Exploring the Possible Selves of Pre-Service English and Filipino Language Teachers: Insights into Language Teacher Preparation

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Abstract. Despite the growing interest in understanding the complex nature of possible selves among pre-service language teachers, an in-depth exploration into its intricacy and how this can directly inform language teacher preparation remains relatively scarce. Using qualitative-descriptive research design, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the possible selves of pre-service English and Filipino language teachers, specifically focusing on identifying their hoped-for selves and feared selves as future language teachers. The participants were 20 pre-service language teachers from a state university in the southernmost part of the Philippines, evenly divided between Bachelor of Secondary Education-English and Bachelor of Secondary Education-Filipino, who were selected using purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through a reflective journal, an unstructured questionnaire which explored the participants' experiences with 40-session practice teaching, and an experiential learning course which ran for 10 weeks. The reflective journals were analyzed thematically following an AI-assisted inductive thematic analysis procedure. The analysis revealed a complex panorama of pre-service English and Filipino language teachers' possible selves, highlighting a myriad of their hoped-for and feared selves. The findings enhanced theoretical understanding of possible selves in language teacher education and further propounded the critical need for a multifaceted approach to language teacher preparation.

Keywords: possible selves; pre-service language teachers; English; Filipino; teacher preparation

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1. Introduction

Teaching is an arduous task and part of becoming a teacher necessitates an in-depth understanding of teachers' future-oriented self-concepts. In recent years, there has been a spate of interest in exploring teachers' future-oriented self-concepts, also known as 'possible selves' (Hong & Greene, 2011; Lutovac, 2020; Markus & Nurius, 1986), especially in the context of language education (Aslan, 2022; Debnath, 2021; Hiver, 2013; Kammayeea & Tepsuriwong, 2024; Quinto, 2018).

Possible selves are understood as people's ideas depicting what they want to become and what that may be afraid of becoming (Markus & Nurius 1986). Possible selves can be described as positive since some are "expected or hoped-for" selves, while others can be characterized as negative since they are labeled as "avoidant and feared" possible selves (Oyserman & James, 2011, pp. 128-129). The positive possible selves are the hoped-for selves, while the negative possible selves are the feared selves.

Understanding the possible selves plays a central role in the professional identity development of language teachers. The possible selves are assumed to be highly influential in language teachers' conceptual change which is, in turn, believed to have a transformational impact on teachers' practices (Kubanyiova, 2009). Furthermore, possible selves are believed to influence teachers' overall classroom approach, specific instructional practices, and the way they navigate classroom discourse (Hamman et al., 2010; Horn et al., 2008). These possible selves contribute to self-improvement, change and growth, which are viewed as critical in becoming a teacher (Lutovac, 2020).

In the context of pre-service language teachers, a number of past studies have been conducted on possible selves. Debnath (2021) explored possible selves, motivation and classroom practices, and found that the participants depict two views of L2 selves: the ideal L2 selves and L2 learning experience. An ideal L2 self refers to a possible self in which a learner wishes to become a fluent speaker of the target language, whereas an L2 learning experience has to do with students' situated, "executive motivations as influenced by several inherent forces such as the curriculum, the teachers, and the peers, among others" (p. 256).

Aslan (2022) revealed two patterns in the participants' future-oriented identity work: highly developed and (under)developed possible selves as L2 teachers. Further analysis revealed that the participants' possible language teacher selves are characterized into three main groups: L2 teacher development, L2 teacher competency, and L2 teacher proficiency. Additionally, a study by Babanoğlu (2017), which explored the possible selves of pre-service English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, found that EFL teacher candidates possess positive expectations about language teaching and show no specific fears for their first year of experience. Furthermore, Hiver (2013) examined the possible language teacher selves in the context of professional development choices and discovered two essential motivational elements of possible language teacher selves of the participants. An essential element is that the participants were driven by a central

need to address perceived inadequacies of the self, while the other is they were motivated to enhance the self. Hiver (2013) also found that lack of language self-efficacy, which was comparable to lack of teaching self-efficacy, served as the driving force for the participants to invest in teacher development. In a more recent study, Kammayeea and Tepsuriwong (2024) found the congruence of the participant's ideal and ought-to selves. The findings showed that clear goal and positive attitudes influenced the participant's investment in professional development.

Sang (2023) examined the emerging pre-service teachers' beliefs and how their beliefs linked to professional identities. The findings indicated that pre-service EFL teachers underlined three crucial elements of their English language teacher identities, recognizing English teachers as instructors, as individuals, and as English experts. In a similar manner, Le et al. (2023) explored the self-perceived professional identities in the context of Vietnamese EFL pre-service teachers. The findings showed a gamut of self-perceived professional identities among pre-service teachers, which included flexible teachers, student-centered teachers, reflective teachers, and growth-oriented teachers, among others. The study advanced significant insights into the improvement of teacher professional development methodologies and pedagogical enhancement. Finally, Karim et al. (2024), employing multiple instruments, investigated the responses of prospective TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages) teachers as regards their perceived professional identities before and after the *Growing as a TESOL Teacher* project. The findings demonstrated the value of dialogue, noting that dialogue acts a platform for pre-service teachers to negotiate their professional identities as TESOL teachers. All these studies collectively provide an important basis which positions possible selves as an ongoing topic of discussion in the broader scholarly discourse of language teacher education.

Despite the availability of literature surrounding pre-service language teachers' possible selves, a comprehensive understanding about what kind of possible selves prospective language teachers hold with regard to L2 teaching remains essentially scarce (Aslan, 2022; Karimi & Norouzi, 2019). More importantly, there is a paucity of evidence that can clarify how possible selves can directly inform language teacher preparation (Hamman et al., 2013; Kumazawa, 2013).

While the findings of previous studies revealed useful insights on the nuances of possible selves in language teaching context, they have failed to show the complexities of possible selves among Filipino pre-service language teachers. Furthermore, these studies do not seem to provide a clear understanding of how analysis of possible selves can inform language teacher preparation. For instance, although the work of Quinto (2018) illustrated a possible selves-based model of language teacher identity, which informs teacher preparation and practicum, the research was mainly reflective of new teachers in the context of English language teaching. It failed to account for Filipino pre-service language teachers other than those majoring in English, not to mention the focus of that research was not on pre-service teachers. Considering this lacuna in research, there was a need to

conduct a study focusing on understanding the possible selves of pre-service English and Filipino language teachers (PSEFLTs) in the Philippines.

The study aimed to explore the complexity of the possible selves of PSEFLTs, specifically focusing on exploring the hoped-for and feared selves in the context of the Philippines. Using practice teaching reflections as data, an exploration of the spectrum of possible selves among the pre-service language teachers offered invaluable insights into their career aspirations and perceived challenges. By exploring the hopes and fears that influence the professional identities of preservice language teachers as future language educators, the study hoped to generate actionable insights pivotal in shaping the dynamic backdrop of language teacher preparation, thereby enhancing the cultivation of effective language teaching professionals in the Philippines.

Considering the study's goal, the following specific research questions informed what the research intended to address.

1. What hoped-for possible selves can be identified from pre-service English and Filipino language teachers' reflections of practice teaching?
2. What feared possible selves can be identified from the pre-service language teachers' reflections of practice teaching?

2. Methods

This study used a qualitative-descriptive research design. A qualitative descriptive design acknowledges the subjective essence of a problem, the multifarious experiences of participants, and presents the findings in a manner that directly depicts or closely mirrors the terminology posed in the original research question (Bradshaw et al., 2017). Using such a research design was crucial for addressing the research questions in the present study as it enabled the researchers to explore the possible selves of pre-service language teachers, particularly focusing on describing their hoped-for and feared selves as future language teachers.

The participants of the study were 20 pre-service language teachers from a college of education in a state university in the southernmost part of the Philippines, which is dominated by Muslim learners. The participants represented two language education degree programs, Bachelor of Secondary Education-English (BSEd-English) and Bachelor of Secondary Education-Filipino (BSEd-Filipino), with 10 participants from each degree program. The participants underwent a 40-session practice teaching, a terminal experiential learning course, which lasted for 10 weeks from February 2024 to April 2024. The practice teaching sessions were held in both the college's laboratory high school and public high schools with grade levels 7-10. The PSEFLTs were assigned supervising instructors at the college and had cooperating teachers in the schools where they were deployed to teach. The selection of the 20 participants was purposive in that only those who had comprehensive answers in their practice teaching reflective journals were considered. Pre-service language teachers whose reflective journals did not thoroughly respond to the task were excluded from the study. The researchers believe that the employment of such a sampling technique was crucial as it ascertained the comprehensiveness of the data needed for the study.

The instrument used in the data collection was an unstructured questionnaire and a reflective journal, focused on the participants' experiences with practice teaching. The reflective journal was a comprehensive document of their practical experiences in the different key components of practice teaching: lesson planning, instructional materials development, and actual teaching. Considering the nature of reflective journal as unstructured, the participants were freely asked to narrate in writing their practice teaching experiences, particularly on the three components mentioned. For each of the 10 practice teaching sessions, the pre-service language teachers were asked to accomplish a reflective journal. Reflective journals from all teaching sessions were submitted at the end of the 10-week practice teaching period. The submission was in the form of a portfolio which contained other relevant course requirements, such as the best lesson plans, best instructional materials, and some action photos of actual teaching. For the purpose of this study, however, only the reflective journals were used as data for the study and only those characterized with most comprehensive answers were further subjected to data analysis. To ensure ethical compliance, informed consent was sought from the participants.

Prior to the data analysis and considering international readership., all reflections from the Bachelor of Secondary Education-Filipino pre-service teachers which were originally written in Filipino language were manually translated to English. The reflections were assigned a code (e.g. Participant 1) to protect the participants' identity. The data were then analyzed using inductive thematic analysis, with the assistance of a generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tool, Gemini Advanced. Gemini Advanced is Google's largest and most capable AI model. The researchers treated the GenAI tool as a "co-pilot" in the analysis, which "enhanced and complemented human capabilities rather than replacing them" (Perkins & Roe, 2024, p. 393). This form of symbiosis was important in amplifying the strengths of human researchers and GenAI tools (Perkins & Roe, 2024). Thus, using Gemini Advanced, the researchers adopted the AI-assisted analytic procedure by Perkins and Roe (2024) in performing the data analysis, which was undertaken following the succeeding steps.

First, the researchers immersed themselves with the data reading and re-reading the text to gain an in-depth understanding. Early impressions on the data were noted during this phase of the analysis. Second, following the research questions, the researchers organized the data into a tabular form, ready for importing into the GenAI tool. Third, the researchers wrote and re-wrote prompts to instruct the GenAI tool on the desired output. This step in the analysis was crucial because the GenAI tool could only provide the required output based on the prompts it received. It took several trials by the researchers to arrive at a robust prompt. Fourth, the researchers scrutinized the themes generated by the GenAI tool and cross-referenced them with specific examples from the data. This was done to ensure validity of the themes. During this phase, the researchers discovered that an initial theme, "The Haphazard Planner," generated for the study's second research question was not totally reflective of the data; hence, after careful deliberation, the theme was removed. Apart from reducing themes, manual reassigning of text excerpts to their appropriate themes was also done to ensure

accuracy because there were instances when some text excerpts were not representative of the themes. Fifth, the researchers re-ran the analysis at different points in time to enhance the validity of the themes. In particular, the researchers had to run the analysis three times after every 10 minutes. This was done to ensure the trustworthiness of the generated themes. Finally, the researchers wrote the findings and discussed considering the existing relevant literature.

3. Findings

This section of the paper presents the findings on these pre-service language teachers' possible selves. The thematic analysis of the participants' reflections revealed their myriad of possible selves. These possible selves can be understood as hoped-for selves and feared selves.

3.1 Hoped-for Selves of the Pre-Service Language Teachers

There are five themes that were uncovered from the analysis that depict the hoped-for selves of the pre-service language teachers. These are: (1) the nurturing guide; (2) the inspiring facilitator; (3) the reflective practitioner; (4) the passionate educator; and (5) the collaborative partner.
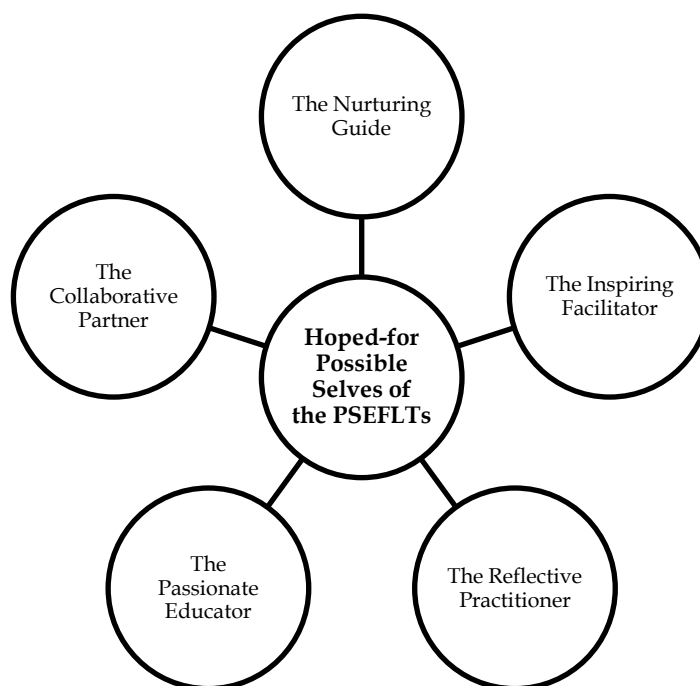
Figure 1: Visual presentation of the hoped-for selves of the PSEFLTs

3.1.1 The Nurturing Guide

One of the key themes from the analysis described the participants' hoped-for selves as a nurturing guide. The participants shared narratives that illuminated how they see themselves as responsible for guiding the students in their learning. As noted by Participant 3:

> *This class made me reminded that a teacher should not put high standards on his/her students, as he/she should learn to blend in their own learning pace.*

This is further elaborated by Participant 8:

> *Teachers play significant role in establishing a safe, and positive learning environment by interacting with students while teaching.*

Such statements emphasized the importance of guiding students, ensuring that the learning environment is non-threatening so that they can unlock their full potential. The following responses further reflect this hoped-for possible self of the participants.

> *Learners learn best when they receive feedbacks. So, the next day, I let them read their own work and provided them with some feedbacks, whether positive or needs improvements.* (Participant 1)

> *Guiding students to respect and love one another would be one of the best ways or disciplines to make them realize how important it is to have classmates and friends along the journey of studying.* (Participant 2)

From these excerpts, it can be understood how providing constructive feedback and promoting collaboration among students can help them to be engaged and successful in learning. The participants aspired to be caring and supportive teachers who could foster a positive and inclusive learning environment. By providing guidance to students, the participants could ensure all students felt valued and empowered to reach their full potential.

3.1.2 The Inspiring Facilitator

Another hoped-for possible self the participants manifested, based on the analysis, is the inspiring facilitator. They envisioned themselves as engaging and motivating teachers who could spark students' curiosity, encourage active participation, and create a love for learning. From the narrative of Participant 3, it can be seen how this hoped-for self is concretized:

> *Instead of giving them a task by making a paragraph, I asked them to compare and contrast the two topics in a bullet type form. Fortunately, the strategies I used were effective, as I observed that they can explain our topic in their words and even can give examples.*

The use of compare and contrast strategy by Participant 3 proved useful for the students in showing their complete understanding of the topic discussed, hence showcasing how inspiring of a facilitator Participant 3 is.

This is comparable to what Participant 7 did where she:

> *… incorporated group activity, board activity and even a friendly competition to spark their interest. I found that encouraging friendly competition among the students motivated them to actively participate and learn.*

Participants 8 and 20 concurred with this as expressed as follows:

> *I am aware that students learn in different ways, that is way I adjust my instruction to cater individual needs. I employ a combination of whole-class instruction, small-group activity, and one-on-one support to provide personalized learning.* (Participant 8)

[Masasabi kong masaya magturo at nagpapasalamat din ako kasi nagkaroon din ako ng karanasan sa pagtuturo at napahaba din ang aking pasensya dahil sa mga batang mag-aaral ko.] *I can say that teaching is fun, and I am thankful that I got the opportunity to teach and was able to extend my patience because of my students.* (Participant 20)

The excerpts further illustrate the inspiring facilitator self of the participants. As pointed out by Participant 8, the use of differentiated strategies is important in ensuring that the students are engaged. Considering the diversity of learners, an inspiring facilitator needs to use various forms of instructional strategies to address differences so that no students is left behind. However, this is not an easy task as it requires patience among pre-service language teachers. The value of patience as inspiring facilitators was clearly emphasized in Participant 20's words.

3.1.3 The Reflective Practitioner
Being the reflective practitioner is another hoped-for possible self of the participants. The pre-service language teachers demonstrated a commitment to self-reflection and continuous improvement, recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses and seeking feedback to enhance their teaching practices. Participant 5 narrated how her experience taught her to know herself better as a pre-service language teacher. She shared:

> *I know that my 1st teaching experienced was quite not good though it was not that bad too, but I am filled with so much joy. Her [the cooperating teacher's] comments helped me improve my teaching strategies because I know that there are still improvements that I need to learn and be aware of.*

Participant 11 also voiced a point of reflection showing how his experience taught him to be sensitive as a teacher:

> [At natutunan kong maging sensitibo sa mga pangangailangan at karanasan ng aking mga mag-aaral upang maging epektibo at makabuluhan ang aking pagtuturo sa iba't ibang kapaligiran.] *And I realized that I need to sensitive to the needs and experiences of my students so that my teaching would be effective and useful in different contexts.*

This reflection is similar to that of Participant 15, where adaptability is necessary to meet students' needs, as can be understood:

> [Maraming mga pagsubok na dumarating sa buhay, lalo na sa bawat istudyante na tuturuan mo may kanya-kanyang perspektib, kultura at tradisyon kaya kailangan mo talagang mag-adjust sa mga bagay-bagay.] *There are many challenges that come in life, especially dealing with children who have diverse perspectives, cultures and traditions so you really need to adjust.*

From the reflections of participants 5, 11, and 15, it can be seen how being reflective as a practice teacher is an important skill for them to improve themselves and meet the complex needs of their students in the classroom. The same sentiments are echoed by participants 2 and 3, as can be seen as follows.

I may not be able to get a higher rate but at least I was able to teach and share knowledge to the students that may be able to help them in the future… This made a sense that I have to level up my practice teaching so that I will be given a satisfactory rate from my next cooperating teacher. (Participant 2)

This class made me realize that maybe I was not good enough, so I need to improve myself more. The way they treated me was discouraging, yes, but I like to take it positively. (Participant 3)

Notably, the reflection of Participant 2 revealed her commitment to continuous development. She reported how she was rated low in her teaching by her cooperating teacher and how this experience taught her to improve herself further. Meanwhile, the words of Participant 3 showed that her unpleasant experience with the students taught her to take things constructively, seeing the opportunity to work on herself to become better. These reflections uncover how the participants assume the role of being reflective practitioners.

3.1.4 The Passionate Educator
The participants also portrayed themselves as the passionate educator. They expressed a deep passion for teaching, a commitment to their students' success, and a desire to make a positive impact on their lives. From the narrative of Participant 8, it can be concluded she loves teaching, making extra effort to not just be a teacher but also a mother and a friend. She shared:

I love teaching. I take the internship too serious, I act like a teacher, a mother to my students, and a friend that they can run to.

This is complemented by the words of Participant 16:

[Bilang isang intern, ako'y puspusang naglaan ng oras at dedikasyon upang mas mapalawak ang aking kaalaman at kasanayan sa larangan ng aking propesyon.] *As an intern, I seriously devoted my time and dedication to expand my knowledge and skills in the field of teaching.*

Such positive words about being pre-service language teachers are further evident in the following excerpts.

They were all shouting their answers when I happened to neglect them... Thankfully, I still handled the class well…to add extra points to those who are in favorable behavior. Those moments with them really overwhelmed me because it is as if telling me that I have explained my lesson well. (Participant 1)

This teaching experience taught me to love students for no reason. Teaching becomes more meaningful when you learn to love your students that will encourage you as a teacher to be productive and resourceful... It is said that in everything you do, put your heart into it and your heart will never leave you. (Participant 2)

The statements exemplify passion and commitment to teaching. From Participant 1, it can be gleaned how she manages the class by finding a way to engage them, ensuring their active participation. This extra attention affirms her passion for teaching. In addition, Participant 2 recognized the importance of loving her students. She underscored that loving her students encourages her to become productive and resourceful, ensuring an enjoyable learning experience for her class.

3.1.5 The Collaborative Partner
Lastly, the participants project a hoped-for possible self as the collaborative partner. They recognized the importance of collaboration and teamwork, valuing the support and guidance of their cooperating teachers. The statements from participants 2 and 14 showcase the collaboration that they established with their cooperating teachers which ultimately led them to overcome their practice teaching challenges.

> *My cooperating teacher from this section is … kind … I can say so because I remember when I approached her to ask for a subject … she entertained us with warmth. Of all the cooperating teachers I have met, only ma'am … has observed my performance for the whole five sessions and that is why her ratings towards my teaching is justifiable.* (Participant 2)

> *[Ang aking cooperating teacher … ay may espesyal na puwang sa aking puso. Mula sa unang araw hanggang sa huling araw, siya ay walang pagod na nagbibigay sa akin ng mahalagang payo sa kung paano maging isang mabuting guro.] My cooperating teacher … has a special place in my heart. Since the beginning till the end, she has not failed to provide me with useful advice on how to become a better teacher.* (Participant 14)

Participant 2 indicated how her cooperating teacher consistently monitored her practice teaching, providing the support she needed to succeed in her teaching internship. Meanwhile, Participant 14 acknowledged the consistent feedback and advice she received from her cooperating teacher, underscoring her gratitude for the support provided. These statements collectively show the important role of mentor-mentee collaboration in driving success for the pre-service language teachers.

3.2 Feared Selves of the Pre-Service Language Teachers
The analysis of the participants' reflections also revealed their feared selves. Such possible selves can be categorized into four recurring themes: (1) the impostor syndrome instructor; (2) the disrespected maestro; (3) the overwhelmed educator; and (4) the uninspiring instructor.
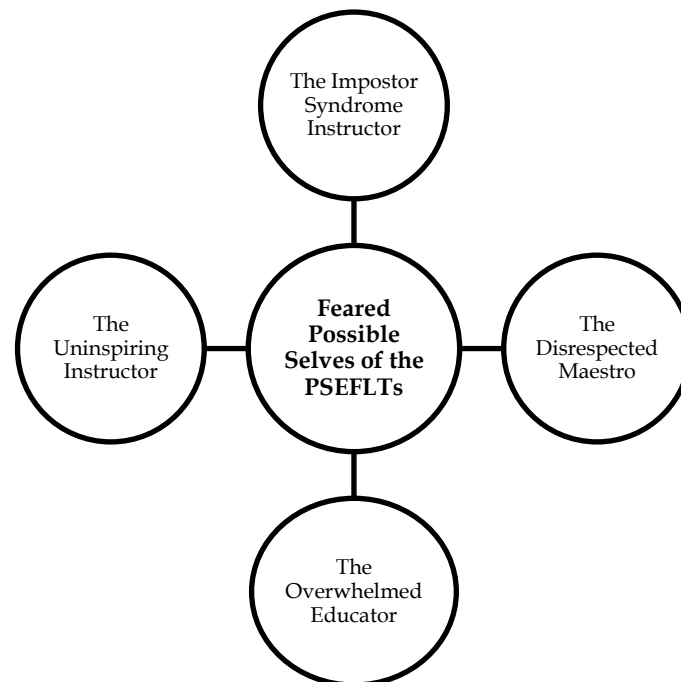
Figure 2: Visual presentation of the feared-for selves of the PSEFLTs

3.2.1 The Imposter Syndrome Instructor
One of the recurring themes characterizing the participants' feared selves is the impostor syndrome instructor. Participant 2 shared how she felt dissatisfied with her teaching after knowing the students' performance in the assessment. She recounted:

> *I couldn't tell where and how I missed my part as a pre-service teacher upon explaining or discussing to them the topic because I was not so satisfied with their performance.*

This statement explained her frustration thinking that what she did was not enough for the students to learn the lesson. This is supported by the statements of other participants, as can be seen as follows.

> *Only few have understood my topic although that was the easiest yet the shortest subject matter given to me, transitive and intransitive verb.* (Participant 6)
>
> [Sa paggawa ng banghay-aralin ay nahirapan ako dahil sa pag-isip ng mga layunin na dapat akma sa ibibigay na mga pagsasanay at pagsusulit.] *In writing the lesson plan, I found it difficult to think of the learning objectives which are appropriate to the activities and tests I give for my students.* (Participant 12)

As Participant 6 expressed, despite the simplicity of the topic, she recognized only few of her students understood it, putting a blame on how she failed to manage the class to understand the lesson well. Meanwhile, Participant 12 underlined the difficulty she encountered in lesson planning, trying to construct learning objectives that would match the activities she wanted her students to perform.

This is parallel to the struggle experienced by Participant 5, who shared:
> *I actually had a hard time making my lesson plan because I had to search for the content of the lesson and adapt activity from the module.*

In general, the participants expressed concerns about their abilities as teachers, doubting their knowledge, skills, and capacity to effectively deliver a lesson. They worried about not being able to meet the diverse needs of their students.

3.2.2 The Disrespected Maestro
The disrespected maestro is another feared possible self that was uncovered from the participants' reflections. The participants feared not being taken seriously or respected by their students. They worried about being mocked, ignored, or challenged, which could undermine their authority and effectiveness in the classroom. As Participant 3 highlighted:
> *There was even one student mocking me, which I didn't expect.*

In addition, Participant 13 described how he had difficulty getting the students to listen to him attentively. He shared:
> [Nahirapan ako sa pagtuturo dahil pag nagsasalita ka sa harapan ang mga bata ay may mga sariling mundo.] *I had difficulty teaching because when you are speaking in front, the students have their own worlds.*

Other participants also shared the same sentiment, as can be understood from their narratives below.
> *They laugh if I mispronounced their names during the checking of attendance. One time I called their attention and ask why they are laughing for just a small mistake.* (Participant 8)

> *However, as the second day arrived, the students began to reveal their true colors … They displayed disruptive behavior, throwing papers and shouting during class discussions.* (Participant 10)

The statement of Participant 8 shows how she felt disrespected by her students with just a minimal mistake on pronouncing their names. This is consistent with the experience of Participant 10 where she noticed her students shouting and throwing papers during her class discussion. These experiences challenged these pre-service language teachers to manage their classes well.

3.2.3 The Overwhelmed Educator
Another feared possible self that was depicted by the pre-service language teachers is the overwhelmed educator. The participants expressed a feeling of being overwhelmed by the demands of teaching, such as managing large class sizes, dealing with diverse learning needs, and meeting deadlines. They also shared concerns about the emotional and physical toll of teaching, including stress, fatigue, and burnout. From the narrative of Participant 17, it can be surmised that her experience in practice teaching was exhausting, making her:
> [parating puyat] *always sleepless*, [pagod] *stressed...*

This sharing reflects the multifaceted challenges of practice teaching causing mental and emotional stress. The same reflections are shared by the participants below.

> *Teaching Grade 8… was an eventful experience. In my first week, I found myself also responsible for teaching Grade 10... This meant that my first foray into teaching involved juggling multiple responsibilities…Handling 54 students in one class was undoubtedly demanding, requiring full energy and attention.* (Participant 4)

> *Secondly, bullying, it was my day three teaching in this class when I witnessed my students are bullying each other... I have calm them first and listen to the both side story. I give them an advice that not only to stop their fight but also could maintain their good relationship.* (Participant 8)

> [Ang nahirapan lang ako ay yung paggawa ng mga banghay-aralan at mga biswal eyd at sa oras dapat marunong lang bumalanse ng oras para sa gayun ay mabigyan mo parin ng oras ang iyong katawan para magpahinga.] *I only had difficulty in making lesson plans and visual aids. You need to manage your time properly so that you can give yourself time to rest* (Participant 19)

As can be gleaned from those statements, Participant 4 outlined the multiple roles she had to play, handling different sections and large classes. Meanwhile, Participant 8 narrated how student behaviors demanded her to take a different role to mediate a fight among her students. Further, Participant 19 underscored the importance of time management with regard to practice teaching preparation. All these led to the participants fearing themselves as overwhelmed educators.

3.2.4 The Uninspiring Instructor

The last feared possible self that the participants projected is the uninspiring instructor. The participants expressed concerns about students' lack of interest, motivation, or engagement in learning. They worried about not being able to capture students' attention, overcome their apathy, or create a stimulating learning environment. Participant 5 shared how she had a hard time managing her class and engaging the students:

> *I really had a hard doing classroom management with them because their noises cannot be controlled … I learned that even though you give your full efforts in providing the students' needs in learning, when the students itself do not have interest to learn then that will all be useless.*

A reflection from Participant 18 expressed this concern as well:

> [Sa bawat araw ng aking pagtuturo, naranasan ko ang mga hamon lalong lalo na pag dating sa oras at ang mga estudyante na maiingay, minsan napapaisip ako naiintindihan kaya nila ang paksang aking tinalakay?] *Each day I teach, I experienced challenges especially dealing with noisy students. Sometimes, I wondered if they understood the lesson I was discussing?*

The statements of Participant 5 and Participant 18 is supported by the sharing of Participants 2 and 9.

> *First, due to their large number in the class, students are less motivated to take their study seriously. Second, being one of the last sections has least privileged to be given some basic but important topics by the teachers.* (Participant 2)

> *In the actual execution of the lesson, it was extremely difficult in my part as practice teacher to handle students with the population of 61. From day one that was so challenging to handle a last section, knowing that they were not interested to learn.* (Participant 9)

Participant 2 underscored how difficult it was to motivate students to learn when the class size was large, and the students were in a last section. In addition, Participant 9 shared the difficulty of making students interested in learning due to the large class size. These contextual factors tended to create a feeling of worry in the participants; hence, they feared the uninspiring instructor self.

4. Discussion

The thematic analysis of pre-service language teachers' reflections reveals a complex landscape of hoped-for and feared possible selves. The hoped-for possible selves that the participants depicted are mainly nurturing guide, inspiring facilitator, reflective practitioner, passionate educator, and collaborative partner. However, the participants also projected feared possible selves such as impostor syndrome instructor, disrespected maestro, overwhelmed educator and uninspiring instructor.

The hoped-for possible selves found in this study are in agreement with past studies on possible selves of language teachers in other contexts. These studies have shown that pre-service teachers portray a complex tapestry of hope-for selves (Aslan, 2022; Lutovac, 2020; El Masry & Alzaanin, 2021). The participants recognized themselves as the nurturing guides for students in their learning. They emphasized the importance of providing constructive feedback and engaging students through interactions that create a non-threatening learning atmosphere. By nurturing guidance to students, the participants could ensure all students felt valued and empowered to reach their full potential. This finding corroborates the study of Hong and Green (2011), which refers to "effective teaching" to describe the possible self of preservice teachers that supports "informative and engaging" guidance for students (p. 498). In addition, the participants saw themselves as inspiring facilitators, who sought innovative ways to engage students in active learning. The participants highlighted the role of differentiated instructions in addressing the diverse needs of students. This is consistent with the work of Aslan (2022) about the importance of competency-based possible selves, such as differentiated instruction, using different and interactive teaching ideas and methods. However, the participants reported that patience is necessary to maximize their potential as inspiring facilitators.

The participants also describe themselves as reflective practitioners. This finding resonates with the work of Le et al. (2023) which highlighted that pre-service

teachers are reflective educators. The participants' observations with low students' performance and the low ratings they obtained from their teaching propelled them to reflect and improve upon themselves. This reflection suggests that the participants recognized their failures and saw this as motivation to grow and develop as future teachers. By reflecting upon their failures, the pre-service teachers acknowledged the value of reflection knowing it is vital for their development as teachers (Lutovac, 2020; Shapiro, 2010). Furthermore, the participants acknowledged their role as passionate educators, who play multiple roles to instill learning among students. Passionate educators go to great lengths to help their students become better learners. The participants believed that as future teachers, it was important to embrace the teaching profession with love because this would help them to continue to teach despite the demands of teaching.

Further, the participants saw the importance of collaboration in becoming effective pre-service language teachers, hence recognizing themselves as collaborative partners. They indicated that working with their cooperating teachers closely was essential in transforming their teaching practices. The professional advice they received from their mentors enabled them to become the best version of themselves as language teachers. This aligns with the study of El Masry and Alzaanin (2021) which reported the value of feedback and dialogical reflections with supervisors and peers as central in further developing the pre-service teachers' practical theories.

Nonetheless, the pre-service language teachers manifested a multitude of feared possible selves. The findings align with previous studies, repeating the importance of understanding these feared possible selves to navigate the challenges of practice teaching (Aslan, 2022; Moussaid & Zerhouni, 2017; Salmela-Aro et al., 2019). The participants manifested the feared self as impostor syndrome instructor. Despite doing their best, they expressed concerns about their abilities as teachers, doubting their knowledge, skills, and capacity to address the complex learning needs of students. This supports the existing literature indicating that pre-service teachers develop a feared self that revolves around instructional strategies, especially targeting L2 learners' diverse needs and profiles (Aslan, 2022), considering their low linguistic proficiency (Moussaid & Zerhouni, 2017). Additionally, they reported scenarios reflective of being the disrespected maestro. Due to the students' misbehavior, they worried about being mocked, ignored, or challenged by their students, which led them to question their authority and effectiveness as teachers (Moussaid & Zerhouni, 2017). Students' behavioral problems, such as disrespect, are common classroom issues, even for experienced teachers (Amado & Guerra, 2018). Moreover, the participants projected the overwhelmed educators. The complexity of teaching involving handling multiple classes and dealing with students in large class sizes created a feeling of burnout among the participants. Higher workload and larger class sizes are main contributing factors to teachers' burnout (Salmela-Aro et al., 2019). Teaching in a large class impacts teachers' stress reactions, be it physiologically and psychologically (Huang et al., 2022) or emotionally and physically (Manlongat et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the participants described themselves as uninspiring instructors. Considering contextual factors such as large class size and students' learning difficulties, they stated concerns about students' lack of interest, motivation, or engagement in learning. They worried about not being able to capture students' attention, overcome their indifference, or create a stimulating learning environment. As reported by Aslan (2022), such negative feelings towards self as teachers can lead the pre-service teachers to become 'uncaring' and 'uninspiring' which undermine close relationships with students and result in disorganized instruction.

5. Implications of the Study

The general findings depict the complex panorama of possible selves of pre-service language teachers. The collective possible selves the participants narrated in this study support previous studies on possible selves in other educational contexts. Consequently, the theoretical and practical implications are noteworthy. On a theoretical level, the study enhances our broader understanding of possible selves in the context of language teacher education. The findings illuminate theoretical insights into the dynamic vista of pre-service language teacher identity development and the critical role of practice teaching in shaping both aspirations and anxieties. This theoretical understanding posits that language teacher education is a complex phenomenon that goes beyond content knowledge acquisition and pedagogical skills development. It underlines the significance of providing pre-service language teachers with on-going opportunities for reflection, mentorship, and strategies to address potential self-efficacy challenges that beset pre-service language teachers in the multifarious field of language teaching. Understanding the possible selves from this theoretical perspective can propagate language teacher preparation programs that contribute to self-improvement, change and growth, which are key to transforming into a professional teacher (Lutovac, 2020). By conceiving possible selves as an intricate theoretical concept in language teacher education, one can bolster the preparation of resilient and effective language educators.

The findings also advance practical insights central to shaping the landscape of language teacher preparation. Language teacher preparation programs should foster a holistic self-efficacy development of pre-service language teachers. Rigorous training programs on content expertise and teaching methodology are inadequate to address feared possible selves, such as the impostor syndrome. Pre-service language teachers need to develop pedagogical confidence, belief in their ability to manage a classroom, and the ability to deal with diverse students (Pandee et al., 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Hence, teacher preparation programs should be designed to integrate micro-teaching where the pre-service language teachers can engage in a reflective process, receive feedback, and build confidence in a safe environment before entering real classrooms. Fostering reflective thinking is essential for pre-service language teachers because it offers venues for them to challenge their traditional beliefs on teaching (Velasco, 2019). There is also a necessity for language teacher preparation programs to capitalize on trauma-informed classroom management (Kostouros et al., 2023; Stokes, 2022). Pre-service teachers should be capacitated to understand symptoms of trauma in

students so that they may respond with empathy and de-escalation strategies. They should be trained in restorative practices to promote relationship building and address harm without employing punitive measures (Vincent et al., 2021). To mitigate disruptive behaviors, a classroom culture is created where all students feel safe, respected, and valued regardless of their behavioral problems backgrounds.

In addition, considering burnout due to the pre-service language teachers' multiple roles and the larger class sizes, a comprehensive burnout prevention program should be in place. Pre-service teachers should have explicit training on mental and emotional health management to help them take care of their own well-being (Bautista et al., 2024; Atkins & Rodger, 2016). As Erdem (2020) noted, despite its importance, affective development in teacher preparation is often neglected. Thus, its integration in language teacher preparation is indispensable. Moreover, there is a need to harmonize critical pedagogy in language teacher preparation (Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Nkealah & Simango, 2023). Pre-service teachers should be trained to cultivate critical engagement, to enable students to connect with the materials meaningfully and engage in classrooms intensely. Thus, pre-service teachers should be trained to design lessons that foster relevance and critical thinking, which can address students' prior learning and wide array of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Finally, to optimize professional growth and development of the pre-service language teachers, there is a necessity for a reciprocal mentorship and community building program (Bessette & Bennett, 2021; Paris, 2010). In this respect, there should be a community of practice where pre-service teachers and experienced teachers learn from each other to co-construct critically engaging and meaningful lessons. This collaboration is important because it will dismantle power hierarchies, thereby providing an empowering platform for pre-service teachers to grow fully as reflective and critical practitioners. Teacher-led professional learning communities should also be established for pre-service and in-service teachers. With such learning communities, they can learn best practices, share resources, and solve problems together. Lastly, teacher preparation programs and schools should nurture ongoing dialogue (Chaaban et al., 2019). This is to ensure that pre-service teachers will have the support they need once they enter the practice teaching field.

6. Conclusion

This study has explored the hoped-for and feared possible selves of PSEFLTs from a state university in Southern Philippines. The findings unveiled how pre-service language teachers depict complex possible selves as future language educators, both hoped-for selves and feared selves. For hoped-for selves, the pre-service teachers envisaged themselves as nurturing guides, inspiring facilitators, reflective practitioners, passionate educators, and collaborative partners. In contrast, their feared possible selves were impostor syndrome instructors, disrespected maestros, overwhelmed educators, and uninspiring instructors. These feared selves are influenced by low self-efficacy, disrespect, burnout, and

ineffective pedagogical strategies, revealing the complex challenges the pre-service language teachers face in their practicum.

The findings underpin the value of viewing possible selves as a complex theoretical construct within language teacher education, propelling the necessity for comprehensive language teacher preparation programs that nurture both professional growth and resilience among prospective language educators. Therefore, the study has focused on the critical need for a multifaceted approach to language teacher preparation. It advocates for holistic self-efficacy development, trauma-oriented classroom management, burnout prevention, critical pedagogy, and reciprocal mentorship and community building. Through these holistic teacher preparation programs, teacher education institutions can better equip future language educators to become resilient and steadfast despite the insurmountable challenges of the language teaching profession.

7. Limitations and Recommendations

The study has limitations. The analysis of the participants' possible selves was mainly drawn from the participants' written reflections. Future research may use other forms of data, such as interviews and classroom observations, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse nature of pre-service language teachers' possible selves. In addition, the sample size was limited to 20 pre-service language teachers. Other research may incorporate a larger sample size to arrive at a more robust knowledge of the possible selves of pre-service language teachers. Further, the study was conducted in a state university located in the southernmost part of the Philippines dominated by Muslim learners. Future research may explore other contexts with a diversity of pre-service language teachers to generate a unique perspective into pre-service language teachers' possible selves.

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9. References

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