Innovations in Pedagogy and Technology
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On Becoming a Language Teacher-Researcher: Framing Identity Development through Narratives and Metaphors

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ABSTRACT

Beyond the individualistic and social debate, discussions on identity have paved the way for a discursive turn, looking into the strong link of language and discourse that creates formative impact on identity formation and development. With literature proving the relationship of discourse and identity, the present study examined how language teacher-researcher identities were developed as reflected in oral narratives and metaphors. Using narrative inquiry, the study utilized audio diaries of selected language teacher-researchers (n = 2) to collect narratives and metaphors for analysis. Both participants were English language teachers in the basic education while completing their PhD degrees and conducting individual research projects. Based on the analysis, metaphors exemplified how language teacher-researcher identities were shaped by one's contextual setting and guided by one's social environment. Recognizing how metaphors were contextually created and culturally grounded, metaphors represent the participants' conditions and views of their socio-environment contexts, which may include their experiences with their peers and their workplace. Moreover, narratives reflect how these identities have continuously evolved as one gains more research experiences over time. The evidence of shifting identities of these language teacher-researchers was revealed to be a result of their agency to participate and perform in the 'figured world' of the academe. These results can provide implications for various educational policies that involve the research functions of language teachers.

Keywords: Language Teacher-Researcher Identity; Narrative Frames; Metaphors; Identity Development

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 24 October 2025 | Revised: 5 February 2026 | Accepted: 12 February 2026 | Published Online: 20 February 2026
DOI: https://doi.org/10.63385/ipt.v2i2.366

CITATION

Alcazaren, H.K.G., 2026. On Becoming a Language Teacher-Researcher: Framing Identity Development through Narratives and Metaphors. Innovations in Pedagogy and Technology. 2(2): 8–24. DOI: https://doi.org/10.63385/ipt.v2i2.366

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1. Introduction

For decades, interests and investigations on the relationship between identity and language have been established within discourse studies. With notions of identity rooted in other disciplines in the social sciences, much of the education research draws from the constructs adopted from socio-cultural theories to explore pedagogical practices, for example, the idea of participating in communities of learning/teaching practices [1, 2]. The notion of identity has also been associated with poststructuralist approaches, which critically view the embedment of subjectification processes into institutionalized practices and discourses [3]. With notions of identity moving beyond the existing debate whether it is in essence individual or social [4], there has been a discursive turn on how language has been proven to mediate humanistic characteristics (e.g., affect, reasoning, culture, knowledge acquisition), and frame human consciousness [5]. Among the notable assumptions and findings from these inquiries are the notion of subjectivity [6], notions of identity construction within social interaction [7], notions of social identities in discourse [8], and notions of identity work in different discourse contexts [9].

Such findings exemplify the strong link between language and discourse in identity construction and development. The study of Sun [10], for example, looked into the creation of leadership identity through narratives and discourses among manufacturing specialists (n = 8) in New Zealand. The findings revealed that leader identity usually begins in the intrapersonal narrative stage where individuals engage in a reflexive process of their own identities. These identities evolve through interpersonal level where individuals socially engage with others, and through organizational level where narratives reflect positioning and manifesting themselves as leaders. In another context, the case study of Nguyen and Yang [11] examined the construction of gender and learner identity of a Korean queer learner of ESL (n = 1). Results revealed how the learner agentively expressed her gender identity, which met resistance among her peers, and self-positioned herself in disconnection from the class content and the cultural capital she wanted to gain from her class. On the other hand, the study of Ashcraft [12] sought to understand relationships between occupational identity discourse and role communication among commercial airline pilots. Her analysis established how these identities drew from a historical perception of airline pilots as elite father figures, which explicitly expressed a gendered discourse of labor and work.

In education research, there is also an increasingly visible interest in the notion of identity, particularly on how teacher and student identities are established in discursive forms. For instance, the paper of Alsup [13] explored teacher identity development among female English education preservice teachers (n = 6) through narratives. Stories of the participants revealed the apparent engagement in narrative discourse as associated with their own identity work in terms of their meaning-making process of concepts of authority and vulnerability. In this meaningful identity work, these preservice teachers began to experience negotiation of conceptions of self and others. Aside from teacher identity, much of the literature focused on student identity and discourse. The paper of Chang and Sperling [14] examined discursive practices of ESL students (n = 6) both in their face-to-face classrooms and their online discussion forums. Results showed how face-to-face classroom favored development of students' academic identity while online forums afforded nonacademic discourses.

Within the scholarship of discourse, a significant locus of analysis has been narratives, particularly oral narratives. Anchored with the "narrative turn" in research [15], narratives have become central in understanding individuals' personal, social, and cultural identities [16]. In definition, narratives are a series of temporally sequenced and causally linked narrated action events [8] that took shape from a narrative event, which is the interactional process of telling stories and narratives [17]. Moreover, narratives allow a space for voicing and authoring one's personal experience that can be crucial in their meaning-making processes [18]. Linking narratives to identity, it can be posited that narratives of personal experiences provide "episodes of positioning" that elucidate one's social position and identity to others [19].

In recent educational research, narratives have emerged as both a tool and a source of analysis in teacher education studies. In the article of Shelley et al. [20], narratives of language teachers (n = 10) regarding their experiences and challenges in the shift from face-to-face to distance and blended teaching settings were examined. Drawing from narrative inquiry, results showed the significance of experience

and context in language teacher development in resolving challenges of changing teaching modalities, and in reshaping one's understanding of teaching. In a study done in the Philippine context, Vallente[21] investigated pre-service English language teachers' (n = 4) identity formation using the lens of Wenger's community of practice (CoP). The findings revealed how these pre-service teachers lacked negotiability and shared ownership of their own constructed meaning of what it is to be an English language teacher in a multilingual classroom. As a result, their language teacher identities are heavily dictated by assumptions on monolingualism and native-speaker norms.

With the expanding field of narrative inquiry, reflecting on one's teaching experiences through articulation has prompted metaphorizing (metaphors) as an important tool of reflexivity that allows visibility of interpretations and representations[22]. Established as not merely literary devices, metaphors have been considered as mechanisms for conceptualization that constitute sensory human experiences[23]. Utilized in many studies in psychology and linguistics, metaphors have become important cognitive tools that reflect one's mental images of a social phenomenon by connecting two often unrelated concepts[24]. The past years have seen the critical attention of studies that observed teachers' and students' understandings of teaching and learning through metaphors[25–27]. Much of the literature in metaphors looked into cognition of language teachers and students. In the study of Nikitina and Furuoka[24], metaphors of Malaysian university students (n = 23) were analyzed to determine their perceptions of their language teachers. Among the 27 metaphors generated in the study, students mostly perceived their teachers as nurturers and entertainers who represent the learner-centered development that these students experience in their education. In parallel, the paper of Wan et al.[28] examined the roles of an EFL teacher as perceived by university English major students (n = 70) and their EFL teachers (n = 33). As implications, the study discussed how metaphors had become a way to gain understanding of students' and teachers' beliefs that allowed them to resolve conflicting beliefs between the two groups. On the other hand, the paper of Rogayan and Reusia[29] explored how Filipino prospective teachers (n = 75) conceptualize and view their teaching internships. Findings revealed that the participants' metaphors interpret their teaching internships as an opportunity for learning and professional development that they need to surpass to become an actual teacher.

With much literature that has proven the relationship of discourse and identity[9, 16], the current study explored the development of language teacher-researcher identities of selected language teachers as manifested in their oral narratives and metaphors. Specifically, the inquiry examined audio diaries of these language teacher-researchers' research experiences to represent their views about their language teacher-researcher identities, and experiences that helped develop these identities. Because the majority of the studies focused on language teachers and students, this inquiry aimed to provide additional discussions on the recent attention on language teacher-researcher identity[30]. The focus on oral narratives of personal experiences by language teachers in developing their language teacher-research identities provided powerful insights into the figured worlds[31] that produce meaningful experiences. Aside from teachers' narratives, metaphors can be a mediational tool for awareness raising and reflection among teachers to shape their pedagogy, to facilitate understanding of their classroom teaching philosophies, and to predict their classroom behaviors[28]. The inclusion of metaphors in the analysis enriched the understanding of how narratives can be significant indicators of one's identity and identity development.

Guided by Gee's[32] and Barkhuizen's[33] theoretical perspectives on identities, particularly of teacher identity, the study elicited metaphors and narratives that would represent and describe how participants view and understand their language teacher-researcher identities. Karabay's[34] categories of metaphors were adapted for the metaphorical analysis, while Polkinghorne's[35] narrative analysis was used to study the narratives of the participants. In effect, the study determined how such units of analysis represent, resonate, and reflect one's language teacher-researcher identity development. Through narratives and metaphors as discourse, this inquiry aimed to extend a more humanistic undertaking in educational settings.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

To understand the development of identities of language teacher-researchers, the study employed Gee's[32] views of identity and Barkhuizen's[33] conceptualization of

teacher-identity as narrative practice. Firstly, Gee's theory of identity assumes how identity is being a particular kind of person in a given situation and context. This can be encapsulated by Gee's four views on identity: (a) Nature-identity refers to identities that were naturally inherent among individuals; (b) Institutional-identity pertains to identities shaped by institutions and their authorities; (c) Discursive-identity reflects the social interactions and discourses of an individual; and (d) Affinity-identity recognizes the affinity groups of the person. Such conceptualization of identity posits how language teacher-researcher identity is a dynamic concept that is highly individualistic and greatly influenced by one's socio-professional institutional environments [30, 36]. Complementing the dynamic view of Gee towards identity, the study made use of Barkhuizen's assumptions on how identity construction is discursively positioning oneself in various social structures (i.e., institutions, policies, practices) through storytelling. For Barkhuizen, identities are represented and reshaped by the stories one tells. With this, Gee's and Barkhuizen's conceptualizations of identity are appropriately aligned with how the study analyzed identity development through narrative practice.

1.2. Research Questions

To guide the investigation, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1) What metaphors that represent language teacher-researcher identities are found in the oral narratives of language teachers?
2) How do narratives and metaphors resonate with how language teachers view their language teacher-researcher identities?
3) What themes from the narratives and metaphors reflect the development of the language teacher-researcher identities?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

Drawing from qualitative research designs, the study employed narrative inquiry as its methodology and analysis tool for the reason that this type of inquiry reflects the relations of human experiences to the individual's cultural context, and allows the exploration of personal dimensions of these experiences [37]. Narrative inquiry views the meaning-making of individuals in their daily lives in story structures. Epistemologically, this methodology has four basic assumptions: (a) narratives are how humans structure their worldly experiences; (b) stories are usually influenced by past and current events, values and attitudes, social interactions, and the context in which the stories are situated in; (c) the notion of multivoicedness is recognized in narratives; and (d) meaning-making of individuals through stories are what narrative research emphasizes [38]. In a nutshell, elements and meanings of past experiences that people select to construct stories of who they are and others shape how people experience their daily lives.

2.2. Data Gathering Procedure

Parallel to the literature [18, 26], the primary data source of the research was the oral narratives of the language teacher-researchers collected through audio diaries and online interviews. To establish the structure of the narratives, the study made use of narrative frames [39], which provided guidance in ensuring the structure and the expected content that directly addressed the research objectives in a narrative form. Also, the participants were asked to create metaphors of their language teacher-researcher identities with few words of explanation. As the primary data source, the narrative framework, together with the metaphors, has been sent to the participants' emails to be completed. After the submission of the audio diaries, an online interview was conducted to make clarifications on the analysis. The interview protocol with its set of prepared questions was referred to, and used whenever conversations digress. The interviews were conducted online, not just to ensure the safety of both the researcher and the informants, but also for an easier recording of the interviews. All the recordings were transcribed immediately to allow the informants to check the transcripts before the data analysis. To ensure the validity and appropriateness of the research tools, two external validators evaluated the research tools independently. These external validators are language educators with a background in educational and linguistic research. To ensure the ethicality of the study, an informed consent form was given to the participants that identified that they should be willing to take part in the study and are free

to withdraw at any time. The form also indicated the study's rationale, methodology, and analysis, where confidentiality and anonymity are emphasized.

2.3. Participants

Primary criteria for the participants were their current experiences as language teachers and as published researchers in the field of language and language education. Both participants were actively teaching and conducting research at the time of the study, positioning them as information-rich cases capable of articulating reflective professional narratives. Potential participants were invited via email and provided informed consent prior to participation.

Using the purposive sampling technique [40], two participants were selected to be part of this current study. This sample size is methodologically consistent with narrative inquiry, which prioritizes depth, relationality, and the co-construction of meaning over breadth or representativeness [37]. Working with a small number of participants enabled sustained engagement and iterative narrative accounts across time, place, and sociality. To protect anonymity, participants selected the pseudonyms Jem and MJ. Jem was affiliated with a public higher education institution, while MJ was teaching in a private institution. This contrast was intentionally included to situate the narratives within differing institutional contexts while maintaining the depth required for narrative analysis [41].

Jem (he/him) is a 31-year-old professional teacher in a public institution that serves as a subject group head, handling English-related subjects. He is a graduate of the Master of Arts in Teaching major in English, and currently enrolled in the PhD program in Education major in Reading Education at a prestigious university in Quezon City. He started doing research in 2015 with his research interests in reading, teaching, and learning. He has published papers on Philippine contemporary narratives and communicated critical content in core subjects in senior high school. On the other hand, *MJ* (he/him) is a 26-year-old faculty member of a private institution that mostly handles research writing courses and research-oriented content courses. He is a graduate of the Master of Arts in Education major in English, and is currently finishing his PhD in Education major in English at a well-known university in Las Piñas City. With his research interests in educational and language research, he has authored papers on language code switching (LCS), move analysis of research abstracts, student attitudes towards research, students' academic writing difficulties, and students' self-assessment of their employability skills.

2.4. Data Analysis

Aligned with the narrative inquiry, the study used narrative analysis on the collected data. Drawing from the socio-cultural perspectives, the focus on the content of stories and the meanings of the narratives allowed an understanding of the participants' reality, situated in their knowledge constructions and rich experiences [35]. In this sense, the study followed Polkinghorne's concept of "narrative configuration," which looked into particularities in the actions and events of the narratives to compose stories that will lead to the outcomes. In this process, actions and events were arranged into coherent structures that echoed the overarching theme and time of the narrative. Moreover, the process enabled the researcher to become a storyteller who generated new meaning through the methods of selection, synthesis, and description of each episode in the participants' narratives to shape an outcome that addressed the research objectives.

For the analysis of the metaphors, the study drew from conceptual metaphor theory [23, 42], which distinguished two domains of metaphors: a) the source domain (metaphors are used literally); and b) the target domain (the metaphor' s underlying ideas and thoughts). Following Cameron and Low [43], the study made use of a traditional approach where metaphors are collected, generalized, and result in a suggested understanding of people's beliefs. Parallel in other metaphorical studies [28, 44], the process involved four stages: a) naming/labeling; b) sorting (clarification and elimination); c) categorization; and d) data analysis. Metaphorical expressions were cautiously identified in the transcripts as some were implicitly embedded [45], and properly labeled to link the metaphors'source and target domains [46]. To group the metaphors for analysis, the study adapted Karabay's [34] categories of metaphors: 1) Knowledge provider, 2) Nurturer, 3) Instructive and directive, 4) Molder and former, 5) Power indicator, and 6) Curer. To ensure accuracy, the data analysis has been checked by a language education expert and has been presented to the participants for the precision of interpretations.

2.5. Scope and Limitations

Although the use of two participants is epistemologically appropriate for narrative inquiry, the study has clear limitations. Both participants are male language teachers pursuing doctoral degrees in the Philippines, resulting in limited diversity in terms of gender, career stage, and institutional positioning. Consequently, the narratives do not capture experiences of women or non-binary educators, early-career or senior teachers, non-academic teacher-researchers, or those working in non-tertiary or international contexts.

As emphasized by Connelly and Clandinin[37] and Barkhuizen et al.[41], narrative inquiry does not aim for statistical generalization but for analytic and experiential resonance. Nevertheless, the homogeneity of the participant profile may obscure intersecting identities and alternative trajectories of teacher–researcher development. Future narrative studies may extend this work by engaging more diverse participants across educational levels, career stages, and geographic contexts to enrich understanding of language teacher–researcher identity.

3. Results

Provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation, and the experimental conclusions that can be drawn.

3.1. Metaphors of Language Teacher-Researcher Identities

Through the analyses of the source domains and target domains of the participants' metaphors, conceptual categories of metaphors were determined. Adapting Karabay's[34] categories, two were dominantly referred to by the participants in their oral narratives.

3.1.1. Language Teacher-Researcher as Someone That Can Be Molded and Formed

One of the recurring metaphorical categories in the narratives is that language teacher-researcher identities are constructs that can be shaped and molded by new knowledge and experiences. Unlike in Karabay's[34] category, where the teacher is the expert who molds and shapes students, this category pertains to how the participants view their identity as a raw material that can be reshaped to fit their desired outcome. This category is predominantly found in how MJ compared his experiences and views of himself as a language teacher-researcher. When MJ narrated his first few experiences as a language teacher-researcher, he compared himself to an empty bucket that can be filled with knowledge and is very open to new learning. This is similar to the findings of Gao and Cui[44], where an empty container is the most common subcategory, demonstrating the lack of confidence and knowledge of a novice teacher. In the case of MJ, he was describing himself as a novice researcher. He explained, "I could compare myself to an empty bucket because when I decide to learn about something, I always consider myself as an empty container that needs to be filled with knowledge. I am someone who is very open to learning new things."

Moreover, he compared himself to an *elementary student* when he recalled his first research experience. He felt that in doing research for the first time, there was a need for him to acquire basic information and skills in order to accomplish research work. He recounted, "If I compare myself during my first research experience to anything, it will be an elementary student because I feel like going back to the basics of doing research, like an elementary student learning the basics." As MJ narrated his initial immersion into research, it was clear how his language teacher-researcher identity has been malleable and improvable in terms of developing his skills from a language teacher to a language researcher.

With the help of his peers, research mentors, and the institution he belonged to, MJ's comparison of his language teacher-researcher identity to an empty bucket has changed into a *half-filled* one. Interestingly, this was also similar to the changes in the case study of Gao and Cui[44] where the empty container metaphor changed both in size and content as the teacher gained more knowledge and experience in teaching. Though this may seem an anticlimactic direction of how MJ views his identity, this suggests how MJ was able to be conscious and be self-aware of his own research growth, which is characterized as a slow but steady process. He narrated:

> Now that I have gained enough research experience, I compare myself to a half-filled bucket. I know that I already learned the basics, but still, I consider myself as someone who is a novice researcher. I still need to learn many

> things about research which is why I am pursuing my PhD. As of now, most of our courses require us to produce either a research proposal or full-blown research.

In the interview process, MJ explained how his metaphorical expressions shared similar characteristics to provide a link between his past identity and his current identity as a language teacher-researcher. This proves how his views of his own identity involved the malleability and adaptability of identities for improvement and growth through practice and support from surrounding people. He expounded:

> Those metaphors in a form of things or people share the same characteristic or in a way describe my views, beliefs, and identity as a language teacher-researcher. For example, I described myself as a "half-filled bucket." The bucket represents me, and the water inside represents my knowledge which is still half-filled. This means I still have a lot to learn to "fill the bucket."

Evidently, this category posits how these language teacher-researchers present their identities as someone who is malleable and coachable, representing an emerging metaphoric image of continuous learning. Such images like a half-filled bucket and an elementary student presents the participants' desire for constantly evolving in their profession, not just as a teacher but also as a researcher. This finding aligns with de Leon-Carillo's [47] analysis in which teachers can also be viewed as learners that continue to pursue professional growth, despite the superiority in status or, in the case of the participants, being in a PhD program. Moreover, this suggests how teachers produce better learning outcomes in their own classrooms through personal growth and transformations [48].

3.1.2. Language Teacher-Researcher as Someone That Can Be Instructed and Directed

Another metaphorical category that emerged from the narratives is how language teacher-researcher identity can be instructed or guided by internal (i.e., curiosity) and external entities (i.e., opportunities and institutional support). This category is also different from Karabay's [34] definition, where teachers play the role of guiding and directing students. In this case, language teacher-researchers were the ones being directed to obtain instructions towards their objectives to become well-established researchers in their own fields. This can be seen in the various metaphorical expressions used by Jem in his narratives. For instance, he has used *light* and a *lightbulb* to compare his curiosity and his peers, respectively. He described his curiosity as, "I could compare my curiosity to a lightbulb because if something sparked my interest, I will try to make a research problem out of it." On the other hand, he compared his research mentors and colleagues to a light as people who guided him throughout his research process. He stated, "If I compare these people to anything, it will be a light because they show me how some processes in research should be done and accomplished."

This is also seconded by MJ when he compared his peers to a lighthouse. As MJ became more exposed to research through teaching research courses and doing research work, he was able to improve and hone his research skills with the help of his colleagues and the research culture of his institution. In guiding him to become a language teacher-researcher, he compared his peers and the people who helped him to a *lighthouse*. He explained, "If I compare these people to anything, it will be a lighthouse, because without them guiding me, I will not be able to hone my skills in research writing."

The imagery of light signified how Jem and MJ viewed their own language teacher-researcher identity as something that can be guided by various forces to accomplish their desired research outcomes. Interestingly, when Jem was asked to compare his current self as a language teacher-researcher to anything, he responded that he could compare himself to a lightbulb. This suggests how he was able to come full-circle as someone that has been guided to accomplish his research goals to someone that can already guide other language teacher-researchers for their own research aspirations. He explained:

> If I can compare my current self as a language teacher-researcher to anything, it will be lightbulb because I only start to conduct research if I only see an opportunity to do so and not as a mere requirement from work, and also, I start to partner up with the teachers I handled and together, we work to conduct action research.

In this category, the metaphoric images presented con-

cepts of language teacher-researchers as individuals who can be guided to fulfill their professional objectives while also being the ones who guide other people, including their peers and students. A common metaphoric image of their identities is being a light (e.g., lightbulb, lighthouse), which signifies a spark or direction setting in doing research work. This also aligns with de Leon-Carillo's [47] analysis, where teachers view their roles as not just direction-setting but also agents of change. The present analysis contributes by adding that such roles being agents of change may not only refer to teacher-student relationships but also teacher–to–teacher interactions that can initiate and promote collaboration in terms of doing research work. Culturally, this speaks of how Filipinos emphasize the importance of recognizing *kapwa* (shared identity) among their peers. In this context, the *kapwa* framework is a teacher's commitment to genuinely relate with others [49].

3.2. Themes of the Language Teacher-Researchers' Narratives

Analyzing the narratives of the participants, three themes emerged from the data: a) Difficulties prompt action and agency; b) Environment fosters change and growth; and c) Experiences transform identities. As posited by Barkhuizen [33], these three themes represent the overarching 'storied experiences' of these participants in developing their own language teacher-researcher identities.

3.2.1. Difficulties Prompt Action and Agency

In developing one's language teacher-researcher identity, it was apparent from the participants' narratives that there would be a lot of difficulties and barriers to overcome as a process of becoming one. The challenges and difficulties the participants have encountered prompted them to take action; hence, developing their sense of agency as language teacher-researchers. These difficulties typically stemmed from the participants' lack of research knowledge or unfamiliarity with some of the research processes that were needed to accomplish successful research undertakings. Based on the narratives, these types of difficulties can happen as early as experiences in the undergraduate program of prospective language teachers. As MJ recalled, he first learned about research in his undergraduate program, where he was unfamiliar and clueless about different research constructs, which made it more difficult for him to accomplish research work. However, through perseverance, he was able to receive commendable feedback on his first-ever research paper. He narrated:

> I first learned about research when I was taking my undergraduate program, specifically in the course "Introduction to Language Research." It was a very unfamiliar and challenging journey for me and my partner during that time because we are clueless about the technicalities in writing research. So, we really need to consult a lot with our professor. Luckily, our professor is very accommodating and approachable. I still remember that during our final presentation, our professor actually commended us for producing "well-thought research."

As language teachers, research has always been part of their responsibilities and functions. Having encountered research for the first time, both Jem and MJ have experienced difficulties in incorporating research and its process into their classrooms. For instance, Jem's first attempt at research had been a challenge as there was a lack of access to relevant literature for his study to be comprehensive. He shared:

> In my own classroom, I remember my first attempt in research was when I developed a process mechanism in teaching my students-at-risk of dropping as to where I can help them at least continue their studies. I remember having difficulties in looking for literature. It was like something that required much library search because searching literature on the Internet then was somehow difficult and limited. This is probably because some libraries have not turned to electronic versions of their students' studies. And there is limited access to e-journals.

Another difficulty for these language teachers is how they will be able to be research productive while balancing their teaching workloads and graduate school workloads. This challenge was shared by MJ when he mentioned that it was difficult for him to be consistently research productive because of the workload that hindered him from devoting time to research. As a compromise, he took advantage of his graduate school requirements as a driving force for him to

do research work on his own. He shared:

> I had a difficult time trying to be consistent in my research productivity. The main reason for this was that I am a full-time faculty and we are not really given enough time to engage in research writing. However, since I am in graduate school, and most of our subjects would require research-related tasks, I am being "forced" to create research whether I like it or not. I tried to cope with these difficulties by taking advantage of my graduate school research requirements because that is the only time that I get to be motivated in being productive relative to research.

Part of the role of these language teacher-researchers is to experience the rigor of having their works published in reputable journals. During his first experience with a publication, Jem narrated how he felt that he did not have sufficient research skills to write a decent paper for publication. He was having difficulties writing the sections of his paper, from the introduction to the methodology part. Also, selecting an appropriate statistical analysis has been a challenge for him. To cope with these difficulties, he resorted to reviewing extensively the literature associated with his topic to help him be informed of his research choices. For a clearer description, he shared:

> At that time, I was like a novice, thinking that I do not have the capacity to write a comprehensive and concise research since I am used to writing research in thesis format. I could compare myself to a fresh graduate who seems to venture to the unknown. I had a difficult time trying to determine appropriate statistical tools to use for whatever questions, especially the quantitative type of questions. The main reason for this was that it is very tricky to identify what works best for and (correctly) answers a particular question. I tried to cope with these difficulties by reading through sample research with similar questions that I had. Reading textbooks also worked with me to learn more about what statistical tool to use.

The narratives on how these language teachers overcame challenges and difficulties to pursue their craft and practice for research have shown the adaptability of one's language teacher-researcher identity. Even with the constraints, these language teachers still persevered through creating strategies that worked for them and their situations. MJ appropriately summed up these experiences when he stated, "In that experience, it made me realize that as teachers, we really have to learn how to adapt and learn fast. We should not fear taking the challenge of teaching a new course or learning a new skill or discipline. Teachers should be lifelong learners."

During the interview process, MJ explained how the difficulties he encountered have become his motivation that prompted action and agency. In a way, he was able to consciously find ways to cope with these challenges and better his craft through creating and looking for learning opportunities. He expounded, "[Difficulties] served as a motivation. I considered those difficulties as opportunities for improvement. For example, I had difficulties in learning about statistics in research, so I would always look for learning opportunities relative to statistics, like webinars, or asking someone more knowledgeable."

3.2.2. Environment Fosters Change and Growth

Based on the participants' accounts, the environment that they were situated in also plays an important role in developing their language teacher-researcher identity. The narratives suggested how the participants' environment (e.g., graduate school, workplace, and peers) has enabled opportunities for them to change and improve their attitudes and skills towards doing research. This aligns with Gee's[32] argument that identities are greatly influenced by one's institutional connection and affiliation. This may be associated with one's educational background or one's workplace culture. Being able to pursue graduate studies, Jem shared how his experiences in his Master's program have taught him a lot about research writing. He was also able to gain first-hand experience in doing research that helped him improve his own skills in academic writing. Jem shared:

> I have learned a lot about research writing through reading and earning units in MA. Reading sample researchers was my stepping stone in determining features of a research paper rather than simply reading a textbook on how to

> go about it. I have gained research experiences from them. For example, since tasks relating to writing research was a requirement, I have gained such experiences. Also, I believe that I have gained such experience, it was because of the critiquing from my teachers and panel and from the tasks that were required from me. My research experiences have served as bases for coming up with research and improving my skills in academic writing.

Aside from the experiences and learning that the participants have acquired in their graduate programs, they were also keen in speaking about how their colleagues and peers helped them in their own research practices. For MJ, he was particularly grateful for the generosity of his colleagues, especially of his former coordinator, in providing him sufficient exposure and opportunities to be part of various research projects and colloquiums. Through these opportunities, he was able to gain more research experiences; thus, fostering a positive environment for research productivity. He narrated:

> When I was still a novice language teacher-researcher, I felt that research is something that is really hard to do. I feel like it will really take a lot of time for me to produce publishable research. I have learned a lot about research writing through my graduate studies, and of course through my colleagues who are ahead of me in terms of experiences and educational attainment. I am very lucky because they are really generous in sharing their knowledge and expertise. I have gained research experiences from them. For example, my former coordinator encouraged us to produce group research proposals that we are able to present in the school colloquium. I was also exposed to data analysis techniques as some of my colleagues asked me to be an intercoder in their research. My research experiences have served as learning experiences that I am able to apply and share with my students.

This is also seconded by Jem when he mentioned how his colleagues have become his research partners with whom he was able to collaborate on research undertakings. With the help of his friends, who turned into research collaborators, he was able to gain research experience and even have his work published in a journal. In addition, he pointed out how his professors have become the research mentors who constantly help him to improve his skills and knowledge about research.

> There are also people that have helped me. People that I feel have been most significant on my journey are my colleagues whom I consider my research-partners. I collaborate with them in conducting research relating to language and reading. The people I consider as my research mentors are my friends those who already had an experience writing a research paper whom I think I can easily work with. I also consider my professors both in M.A. and Ph.D as my research mentors. These people have helped me in many ways. For example, a friend of mine welcomed me to be his co-researcher and helped me undergo the process of research and have it published in a journal.

Another factor that has helped these participants in developing their identities is how their workplaces have allowed them to foster as language teacher-researchers. These workplaces have allowed the participants to undertake their own research work with the help of their colleagues. Jem recounted how he was able to accomplish action research with his colleagues because of the many opportunities he was offered, for example, his Continuous Improvement projects that he led and participated in. He shared:

> My current workplace has allowed me to conduct action research as mandated in the duties and responsibilities and as a requirement in the RPMS-PPST of a Master Teacher. Also, I lead in conducting while collaborating with my colleagues in coming up with action research relating to teaching the English subject. Some of the research experiences I gained from my workplace are from the Continuous Improvement (CI) projects that I lead and participated in since Cis can be transformed as research since most of the processes involved in conducting a CI is the same with the processes

> involved in accomplishing research. Also, developing materials and activities for the school to use has also undergone the process of research to see its effectiveness. Also, some experiences involving the RPMS-PPST paved ways to formulate research problems on how teachers could attain the indicators.

For MJ, his workplace has promoted his growth in research through providing funding for attending research-related conferences, and in pursuing his Master's and Doctorate degrees. He shared how his workplace, including his workmates, has been supportive in providing opportunities for him to develop his research skills and experiences through teaching research, serving as a research panelist, and acting as a thesis adviser for students. He mentioned:

> My current workplace has allowed me to develop my skills in research by giving subsidies in attending research-related conferences. Moreover, as I have mentioned, my workmates really helped a lot in making me exposed to research. Even from their simple research-related conversations in the faculty room, I can really pick up something worthy. Additionally, my institution has generously given me the chance to pursue my M.A. and Ph.D. for free, and that contributed drastically to my research skills and exposure. Some of the research experiences I gained from my workplace are, of course, teaching research both in Basic Education and College. I also experienced serving as panelist in student research defense, and a thesis adviser for college students.

3.2.3. Experiences Transform Identities

One notable insight that narratives have revealed is how the participants' "storied lives" and experiences have represented the transformation of their own identities. Through the discourse of the narratives, experiences of the participants as language teacher-researchers throughout their professional career emerged as a vital turning point in developing their identities. These experiences, from their difficulties to their socializations, served as significant factors that influenced the way they enact and perform their own identities as language teacher-researchers. One good example is when Jem mentioned that when he was still a novice language teacher-researcher, he started as a procrastinator and eventually changed his attitude towards research as he gained more experience. He explained:

> When I was still a novice language teacher-researcher, I felt that I had to conduct research in order to help my learners become one. I was like a procrastinator where I only identified gaps then but not actually proceeded to answering it through a research process.

As these participants gained more experience, they were also able to be more confident in their own skills and knowledge of research. MJ narrated his first experience in a conference where he initially felt nervous meeting other people and presenting his own work to them. He shared:

> I remember the first time I presented my work in a conference/symposium. The experience was really memorable because I do not know what to expect. I am not very confident with my presentation because I did not have enough time to rehearse, as I have classes the whole week. Also, I do not have someone with me, so I felt like I will be having a hard time socializing or talking with other educators and professionals. Luckily, there were teachers who approached me and asked me to join them at their table. I made friends with them and actually, we are friends now on Facebook.

With the positive feedback from the conference, MJ was able to be more confident in the research work that he tried to have published in a journal. Through this experience of publication, MJ felt that it was a milestone in his career that prompted a confidence boost and validation as a language teacher-researcher. He shared:

> The first time I submitted my research for publication was after my first research conference. I tried to submit that same paper in a journal that I discovered through our former assistant principal. It is an international journal. I consider it one of the milestones in my journey as an educator. As a teacher who is teaching research, I think it boosted my confidence. Fi-

> nally, I can share to my students the process and experiences I had relative to publishing my work. At that time, I was like a kid finding joy in experiencing something for the first time. I am really happy, proud, and humbled at that moment because I felt like my being a research teacher was validated.

After gaining various research experiences, it is interesting to note how the participants were able to point out the aspects that they were able to improve and the changes that occurred in the way they view their identity as language teacher-researchers. One important finding from the narratives is how the participants view these experiences as learning opportunities for them to take more risks in doing research. For instance, Jem shared how his fear of conducting research and using other research methods other than quantitative methodology has changed. Through his experiences, he has been more welcoming to explore different research interests and research approaches. He explained:

> What I have learned is that there is still much to improve in researching since every time I finish one, I can see opportunities where I can still improve as a researcher, how I can best share these skills as a teacher, and how I can add to the body of knowledge more. Looking back, I feel that there are different changes in me. For example, (1) before I was afraid of even trying to conduct research but now, I can definitely say that I can do research on my own; (2) before I can only do research quantitatively but now, I can do research using different research method and even I have not used some methods, I know how and when I can use them; (3) before I have a different approach in researching but now, I know how important conducting literature reviews before writing.

Aside from having these experiences as learning opportunities, another notable insight from the narratives is how they view these experiences as validation in their profession as a language teacher-researcher. As a validating factor of their hard work, the gained experiences have become their 'best teacher' that has taught them to be more critical, and to learn to enjoy learning in general. To sum up how experiences transform their identities, MJ extensively shared:

> Having to share my work for the first time, I view these experiences as a form of validation in my profession as a research teacher because I can somehow say that I am able to apply the concepts that I teach or share to my students. What I have learned is experience is the best teacher. Research is very technical and there is no other way for you to fully master the rudiments of research but by doing it and immersing yourself in it. Looking back, I feel that there are different changes in me. For example, I feel like I am more critical in terms of evaluating pieces of information. I have also become interested in statistics, although I am not good at math. Probably, we really tend to enjoy learning things if we can see its relevance to our current practice.

4. Discussion

As part of the narrative inquiry, metaphors have become determinative representations of realities and experiences of language teachers enacting their developmental stories as language teacher-researchers that include disclosing their incremental core identities [32]. Like previous research that utilized metaphors to uncover teacher identity [24, 27, 28, 44], eliciting metaphors in narratives has revealed how teacher identity, specifically language teacher-researcher identity, is incessant, and both individualistic and socially-driven. With the systematic use of a variety of metaphors, both identities of MJ and Jem were projected as continuous and evolving, suggesting how their previous (novice language teacher-researcher selves) and their present identities went through a dialectical negotiation and co-construction of the current identity they have as language teacher-researchers. The transition of MJ's metaphor from an "empty bucket" to a "half-filled bucket" exemplified how metaphors were also reflective of the changing identities of language teachers. These findings support the position that past and new experiences are highly interactive [50] and that past and present selves merge into a coherent whole [51]. Recognizing the complexity of teacher identity, metaphors reflect how identities are constructs that are con-

textually structured [52] and culturally bound [25]. In the study, metaphors were used to describe participants' current context, which includes their workplace and peers, in characterizing their own identities as language teacher-researchers. This suggests how metaphors link one's experiences and beliefs in making sense of their current situation and environment in an attempt to find meaning in their identities. One good example is how Jem made use of the metaphor "lightbulb" to describe his current self, considering that he has used similar metaphors to describe his curiosity and the people who have helped him to become who he is now. This shows his desire to embody the same characteristics and opportunities that helped him so that he can pay it forward to other novice language teacher-researchers. This only extends the discussion on how metaphors allow teachers to be reflective of their own present identities to understand the kind of person they aspire to be in the future. In this metaphorical analysis of the participants' view of their identities, both categories exemplify how Filipino culture has been greatly characterized by how they treat identities in relation to their *kapwa*, having a shared identity with others, and seeing themselves in others [53, 54]. Moreover, this act of communal unity recognizes the merits of Gee's [32] argument that identities are discursively created and influenced by one's affinity and community.

Based on the narratives, there have been shifting identities experienced by these teachers, which are inherently linked to various factors such as cognitive, institutional, social, and even political. While these factors were considered as constraints, teachers display prompt action through degrees of agency, also referred to as "movement" [55]. By definition, agency is associated with "people's ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals leading, potentially, to personal or social transformation" [56]. In developing language teacher-research identity, teacher agency is a vital component as it enables individuals to shape their own identities [36], allowing them to enact or resist potential identities [56]. In the study, the participants' actions were provoked by the difficulties they encountered in doing research and driven by their desire to achieve their future-imagined identities as language teacher-researchers. Because of this, participants' agency was used to mitigate these difficulties through enacting in local settings, such as doing research in the classroom, and gaining research experiences from their respective graduate schools and peers. As a result, their agency is reflective of their own actual learning and empowerment of their experiences, allowing appropriation of knowledge and development of identities [57].

Acknowledging the impact of agency in identity development, this implies how individuals have the power to refigure their identities without being entirely dependent on social forces [58]. However, identities should also be viewed as a result of continuous negotiations and exchanges of one's claim of their being in different situations while interacting with different people over time [59]. As shown in the findings, participants' language teacher-research identity has been extensively influenced by their contextual settings and social environments. To provide insights on how these language teachers respond to their socio-cultural world, which they encounter and engage, it is interesting to discuss constructs on 'figured worlds' [60] juxtaposed with notions of agency as forces that enable identity formation. It was argued that there are various kinds of figured worlds: a) one that adopts because they believe in them, b) one that uses to evaluate themselves and others, and c) those that un/consciously direct what we do and how we interact [31]. For example, the world of the academic community (with its responsibility for education, research works, administrative functions, academic socialization, conferences, symposiums, and classroom interactions) is an example of a figured world in the participants are situated. With the teachers participating and responding to the figured worlds, identities are developed, changed, and refigured in the process, resulting in experiences of agency.

Across figured worlds, stories and narratives were created from figurative identities which emerged from experiences and discourses of individuals and others in which appropriation, participation, and transformation of these experiences and activities occur [33]. In this assumption, identities are described as dialogic, where participation in social activities entails the process of authoring of self; thereby creating a space for agency. Because there is no singular understanding of one's identity and the world, this space can also be considered a space of struggle. As can be seen in the narratives of the participants, their identities as language teacher-researchers were shaped and negotiated by their constant struggle to improve, to interact, and to produce contributions to the figured worlds they were participating in. Holland et al. [60] clearly established this assumption when

they argued that identity is created in figured worlds where there is negotiation of meaning, and is a product of the space of authoring where individuals participate in discourses and practices.

5. Conclusions

By tracing the developmental trajectory of the experiences of language teacher-researchers, the present study offered valuable insights into the dynamic but coherent process of teacher identity development and provided a critical look into how the present self can be a product of past experiences and identities. Such transitions and changes of identity are only achievable through the constant struggle of negotiations between the existing and potential identities, between the perceived self and its institutional context, and between agentive efforts and socio-cultural domains. This study took a constructive perspective to delve into language teacher-researcher identity development by using narrative inquiry through narrative frames and metaphorical analysis. Narrative frames and metaphors could also function as a useful pedagogical tool for reflective practice for teacher education to (re)construct teacher identity among pre-service and in-service teachers. This study may help policymakers and educational agencies to be more considerate and understanding of the current realities of language teachers in terms of their research responsibilities in their respective institutions. And, school administrators and teacher training specialists should be able to create in-service training programs that will foster teacher agency in doing research, such as research collaborations and research supervision.

Funding

No funding was received for the conduct of this research.

Institutional Review Board Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards and research guidelines of the University and complied with the provisions of the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012. All procedures involving human participants adhered to institutional policies on research ethics, voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and data protection.

Informed Consent Statement

The author has obtained informed consent from all participants involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting this study consists of interviews that contain confidential information. Due to ethical and privacy considerations, the data is not publicly available. Access to the data may be granted upon reasonable request, subject to approval from the interviewees. Researchers interested in accessing the data should contact the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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