

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# Opportunities and Challenges of a Filipino Educator in a Home-based Online EFL Industry: A Single Case Study

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**Abstract**

Filipino educators are known for their remarkable traits in the teaching profession here and abroad. One of the most in-demand fields is English teachers. Studies have shown that non-native speakers have high regard for Filipino teachers in ESL/EFL schools. Because of the availability of technology in today's time, Filipino teachers do not need to go abroad to teach international students. This study utilized a single-case research method with a single participant who has been in the online industry for almost eight years now. Teacher John of Company A shared his experience highlighting the opportunities and challenges he encountered as a home-based online teacher. The study is guided with constructivism as the main framework of the study and thematic analysis to generate the themes of the data. The themes identified include: background of the participant; the application process; adjustment and investment to the company; handling a class; company rules and regulations; personal and professional development. The findings of the study showed that the opportunities and challenges faced by online teachers paved the way for their personal and professional development. The researcher recommended that other researchers could explore factors affecting the computer-mediated set-up of English language teaching.

**KEYWORDS:**

EFL, Filipino Educator, Online Teaching, Opportunities and Challenges, Single Case Study

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

In EFL or English as a Foreign Language countries, it has been noted that a good language environment in the usage of English communication skills is a significant challenge for the people both in academic and professional settings (Al-Husban, 2020). Gil (2008) attested that insufficient opportunity to use the language, lack of language exposure, inadequate learning materials, and limited teachers who can teach are some of the challenges in China regarding English language learning. That is why non-native speakers are eager to learn the language, and as early as a young age, parents are exposing their children through various programs in English, both online and offline. They believe that exposure at a young age will increase their learning motivation, which will lead to a high proficiency of the language (Tachibana, Matsukawa, Zhong, 1996). Non-native speakers have shown improvement in the English language because of the motivation set by their teachers in every class. High motivation correlates with high language proficiency in an English class (Pontillas, 2015).

Because of the premises above, countries of EFL like Japan, China, and Korea are paving the way to hire qualified instructors in their country to hone their citizens in the English language. Some institutions even invite non-native speakers to teach in their country with a competitive salary package and benefits (Llurda, 2004). With the advancement of technology, instead of

establishing physical institutions for English programs, people in business and school administrators set up online schools that cater to the needs of non-native speakers across all ages and levels. Teachers and learners are linked to online platform/s where teachers can conduct synchronous computer-mediated communication language classes. Like in a face-to-face set-up, teachers could assess the learning needs of the students, introduce various teaching pedagogy teaching strategies, and follow-up students' learning (Terhune, 2015).

The online teaching industry has opened opportunities to other nationals, especially for Filipinos. Filipino English teachers are notable for their exceptional communication skills in the English language because the Philippines is an English as a Second Language (ESL) country (Balgoa, 2019). Rarejob Philippines, one of the leading online EFL industries in the world, was built to encourage Japanese learners to learn English. Kato-San (2007), the CEO of the company, saw the potentials of Filipinos who are proficient speakers of the English language. To date, there are already thousands of Filipino tutors employed in the company and have established their careers in the company for more than a decade now.

Some Filipino online tutors are not full-fledged teachers. Some of them are businessmen, engineers, nurses, full-time mothers, and other professionals. Online EFL companies look for tutors who have a passion for teaching other nationals, dynamic, with a sense of commitment, and trainable in the field. To get a teaching post, the candidate should pass the rigorous process such as an interview, grammar test, and online demonstration teaching. Since it is a home-based job, tutors should have a reliable internet connection and a clutter-free working environment. Also, the desktop/laptop specifications of the tutor should conform to the standard requirements set by the company. Most of the companies allow their tutors to choose a schedule based on their preference. Thus, they can work either on a part-time or full-time basis.

Since the pandemic crisis has struck all parts of the world, businesses were affected. Thus, small and big companies closed, which led to losing many jobs (Roggeveen Sethuraman, 2020). With this, other people resorted to finding other jobs to support their living. Because of the strong implementation of quarantine protocols, especially in the Philippines, the workforces are very limited. Therefore, home-based jobs are in demand right now. Online teaching jobs are awaiting to qualified candidates who could pass the rigorous application process set by every company. This paper thus sets out an in-depth analysis regarding the opportunities and challenges faced by an online educator in the home-based teaching industry.

Filipino educators, especially young teachers, are passionate in their profession (Rogayan, 2018). Their skills and expertise have been established inside and outside the country, especially in teaching English as a Second/Foreign language to different countries in Asia. Many Filipino educators teach English to Thai nationals in Thailand, and the demand for the job is continuously rising. Studies have shown that international students are satisfied with Filipino English teachers (Ozaki, 2017; Ulla, 2018). However, teachers reported challenges in their teaching profession, such as students' lack of motivation in learning the English language, not enough exposure to the English environment in schools, and lack of professional career given by the administrators (Kirkgoz, 2008; Ulla, 2019). Filipino teachers experience racial discrimination and language barriers that affect their everyday lives (Methanonpphakhun Deocampo, 2016; Stewart, 2020). Some of them lack skills in the first language of the countries they are working with, contributing to different communication barriers (Pastera, 2014).

English teachers face several problems they encounter with their learners, which become so challenging in their profession. Estacio, Valdez, Pulido (2018) found out that writing and speaking are the macro-skills that Filipino teachers need to strengthen to their students in terms of the language curriculum. Thus, teachers should be trained with different pedagogies to address the said problem (Souriyavongsa, Rany, Abidin, 2013). It is also suggested that teachers should have a positive outlook in their life which affects their teaching beliefs and pedagogical practices to help address the learning needs of students (Watson, 2015). Furthermore, technology can also be maximized through different approaches such as blended learning and fully online learning to cater to the learning needs of students across the world (Jung, 2001; Riel, Lawless, Brown, 2001; Chase, 2008; Obari, Goda, Shimoyama, Kimura, 2008; Weitze Orngreen, 2014). (Chase, 2008; Jung, 2001; Obari, Goda, Shimoyama, Kimura, 2008; Riel, Lawless, Brown, 2001; Weitze Orngreen, 2014).

Ulla (2009) posited that despite the challenges of English teachers, Filipino teachers working in Thailand posited that their career as language educators abroad paved the way to providing for their family needs because of the high salary and the chance to be more exposed to different international cultures. Thus, working abroad has been an excellent opportunity for them personally and professionally. In terms of research methodology in language education, other scholars have used case studies to evaluate the language policies and curriculum in the assessment of ESL/EFL learners. Genesee Leary (2013) evaluated language instruction in a second language instruction using a case study method. Issues affecting the proficiency of learners emerged in the study. Previous literature highlighted the opportunities and challenges of non-native English language educators, especially Filipino educators. However, no existing studies have yet discussed the opportunities and challenges of Filipino educators working in

a home-based online industry and uses the case study as a research method. Thus, this current study bridges the gap of the previous studies presented.

This study investigated the phenomenon regarding the opportunities and challenges encountered by an online teacher in a home-based teaching job. Thus, the following research questions will be addressed: What motivated, inspired, and led the participant to venture into the online teaching industry? and What are the participant's lived experiences that highlight the opportunities and challenges he encountered in the online teaching industry? The researcher utilized the constructivism theory in this study. According to Mogashoa (2014), this theory applies to qualitative education research. This theory could reveal underlying principles, issues, phenomena, which are the main aim of a case study. The participant's personal experiences and individualistic perspectives in the study are investigated in-depth to answer the questions posed in the paper.

## 2 | METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 | Research Design

The research methodological basis of this article is a case study. This method in qualitative research investigates a phenomenon with its real-life context. The researcher believes that the research problems can be best examined using this method since this method requires an in-depth investigation to explore the causes of underlying principles (Pressacademia, 2018). Specifically, this study adopts a single instrumental case study because the study's premises only focus on a specific issue, and this case could represent what is happening in other situations (Allen, 2007).

### 2.2 | Participant and Selection Criteria

There is a single participant in the study. The criteria that the researcher considers in looking for the participant of the study are the following:

1. Should have been an online EFL teacher for more than five years already;
2. Should be working on a full-time basis in a home-based set-up;
3. Should be working in top home-based online EFL companies in Asia.

After the careful evaluation of the possible participants to participate in the study, the researcher decided to take the male online EFL teacher who has been working for more than eight years and met the other two criteria. To hide the identity of the participant, Teacher John is used as a pseudonym. The company he is currently connected to is not also divulged in study. Hence, the researcher uses Company A as a pseudonym to hide the identity of the company.

### 2.3 | Data Collection Procedures

To observe proper research ethics, the researcher discussed to the participant the objectives of the paper. The participant affixed his signature in the consent form, adhering that he is willing to be part of the study. The consent form was submitted via e-mail to the researcher. The interview was done through Google meet and lasted for two hours and 21 minutes. Interview questions are also appended in this paper (See Appendix A). The interview guide was validated by two experts who have published papers regarding teacher's identity.

### 2.4 | Analysis of Data

The researcher's assistant transcribed the recorded interview. After the transcription, the researcher manually coded the interview transcripts to develop the main themes in the study. For the thematic analysis, the researcher used the framework of Braun Clark (2006).

1. *Familiarization with the data:* The researcher read the interview transcript several times and highlights important details on the hardcopy of the transcript to familiarize with the data.

2. *Coding*: The researcher assigned codes (C1, C2, C3, etc.) to the interview extracts that have bearing on the paper's premises.
3. *Searching for Themes*: The researcher assigned themes to the codes with similar responses and groups them together.
4. *Reviewing Themes*: The researcher asked for two other intercoders to review the first draft of themes. This is also a way to triangulate the data and limit the biases of the study.
5. *Defining and Naming Themes*: The researcher and the two other intercoders finalized the names of the themes used in the analysis and interpretation of data.
6. *Writing-Up*: The researcher used the finalized themes in the discussion part.

### 3 | RESULTS

#### 3.1 | Case Study: Teacher John of Company A's Background

John of Company A is an online EFL teacher for almost eight years now. He finished his Bachelor's Degree in Office Administration in one of the state universities in Manila, Philippines. Before working as an online EFL educator, he started as a sales associate. However, he got bored due to the routine work, which led him to apply for another job far from his baccalaureate degree. Since John is a Christian, part of their activities in the church is to share gospels and teach young children. He decided to apply as a teacher even though he has no teaching methodology course or a professional teaching license.

Backed up by his passion for tutoring kids and his strong communication skills, he was hired in a Korean school in 2007 in Clark, Pampanga. Since he has no formal training in teaching methodology, he had a self-review from different printed and online materials regarding handling international students. He read books in English Grammar, World Literature, and TOEIC. He practiced his pronunciation skills by listening to various audio materials because he wanted to reduce his accent. Primarily, he aims to sound like a native speaker because that is the preference of his company. He was a stay-in teacher and worked from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. In the evening, he handled E-phone classes from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. The said class is intended for Korean students who had their vacation in their home country but still preferred to continue their English classes.

"E-phone is something like a Korean mobile phone, but for the internet. During that time, we didn't have like the platform we have now. It is used to be manual. We had a book; I had the book. So, we all have to do is that we asked the student to read. Actually, we couldn't see the student because we have a manual phone."

Due to the number of years he had already spent in the company, John tried to look for another company that would provide more comfort and convenience to his part. He tried to apply for a customer service post in BPO companies; however, his luck did not pave the way for him to be hired in the said field. In 2012, he searched for other jobs related to teaching until he came across home-based teaching positions in different companies, where he found the job posting of his current employer.

#### 3.2 | The Application Process

Since the job posting of Company A is intended for applicants who have a stable internet connection and with computer devices, John was hesitant to apply. However, because of his strong determination and curiosity about how a home-based industry works, he sent his application requirements to the company. With or without teaching experience is welcomed to apply. Any field of specialization, education or non-education, can be accepted in the company.

Walking through the application process, John sent his credentials to the e-mail posted on the website. After a day or two, the interviewer phoned the interviewer and asked basic questions, including his teaching experience, educational background, and the like. He disclosed that he is working in a Korean school, which assured him that he already has teaching experience for international students. After passing the initial interview, he was scheduled for a group interview and used Skype as their platform.

"We were divided into two. The company has two accounts: one for Japanese and one for Chinese. Our group was introduced to the Chinese account. After the interview, I had a demo [demonstration teaching]. After that, they told me about the platform. It used to be manual because I didn't know how to use the platform. I didn't have equipment yet; I have the old computer."

The demonstration teaching only took less than an hour to gauge the teaching competence of the applicants. In the first phase, John acted as the teacher and his fellow applicant as the student. After which, they switched their roles. His fellow applicant acted as the teacher, and John played the role of the student. The evaluator assessed their teaching styles in the online class.

Since John had no enough equipment by that time, he hurriedly bought cheap equipment such as a monitor, CPU, and the like. By that time, his primary motivation to work in a home-based online industry is because he just wanted to earn extra income for his internet. He is paying for P1,200.00 a month for his internet provider at home, which only has 3-5 Mbps. He installed an internet connection before because he is fond of playing internet games. Therefore, working in a home-based online industry would suffice his expenses for his monthly internet bill.

From that simple motivation, the career of John had sprung when he was finally hired in Company A after a week-long process. After being hired, he was sent for a half-day training, and the next day, he was already installed as an online teacher. John started to work as a part-time online teacher since he was still connected to a Korean school. After a year or two, he finally resigned to the Korean school since it provides more convenience in the home-based online industry.

### 3.3 | Adjustment and Investment to the Company

Although John had previous experience in teaching international students, this time was different. Online set-up entails an adjustment in many forms and ways. From a physical environment, shifting to the online environment has never been easy. Purchasing cheap computer equipment has never been enough to survive in this industry since the company sets specific standards that its employees should comply with. "I really had to invest with the equipment. I know this is not the usual set-up, but there is no other way to cope [up] with the work. I have to deal with it."

John invested in high specifications computer set and stable internet connection. Knowing that in the Philippines, internet connection is not as good as the neighboring countries, John had two internet connection sources. His primary internet connection is fiber-optic, and his backup internet is wired prepaid. Whenever he gets an unstable internet connection from his main connection, he has another connection to plug for his classes. Another issue that he had invested in is the power connection. In case of a power outage, he utilizes the power battery of his vehicle. If there is a notice from the electric company, he goes to his fellow teacher's house to connect to an internet to conduct his scheduled classes.

The teacher's identity should be well-established to the students. John mentioned in the interview that once the teacher creates a negative image for the students, the number of classes will also be compromised. In this industry, there will be no permanent students whom teachers will handle. The company applies a booking system method. Meaning, the profile of the teachers will be uploaded on the company's website, and students have the prerogative to choose their teachers. Once the student likes the teacher's class, there is a tendency that the student will remain for a long period. However, if the student finds the teacher unlikeable, the student might select another teacher of their choice on their next class.

Each class is only for 25 minutes, and each class has only one student (1:1 ratio). After the class has been conducted, the teacher will post a lesson note for the student stipulating their comments, pieces of advice, errors committed, and other constructive criticism, which will help improve the English ability of the students. That way, the teacher could assess the learning progress of the students. Also, the teacher will give feedback to the teacher regarding the teacher's style, approach, appearance, and other factors. If the student likes the teacher very well, they could give the highest point that a teacher could receive. However, if the teacher did not perform well, the teacher could receive the lowest point. Also, the feedback to the teachers can be seen on the company's website. Therefore, if other students could see more positive remarks for the teacher, the higher the chance their class will be booked by other students. Consequently, if the teacher receives more complaints, few students will avail of their class.

The situations, as mentioned earlier, are the reasons why a starting teacher should build their image to the students. Students should create a good rapport with the teacher and feel at ease with the teacher's presence. The more popular teacher you have become, the more students will reserve your class. It is expected that when you are a starting teacher, and you have opened for an eight-hour class for your first day, do not expect that all these slots will be filled up quickly. According to John, it takes weeks and months to build your image in the company. That is why you have to invest in a stable internet connection, high computer specifications, and a good power connection to lessen your complaints from the students.

### 3.4 | Handling a Class

The environment in a physical class and online class has similarities and differences. Since John's exposure before joining a home-based online industry is a man-to-man class, he said that there are similarities and differences in handling international

students in the class. He also mentioned several challenges and opportunities concerning this aspect. During his first stint as an online teacher in the company, he expressed his difficulty handling children. "It was difficult for me in handling children because in man-to-man [classes] when they did something, I could easily ask them to stop it; Don't do it! And I could touch them. But here [in online classes], when the student tell[s] me that I will go to the toilet, you can't do anything." Some of John's students find excuses if they do not feel about attending his classes, and he cannot monitor these students because some of his students are off-cam while having classes. He cannot force his students to turn on their cameras because it is the prerogative of students to turn off their cameras while having classes. Another challenging part of handling online classes is the limited time allotted for each class. Unlike in the Korean school, each class is 50 minutes. In the online class, each class is only 25 minutes, which affects the phasing. John posited that it only took him a month to adjust to the phasing of the classes fully. "I realized, after one month, I adopted my skills using my class and also another way [the] assessing student's capabilities. We have a free trial, and then, I use the measurement gauge system used in the company to evaluate the students."

The free trial mentioned by John in the interview is the starting students who are prospective students. Before they enroll in a class package, they are entitled to one free trial lesson conducted by their chosen teacher. The teacher's role is to assess the English skills of the student, whether they are beginner, intermediate, or advanced. The teacher will also recommend the type of class where the students may consider in the enrolment. The free trial session is crucial since this is the 'make or break' whether the student will be part of the company or not.

Another interesting that John highlighted in the interview is the absence of haptics in the online class. Unlike the man-to-man class, he could employ haptics in teaching to show empathy and concern to students. He posited that international students, especially Koreans, appreciate the gestures of teachers through touch to feel the teacher's presence. Since haptics will not be evident in the online class, total physical response (TPR) should be apparent to the online teachers to illustrate interactive engagement. Their company uses a platform intended for the teachers and students to conduct their classes. The platform has several features that could utilize by the teachers to make their classes dynamic and engaging.

Although teachers exert their efforts to make their class interactive, some students use the comfort of their home to show unnecessary behaviors, making the entire class distractive. "For young students, you can see them spitting, or they are having class while pooping. Even now we have the phone class, you can feel that they feel difficult. There are some stage mothers. They are protecting their children. Parents think that they are better than the teacher."

Some of the mothers of the children are even taking pictures or videos during classes. What is worst is that since the students are at the convenience of their home, John even saw some of the roommates of her students (University students) walking around behind her student nakedly. Perhaps, these people are not aware that their roommate has an online class at that time. Since the company caters to different types of students, from children to adults, another challenging case experienced by John is handling adult learners who are businessmen or even CEOs of the company.

"Another thing is in business class. Sometimes, they are CEO [students]. I do not know if I could handle them. Could [Should] I handle them as CEO or I should [should I] be the teacher? I don't know where to act. It was also my struggle."

When John encounters professionals, he is confused regarding the identity he needs to project to the class. However, John still established his identity as someone higher in the class. Like his other students, he facilitates learning by giving inputs, correcting students' mistakes, and the like. He admitted that most of these students are already at advanced levels who need to develop their English language proficiency.

Handling students with different levels are indeed challenging, especially in an online setup. However, with the appropriateness of teaching strategies, things will be under control. For almost eight years in the profession, John encountered different types of students with various learning difficulties. Nevertheless, with the lessons and styles tailored to the students' learning needs, online classes become manageable.

### 3.5 | Company Rules and Regulations

Rules are rules. For every organization, employees need to abide by the rules set by the administration to ensure the smooth transaction of business. Once the teacher is hired in the company, they need to follow the regulations for the welfare of the employer and employees.

John explained that teachers are not even called employees in the company. They are called third-party business partners. They are not deducted with their taxes, and they do not have benefits such as Social Security System (SSS), Philhealth, PAGIBIG, and others. If they want to have these benefits, they can have them on their own.

“We are not being deducted with tax. Only those people who work in the office get benefits or being deducted. We don’t have 13th-month pay. [During] December, we are a little bit sad. Imagine, if you are working in the office, you get minimum. But here in Company A, for eight hours, maybe you can get P1000.00 or above. I think I’m still blessed.” Their total earnings are always reflected on their teacher’s account every after the class and accomplishment of their lesson memo. As starting teacher, they earn P50.00 per class, and once the teacher is promoted for the next level, their salary will also increase. Teachers’ promotion is based on the accumulated lessons and earned ratings of their students.

The company is strict with regard to the punctuality of the teachers. Once the teacher is late or absent from the scheduled class, they will be receiving a penalty. There is a corresponding amount to be deducted from the total earnings of the teacher. Many teachers in the company are complaining because of the inhumane consideration of the company when it comes to giving a penalty to the teachers due to missed classes.

“A lot of teachers complain, it’s suddenly locked [the teacher’s account]. They didn’t [the company] have consideration. I always tell them, we have a system. It’s a computer. For example, you got three absences; it’s in the rule that if you got absences within the cut-off, you’re automatically locked. You could ask the coach to remove it. You have to undergo coaching before they remove it.”

Missed classes are not all because of tardiness. There were times that there was a sudden power interruption and/or internet connection problem on the day of their classes. However, whatever the reason is, missed classes are still missed classes. John explained that teachers should invest in their equipment because the client’s satisfaction is the main priority. John also shared that there are teachers who were terminated from the service because of being caught in service to other EFL company and the number of missed classes they incurred due to power and internet connection failure. Worst, there are reported cases of teachers who committed suicide due to anxiety and stress brought by the online job.

Since online teaching is a lucrative job, John explained that teachers should hardly invest in the equipment and working environment are because of the company rules and its strict implementation. No matter how good a teacher’s credential is, but lacks the necessary equipment, a home-based job may not be suitable for them. During his first few years in the company, he almost lost his job due to power and internet failures. However, he reiterated that he had survived the long years in the industry because of his investment and conformist with the company’s rules and regulations.

### 3.6 | Personal and Professional Development

For almost eight years in the teaching industry, John has established his niche as an online EFL educator. He is one of the top rank teachers in the company. He is one of the senior teachers who guide newbie teachers in the company. Furthermore, he assists and trains teachers in various ways and means.

One of the benefits of being an employee in Company A is the free training of the TESOL Certificate Course to the online teachers. Usually, it costs P15,000.00 to P20,000.00 for this course. This training is done through an online modality. After the required number of hours and passing the assessment, the teacher becomes TESOL certified with no cost. However, the certificate can be claimed after two years of stay in the company.

“Actually [TESOL training] it’s free. But we could get our certificate after two years because once the teacher got it, they could go and find another company. They are using TESOL to go to another company.”

The free TESOL certification course is also one way for Company A to encourage the teachers to stay long in their company. Also, this is a way to upgrade the teaching competencies of the teachers to ensure quality services to the students. Aside from TESOL training, Company A provides training for Teaching English for Young Learners or TEYL. John said that this course needs reading and situational analysis to pass the assessment. The content contains the methodologies of handling young learners in ESL/EFL setting.

Although working in a virtual environment, John disclosed that they have a group on social media intended for online teachers working in Company A. Announcements and other necessary information for dissemination are posted on their group. Also, they have separate groups for every province. Since John is from Pampanga, they have a core group intended for Pampanga teachers. They hang out and organize activities during their common scheduled day off.

Furthermore, the major impact of being an online teacher in Company A, John attested that it broadened his horizon towards multiculturalism and helped to boost his English language skills. He admitted that English had been his Waterloo during his younger years, but now, it has become the bread and butter of their family.

“When I was young... I was afraid of it. But now, [it has been] my strength and source of my income. I am not perfect in Grammar, but I know how to explain it.”

Because of John's exposure to other cultures, he has learned many things about the country's history, tradition, lifestyle, and values. He could compare and contrast the mindset and dispositions of most Filipinos and the nationals he is teaching. Somehow, it positively impacted his life, which catapulted to his personal and professional development as an online educator.

## 4 | DISCUSSION

This study provides a big picture of the life of being an online English teacher in a home-based industry. Although this paper only involved a single case study with a single participant, the participant could expound and provide in-depth narratives regarding the opportunities and challenges in this field. He was able to encapsulate the different cases which are prevalent in this industry. This, for sure, mirrors similar experiences and cases of other home-based online educators.

Although a teaching license is an edge of becoming an online teacher, the online company prefers those teachers who could communicate and connect well to their clients. That is why there is no discrimination between education graduates and non-education graduates as long as they passed the rigorous process, especially the demonstration teaching. Applicants who have good communication skills and stable internet connections are highly preferred. This finding is contrary to the article of Goldhaber Brewer (2000), who posited that teachers have the training and teaching license significantly correlate to a higher academic performance of students. Thus, it is highly encouraged to hire teachers who are licensed and skilled in their respective fields. Teachers who are more confident and with necessary training and skills could positively affect the students' learning needs (Hammond, 1985).

Unlike in other fields, screening applicants in an online home-based job takes a very short period. Since most of the pool of screeners are working online, they can screen applicants who send their application requirements via e-mail. If found qualified in the initial screening, they immediately call the applicant and conducts an initial interview. If they passed the initial interview, a step-by-step process would follow depending on the application process set by the company. Usually, this includes grammar tests, personality interviews, demonstration teaching, and checking internet and computer set specifications. No matter how good an applicant is, if the computer set and internet connectivity are below the standards, they cannot proceed to the next process. Hence, they are advised to upgrade their devices and consider reapplying. The finding supports Salac (2016) study, who noted that the Philippines is one of the lowest ranks in Asia in terms of internet connection speed. The average speed of internet connection only ranges from about 2.8 Mbps. Singapore and South Korea are still leading with an average speed of 20 Mbps. This is why applicants' internet connection does not meet the required speed set by online companies.

Despite the slow internet connection in the Philippines, online teachers should cope with the job demands, especially in handling students. Students are the main clients in the company; that is why teachers should always put their best foot forward in every class. Like in a man-to-man set-up, teachers in the online class can employ several strategies depending on the level of the students like the Total Physical Response. Like other studies, TPR has been proven to be an effective strategy for online teachers, especially for young learners, to sustain an interactive and engaging class in the ESL/EFL setting (Asher Price, 1966; Islami, 2019). Aside from the teaching strategies that online teachers should note, they have to address the diversity of their learners. Learners are diverse along with their language abilities and their attitude and values (Philip, Hua, Jandar, 2019). Misbehaviors do not only manifest in a man-to-man class, but these are also evident in an online class. This finding parallels Selwyn (2007), who posited more misbehavior cases in an online setting than in a man-to-man setting. Students in the online class observe several internet issues. This is the reason why online teachers should immediately address these issues since this very apparent in a computer-mediated class (Hazel, Crandall, Caputo, 2014).

To survive in the hangar of the online industry, aside from investing with the necessary equipment at par with the company's standards and managing the classes excellently, online teachers should strictly abide by the company rules. Some of these companies are merciless when it comes to penalizing their teachers. Reasons such as power and internet connection failures are not excused to being saved from the sanctions. Since the company needs to maintain their reputable image from the clients, they have to make sure that they have the best teachers who do not just have excellent teaching skills, but also high standard internet and power connections. This is why screeners evaluate the speed of connection, location, and equipment of applicants at the start of the application process. Some online companies also do not allow other teachers to take part-time jobs in other competing EFL companies. These things are ground for termination once the online teacher violated the company's rule due to the 'no employee-employer relationship' stipulated in their contract. The findings contrast with other studies. Companies should continuously motivate their people to attain good standing in terms of attendance. Recognitions and incentives are some ways to



keep the people on track (Markham, Scott, Mckee, 2006; Lenunberg, 2011; Kosfeld Neckermann, 2011) (Kosfeld Neckermann, 2011; Lenunberg, 2011; Markham, Scott, Mckee, 2006)

Along with the challenges and setbacks that online teachers face in the industry, it cannot be denied that working in a home-based setup provides more convenience in their lives. Aside from not experiencing the hassles and bustles in the city, online teachers could choose their preferred time to teach, unlike other companies. If they want to earn higher, they can open their teaching slots for more than eight hours. Aside from the comfort and flexibility of this online job, teachers are continuously honed by earning an international teaching certificate course which they could use in upgrading their skills and for their future career plans. In the study of Brandt (2006), it was proven that international courses such as TESOL positively impact teachers to promote a student-centered approach in their teaching styles. Lastly, being an online teacher expands the horizons and develops online teachers' multiculturalism to understand better other cultures, traditions, beliefs, and values. The study of Gay Howard (2010) supports this finding. They pointed out that multicultural educators connect very well to their students and better understand their learners' diversity.

## 5 | CONCLUSION

This paper, which utilized a single-case method, has comprehensively discussed the main premise of the study. This research digs deeper into the two important variables of the study: the opportunities and challenges of an educator. Although these variables are not new in the previous literature presented, this study has given a new angle of the story since online educators are the main subject of this paper. With the pandemic crisis people face now, the limited workforce in the city, and people who eventually lost their job, this paper looks at how life could be working in an online home-based industry.

Indeed, teachers working in this industry have better opportunities and can earn a high amount of money. Even if aspirants are non-education graduate, but remarkably passed the rigorous screening of the evaluators, they can be part of the company. However, this needs investment in high specs of equipment, which is a primary requirement of the company. The said investment entails a very high-speed internet connection, electricity back-up, conducive working place, and the like. A teacher should likewise abreast of the pedagogy in an online class set-up. To establish a reputable image, online teachers should appear dynamic and conversant, to students. The first impression of the student is crucial to the part of the teacher. Also, company rules and regulations are the bibles of the online teacher since these could 'make or break' their career. A single mistake could jeopardize their job because of the high credibility that employers establish to their clients.

The research recommends that online teachers, like every other teachers, should take good care of their mental health. Too much exposure to screen and lengthy classes could lead to a mental breakdown. Moreover, online teachers should extend their patience and tolerance to their students. There are reported cases where students take the class for granted, parents of students who discriminate the teachers' ability, and students who already are company owners. Online teachers should know how to play the game in dealing with the different levels and types of students. Along with the journey of being an online teacher, they could attain high personal and professional growth once they have mastered the craft in this industry.

Also, future researchers look at other variables of this study. It is interesting to investigate the language and power of an online teacher and the speech acts manifesting in an online class. It is also a noteworthy study to find out the identity and language ideologies of online teachers. Also, it is a remarkable study to analyze the language policies manifested in online companies. There are many variables and dimensions that other researchers in this area do not yet explore. Lastly, since the researcher only utilized one participant in this study, future researchers could explore many participants to explore online teachers' identity in the ESL/EFL settings. Outputs and results of these studies could lead to empowering online educators and help to improve the system of online ESL/EFL schools.

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