to build connections with other people around them, may it be in school or somewhere else. In this way, they can consult about school matters or even personal ones. Marilyn enthusiastically shared that "having friends is really a good thing. I mean, genuine friends, okay? You know, people you can share your frustrations with, right?" This idea was also reflected in the statement of Lalaine, as she

purported, "*Ibatalaga 'pag at least, may kasamakangnakikinigsa 'yo*. (It's really different when at least you have someone who listens to you.) I find it very comforting." Shardul, meanwhile, relayed that "challenges are becoming easier to face with amazing people around." In addition, Uma jokingly imparted, "When things get stressful, call a friend and eat a lot with them. Hahaha!"

Utilizing various approaches to teaching. Informants were also able to share what they employ in addressing the issues and challenges in the classroom. For instance, Josephine explained how she uses varied learning approaches weekly to catch the interest of her students. She said, "You know that high school students are hyperactive learners, right?... very very hyperactive and sometimes rude. I have to introduce games, art activities, musical performances.. many others." Roxanne was also experiencing the challenge of handling students. Hence, she suggested, "Make lessons fun and interactive. Activities are done in groups.. sometimes, I also introduce flip classrooms." Supporting the idea, Ghani talked about the use of differentiated instruction. She said, "I need to adjust my lesson activities and tasks for my students in a single class who are at different levels. This I believe will address my challenges as a teacher." Furthermore, Savithri was articulating her use of active learning strategies to "engage students, even the unruly and unmotivated ones in class, in learning, using activities such as reading, writing, discussion, or problem-solving."

Practicing cultural sensitivity. The last essential theme that was extracted from the analysis as to how informants cope with the issues and challenges faced, Practicing Cultural Sensitivity. The informants revealed that for them to survive in the UAE, they need to adjust to the rules and regulations of the country, including being respectful to other nationalities and being mindful of the differences in beliefs, practices, and traditions, in and out of the school premises. Marilyn accentuated that "it is a must for an ex-pat like me to always practice respect while working abroad. I make sure that I always follow the rules here, *mahirapna, bakamapauwi ng walasaoras* (just being careful not to get untimely deported)." Aries also stressed that "rules in the UAE are always changing. That's what UAE is. I can't do anything

about that. What I can best do is to be aware and be responsible all the time.” Meanwhile, some teachers also put across the essence of practicing cultural sensitivity on the school premises to help them adjust to such a culturally pluralistic environment. For example, Lalaine said:

Well, since I work in an international school, I get to work with other nationalities, different kinds of people, different attitudes, etc. If I am unsure about something, I simply ask. I don’t assume anything. (Excerpt#35)

Likewise, Ghazala described how she makes herself culturally sensitive. She verbalized:

Teaching abroad is indeed a challenge, facing culturally diverse students and working with culturally diverse professionals. To me, I have to make an effort to learn about those cultures by becoming immersed in them. Active listening is also imperative, especially when individuals of different racial or cultural backgrounds are involved. (Excerpt#36)

Evidently, Ghani, in her statement, mentioned how being culturally sensitive creates an impact on the way students treat her as a teacher:

It’s important that people around you, especially your students, feel heard and validated. That’s when they start to connect with you as someone to look up to. (Excerpt#37)

As a summary of this essential theme, a line coming from Uma will suffice. It is when she vented:

In today’s changing cultural climate, it’s no longer a choice to become culturally sensitive, it’s a necessity to survive and to live together in peace and productivity. (Excerpt#38)

General Insights for the Academia

Unlimited Learning. Responses from informants shared that working as a teacher abroad is an opportunity to learn innumerable things from their students, the working environment, and even the host country. Worthy to mention, Dennis mentioned, “Reflecting on my experience working with international teachers who come and teach in the UAE...I get to embrace other cultures, and it is a fascinating experience, really. Here, I can try new foods, visit new places, practice a new language, and meet people with different ways of thinking and living.” Moreover, Aries was able to share that teaching in the UAE has offered him great wonders with his professional experience. He mentioned,

“With different kinds of students, colleagues, and school communities, I have learned about a new educational system and adapted to the way things are done at school and in this country.” Likewise, Vandhana expressed that working as a teacher in a foreign land “makes you more flexible and tolerant...forces you to be a team player...creates positive relationships with co-workers to help you to grow as a person.” On this premise, Uma opined that undoubtedly, reaching abroad has been a learning experience not only for her students but for her as well at large.

Salary Difference. Informants were also eager to highlight the factual situation that they face as English teachers in the UAE. This situation refers to the huge difference between the salary of native English speakers and that of non-native English speakers like them, being Filipinos and Indians. Roxanne, who has a PhD degree, expressed that in the UAE, degrees carry no weight. She continued, “No matter how many diplomas I hold, my salary will never be higher nor equal to that of a native speaker, despite us having the tasks and obligations in school.” This sentiment is seconded by Josephine who said, “This is something we need to address in the UAE: compensation based on experiences and qualifications and not on nationality.” Furthermore, Vandhana feels that “now is the time non-native speakers should be paid fairly in this country. By fairly I mean linked to their qualifications, skills, and English ability.” With the same argument being put forward, Uma held forth, “I don’t think anyone could argue that well qualified, capable non-native speakers should get equal salaries. To do so would show ignorance or perhaps something much worse.”

Uninterested Learners. Analysis of the responses reveals informants’ awareness of the fact that not all their students in the UAE will show interest in learning English with them. While teachers are doing their best and exerting much effort to prepare interesting and interactive lessons, not all students will just care about learning English, and for the informants, it is certainly normal to encounter such types of students. Josephine voiced out, “Remember, we cannot please everybody. A few of them come to school to seriously learn, yes; some of them, to literally play. They are basically not interested, maybe because, they already are rich, or some of them really are

rude students.” Lalaine’s experience was similar to Josephine’s. Lalaine expressed, “Well, *para sa akin* (for me), I don’t have to work as an English teacher to end up stressed out and crazy. So, let them. *Kaliwali* (never mind). There will always be students who will show no interest.” Coming from the same side, Ghazala explained that teaching English abroad doesn’t mean “you’ll always have perfect, obedient students. I had my fair share of rude and sleepy Arab students... at the end of the day, no one can force a student to learn.” In the same way, Ghani said, “As a teacher, I always tried to prepare relevant and interesting activities and not take it personally if some students didn’t seem to care. I believe it’s not always about the teacher.” With these realizations anchored in uninterested learners, there’s one this Aries has to say, “*Enjoyinmo lang ang moment; iwasan ang stress – nakakapangit* (Just enjoy the moment; avoid stress – it’s making you awful).”

Importance of Understanding the Contract. The last essential deduced from the analysis alludes to the insight of the informants on how important it is to comprehend the work contract before any work commences. According to them, contracts matter, and understanding it fully is someone’s imperative responsibility. Marilyn said, “Here abroad, you have to be clever. I learned this as a big lesson. Other companies can play words with you. Remember, rules tend to be a bit different than our typical contract in the Philippines.” Roxanne was even empathic in saying “be sure to read, re-read, and re-re-read your contract. Ask people you can trust to help you.” Hence, one piece of advice from Savithri regarding this matter went, “You need to know what you’re getting yourself into. Teaching abroad is a gamble; be wise.”

This research endeavor aimed at exploring the lived experiences of the Filipinos and Indians as non-native English speakers about English language teaching in the United Arab Emirates. Specifically, it delved into the informants’ reasons behind pursuing an English language teaching career in the UAE, experienced issues and challenges, considered coping mechanisms, and general insights for academia. The informants were 12 (six Filipinos and six Indians) non-native English speakers who have been teaching English for not less than two years in the UAE.

In terms of the reasons for pursuing an ELT Career in the UAE, this study revealed that informants rudimentarily considered the financial benefits. Their responses show that working as a teacher in the mentioned country, where teachers do not pay taxes, can help them address vital concerns such as families to support, needs to meet, businesses to establish, and desires to reach financial stability. Also, with the differentials between their salary in the UAE and that in their home countries, they opted to venture abroad. This finding builds congruence with the statement from Altun (2015) as cited in Sumalinog (2020) which states that teachers who work abroad significantly benefit from their country of origin in terms of money and other perks. In addition, Johnson (2013) and Serbes (2017) expressed the same idea that teaching abroad becomes attractive to many due to the offered monetary incentives and benefits the schools abroad could afford.

Meanwhile, the informants’ other reasons to work as English teachers in the UAE include their desire to grow personally and professionally. For them, personal growth happens through immersing themselves in a new culture, experiencing a new working environment, and visiting wonderful destinations overseas. Furthermore, professional growth is anchored on finding a training ground in the UAE for future plans and goals in life. On the same note, Sumalinog (2020) claimed that teachers’ driving forces to work abroad include the aim to experience and enjoy a new culture and live in a new environment. Ulla (2018) also acknowledged that they go abroad to teach, not just to earn, but to learn how to handle learners from other nationalities plus acquire new methodologies and strategies. Toraman et al. (2020) added that teachers also become curious to learn about other countries cultures and experience living abroad, believing that sojourning into another country to work could be worthy and life-fulfilling.

Finally, emerging as the last reason the informants considered working abroad is the opportunity to enhance their communication. They shared that they wanted to work in the international arena to engage with other nationalities (co-workers who are native and non-native speakers alike) so they can be trained to use the English language more effectively and efficiently in various circumstances, whether in school or out. This

finding backs the claim of Celik (2017) in his study which stated that teaching overseas has always been a great opportunity for academic and social development in terms of teaching skills, communication skills, and classroom management. He added that teaching abroad can help teachers promote their skills for efficiency and effectiveness as teachers and improve competence in the use of English as the international language.

This study also brought out the issues and challenges that the informants experienced themselves while journeying in the UAE as English language teachers. Based on the analysis of the responses, these issues and challenges could be thematically categorized as personal and professional matters. On one hand, personal matters encompass homesickness, new environment adjustments, and language barriers. Informants mentioned how they longed to be with their loved ones back in their native lands, how they made adjustments to the rules and regulations in the UAE, and how they experienced problems in communication with others due to language differences. Ospina and Medina (2020) imparted that living and teaching internationally goes with trials including being away from family, settling down, and communication issues. According to them, teachers may be subjected to these encounters as part of adapting to a new place.

On the other hand, professional matters cover preference for native speakers over non-native speakers in the process of hiring, curriculum adjustment, classroom environment, and teacher-parent connection. Studies worldwide have also reported overseas teachers sharing their stories of frustrations as to being rejected as non-native speaker applicants due to the preference of learners and their parents (Songsirisak, 2015; Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012; Walkinshaw & Duong, 2014), of huge adjustments to make to address differences in the curriculum they teach and the one they used to teach (Halicioglu, 2015), of the behavior of the students which could be grounded on cultural differences (Coulter & Abney, 2009; Fee, 2011; Hubbs, 2014; Ospina & Medina, 2020), and of the manner to addressing their students' parents appropriately as they found it complicated to deal with them (Luk, 2012; Ospina & Medina, 2020; Roskell, 2013). In the same way, previous studies have also documented that immigrant teachers' top

challenge is effectively dealing with student behavior and apathy. In a qualitative study by Dunn (2011), she found that challenges immigrant teachers from India faced were "student behavior, culture shock, communication difficulties, new instructional strategies and curricula, and students' lack of cultural awareness." Generally, these issues and challenges of the informants are not surprising in the light of previous findings in immigrant teacher research (Bartlett, 2014; Broutian, 2016; Dumlao & Mengorio, 2019; Dunn, 2011; Sharma, 2012).

After having described the issues and challenges experienced as English language teachers in the UAE, the informants also shared their coping mechanisms to keep themselves capable of continuously performing the job overseas. Based on the findings, teachers remind themselves of their motivations to work, referring to their loved ones whom they need to support and their desire to have a better life. This implies that teachers can overcome the challenges of homesickness and even stress at work and achieve the purpose of working abroad when they feel motivated by the very reason for their coming to the UAE. This finding supports the claim from various studies (Robbins et al., 2004; Hattie, 2009; Plante et al., 2013; Wigfield et al., 2016) that states about motivation energizes and directs behavior toward achievement and therefore is known to be an important determinant of success amidst challenges faced around.

Furthermore, it was found that informants also have to build connections with others to hasten the needed adjustment to the new environment and workplace abroad. Huang et al. (2019) reported that expatriates are eager to make friends with their international peers to understand a new culture, expand their worldview, and gain interpersonal relationships which all are needed in settling down in a new country. Moreover, two other coping mechanisms were mentioned by the informants: utilizing various approaches to teaching and practicing cultural sensitivity. Handling students of various nationalities with different personalities and learning styles, teachers are differentiating strategies and techniques to maintain the interest of the students in learning English.

Professionally, teachers abroad will surely experience classroom management and students'

interest as difficult aspects to deal with in the new school systems. Despite having years of teaching experience in their home countries, they will have difficulty properly addressing behavior problems in their classes (Ospina & Medina, 2020). Amjah (2014) in Ulla (2018) mentioned that teaching English to students is quite tasking for teachers, especially if students do not have an interest in that learning. Thus, to make language learning enjoyable, teachers should have effective strategies employing ICT, games, interactive activities, and other relevant, exciting materials for language teaching to stimulate student motivation. Likewise, Hall (2002) opined that differentiating instruction can be hugely helpful in acknowledging and addressing various student backgrounds, readiness levels, languages, interests, and learning profiles (Hall, 2002; Tomlinson, 2005). As an added bonus, differentiation can be an engaging experience for teachers as it involves a different kind of energy compared to direct instruction (Hess, 1999; Subban, 2006).

Likewise, according to the informants, practicing cultural sensitivity can be deemed a mechanism to help them in coping with the complexities of rules and regulations in the host country, i.e., the UAE, and to genuinely showcase respect for diversity. As per Lutz (2017), becoming interculturally sensitive prepares an individual for the expected and unexpected, which makes the person a better employee and a better global citizen. Furthermore, Toth (2016) claimed that professionals, wherever they are in the world, need to become competent in diversity and cultural issues to become an active and integral part of the global environment.

As a final point, this study explored the insights or reflections of the informants about their teaching experience in the UAE. Results unearthed that teachers experience unlimited learning opportunities abroad. They have the huge opportunity to immerse themselves in new cultures, try foreign foods, enjoy destinations, learn a new language, develop new effective schemes in teaching, deepen values, and widen perspectives in life. Serin (2017) divulged that working abroad helps teachers expose to innovative learning styles, educational materials, and curricula which play key roles in the development of their teaching practice. Furthermore, living in a different culture enables

teachers to gain new skills and knowledge that they can integrate into their teaching strategies.

Meanwhile, teachers also claimed that teaching English abroad to non-native English speakers, it is not surprising that there is a relatively noticeable difference in salaries of native speakers and non-native speakers. With this, informants claimed that it is high time in the UAE to start practicing equal opportunities policy on this aspect as they believed, the amount of salary one receives must be based on a teacher's credentials and capabilities. The study of Ulla (2018) conducted in Thailand concluded that discrimination exists in the workplace where there are native and non-native English speakers who are both teaching English. He elaborated that normally English speakers always receive a higher salary. However, for Sereni and Yanto (2021), this scenario is experienced, since ideally native English teachers have the strength of fluency and remarkable linguistic competence that non-native English teachers often struggle to acquire (Grubbs et al., 2010; Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012).

In addition to the two previously mentioned insights shared by the participants, data provided another essential theme: uninterested learners. Informants talked about how dispassionate about learning English some of their students are in their classes, although they exert tremendous efforts for lesson preparation and execution. But, teachers showed how they managed to avoid getting stressed out and to rather seize the moment. While teaching is considered a stressful job according to studies (Busby, 2019; Gouda et al., 2016), Eulberg (2017) elucidated that many factors that impact a teacher's job are simply out of their control. While this can be frustrating, it does not have to cause anxiety. For teachers, Eulberg (2017) said teachers' energy is too precious to spend on issues that are out of their control. Choosing not to let these issues occupy their mind will help reduce stress and keep anxiety in check. For Brackett and Cipriano (2020), teachers must avoid getting burnt out as they will have poorer relationships with students and are also less likely to be positive role models for healthy self-regulation.

The last insight the informants shared in this study is centered on their realization that understanding a contract is of the essence before commencing a teaching job in any company abroad. Teachers imply that the contract must legally guide

applicants as to how they are expected to perform their duties and responsibilities and how they can be unjustly treated in the workplace. This insight is in congruence with the statement of Elton (2021) that explicates how a well-drafted employment contract can aid in creating job stability and predictability for an employee. They expressed that it is important to note and discuss the terms and nature of employment set forth in the employment contract. Further, an employment contract may ensure a certain degree of job security by restricting an employer's ability to terminate an employee arbitrarily and without warning (Elton, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study endeavored to explore the experiences of purposively selected Filipinos and Indians who are currently working as English language teachers in the United Arab Emirates. Specifically, this study revealed that the phenomenon of Filipino and Indian teacher migration could be elucidated by bringing out the informants' reasons behind pursuing an English language teaching career in the above-referenced country, experienced issues and challenges, considered coping mechanisms, and general insights for academia. Findings revealed that these non-native English teachers came to the UAE basically to earn a salary comparatively bigger than what they used to earn in their home countries; to grow personally in terms of the essence of cultural differences and appreciation for the host country's tourist destinations; to grow professionally by deeming the UAE as a stepping stone for bigger goals in life, and to enhance communication skills.

Nevertheless, working abroad has not been easy for the informants due to issues and challenges they have faced, which encompass personal matters, i.e., homesickness, new environment adjustments, and language barriers; and professional matters, i.e., preference for native speakers, curriculum adjustment, classroom environment, and teacher-parent connection. With these issues and challenges, informants also delineated the mechanisms they employ to cope. These included recalling motivations to work, building connections with other people, utilizing various approaches to teaching, and practicing cultural sensitivity.

Finally, this study also shed light on reflections the informants have in relation to their language

teaching in the UAE. They shared that teaching abroad is an avenue for unlimited learning from their students, working environment, and even the host country. Moreover, they also mentioned the reality of the difference between native speakers' vs non-native speakers' salaries and voiced out that this practice must be wiped out. Furthermore, informants also were able to share their insights about uninterested learners in their classes and how choosing to be stress-free makes them keep going. Lastly, they shared the importance of comprehending one's work contract before any work commences in the UAE to steer clear of any future inconveniences.

This study could provide an eye-opener to other Filipinos and Indians who wish to teach abroad, especially in the UAE. Moreover, it could contribute to the personal and professional experiences of English language teachers who are non-native English speakers who may then influence the school administrators, curriculum implementers, and policy-makers in the UAE when it comes to hiring NNESTs like Filipinos and Indians, that they may see the realities that the foreign teachers are experiencing in the country. The results of this study may also be valuable to owners and administrators of schools that they may understand the issues and adversities experienced, so necessary actions may be put forward for the development of their Filipino and Indian employees and that of the educational institutions at large. Professional development opportunities may be offered like training and workshops on team building, social adjustment, intercultural differences, effective classroom management, and teacher-parent connection. Additionally, well-designed mentor programs may also be provided so that adjusting Filipino and Indian teachers find their way to success in the new setting.

Moreover, this study may be deemed as a blueprint of new knowledge and additional information to the existing ideas on teaching English as a second or foreign language that may lead to suggesting possible interventions in dealing with intercultural classes. Putting to the limelight the perspectives of Filipinos and Indians as migrant teachers could lead to a deeper understanding of the demand for teaching and learning English as a language in the context of an Arab country, where native English speakers are preferred over non-

native English-speaking teachers. This study gave me the channel to share the informants' stories, offering a richer and deeper understanding of how they navigated their way from their home countries, i.e., the Philippines or India, into situating themselves in their current school communities in an emirate in the UAE.

In essence, this study is not without limitations. While the qualitative nature of the study yielded valuable data, the findings and analyses cannot be deemed generalizable beyond the responses analyzed. The study included a convenience sample of twelve informants, of which six were Filipinos and six others were Indians. Hence, it is recommended that a bigger sample be employed in conducting a similar study. Studies about the experiences of non-native English speakers who are working as school administrators across the country may also be worth exploring.

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