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Motivation and Investment of Filipino LGBTQ+ learners in learning English: A case study

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MOTIVATION AND INVESTMENT OF FILIPINO LGBTQ+ LEARNERS IN LEARNING ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This case study explores the motivations and investments in English language learning among Filipino LGBTQ+ students. Through qualitative interviews with 11 self-identified LGBTQ+ individuals, the research reveals how societal pressures influence language learning and identity negotiation. The thematic analysis highlights participants' resilience and ambition in overcoming discrimination and affirming their identities through language proficiency. Despite challenging environments that sometimes undermined their confidence, their strong investment in educational aspirations remained steadfast. These findings emphasize the critical need for inclusive educational practices that support and empower LGBTQ+ students. Moreover, the study's insights extend beyond the Philippines, contributing to international discussions on language education and LGBTQ+ inclusion. The universal relevance of these experiences suggests that understanding and addressing the complexities faced by LGBTQ+ learners can inform broader educational strategies, promoting inclusivity across diverse cultural contexts.

Keywords: gender; sexual identity; Identity Approach to Second Language Acquisition; L2 Motivational Self System

Introduction

As the field of Gender Studies continues to evolve, a more nuanced understanding of gender as performative and socially constructed has emerged. This progressive view has extended to the domain of second language acquisition, sparking interest in sociocultural factors' role in shaping language education. Amid these developments, the interconnection between identity categories—specifically gender and sexuality—and language learning processes has come into sharper focus. The negotiation of complex identity constructs during language acquisition is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by learners' social histories and cultural narratives (Norton, 2010, 2012). An exploration of these dynamics is thus essential for comprehending how identities shape language learning experiences.

At the intersection of language education and gender identity, this research probes the experiences of 11 Filipino LGBTQ+ students in their pursuit of English language proficiency. The overarching aim is to identify their motivations for and investments in language learning to recognize their challenges and the support they require. Guided by Norton's Identity Approach to Second Language Acquisition and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System, the research gives considerable attention to identity negotiation, investment in language learning, the construct of imagined communities, and the facets of motivation (ideal L2 self, ought-to-self, L2 learning experiences) as central to the educational experiences of LGBTQ+ students.

Among student populations, LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, plus) individuals face distinct challenges in educational settings. The “+” (plus) represents additional sexual orientations and gender identities beyond the primary categories. In this study, LGBTQ+ refers specifically to the identities of the 11 Filipino participants. While the researchers initially aimed for a broader participant base, only 11 Filipino LGBTQ+ students—four gays, three bisexuals, three transgender people, and one queer—willingly participated after a thorough three-month recruitment effort. This delimitation was not intentional but resulted from the challenges of gathering participants from a marginalized community where trust and confidentiality are critical. Nevertheless, by focusing on these 11 cases, the study provides an in-depth, qualitative examination of their language learning experiences within the Filipino context.

Although this study is grounded in the Philippines, the overarching themes manifest cross-cultural pertinence, underscoring the universal challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in education. It bears broader implications for developing inclusive educational models that transcend national boundaries and invite international dialogue. Therefore, the lessons drawn from this inquiry have potential applications reaching well beyond the local context,

advocating for a collective endeavor toward education that embraces diversity and promotes empowerment.

The (in)visibility of LGBTQ+ and cisgenders in language education

Research increasingly highlights the importance of social context and identity in second language acquisition. Inclusive curricula and materials that reflect diverse identities can significantly enhance learning environments and empower students. Despite this, a critical examination of language education in the Philippines and globally reveals a troubling trend: the near invisibility of LGBTQ+ identities. This invisibility perpetuates heteronormativity, which is a pervasive social construct positioning heterosexuality as the norm, thereby marginalizing LGBTQ+ students.

Analyses of textbooks in the Philippines demonstrate a troubling pattern. Junior high school English materials display a conspicuous overrepresentation of male characters and stereotypical portrayals of females, with a complete absence of LGBTQ+ representation (Briones, 2019; Manalo, 2018). This situation reinforces heteronormativity, a pervasive social construct that positions heterosexuality as the norm (Paiz, 2015). This trend extends beyond the Philippines. Global analyses of English Language Teaching (ELT) materials expose similar patterns, highlighting the mainstreaming of heteronormativity in textbooks across continents, from the UK (Gray, 2013) to Iran (Salami & Ghajarieh, 2016), Poland (Pakuła et al., 2015), Spain (Ruiz-Cecilia et al., 2021), and Turkey (Selvi & Kocaman, 2021).

While academic discourse has increasingly focused on gender inclusivity in language education materials (Java & Parcon, 2016; Mante-Estacio et al., 2018; Tarrayo, 2014), the crucial issue of LGBTQ+ representation remains unexamined in the Philippines (Curaming & Curaming, 2020). Regrettably, this oversight has significant consequences. The invisibility of LGBTQ+ identities in learning materials reinforces heteronormative assumptions and contributes to the marginalization of LGBTQ+ students within educational spaces.

The marginalization extends beyond textbooks. Analyses of popular English learning resources, such as websites and picture books, reveal a tendency to depict heteronormative family structures and relationships (McClure, 2010; Sunderland & McGlashan, 2015). Furthermore, a school-based study highlights the prevalence of heteronormative practices within classrooms (Dalley & Campbell, 2006); and the educators' lack of awareness and sensitivity can create a hostile learning environment for LGBTQ+ students.

The consequences of invisibility are far-reaching. Research sheds light on the detrimental impact of internalized heteronormativity on the well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals (Evrpidou, 2018; Pollitt et al., 2021). By failing to represent diverse identities, there is a risk that educational environments perpetuate societal biases, excluding and marginalizing LGBTQ+ students. With this, the current state of language education necessitates a paradigm shift. Challenging heteronormativity within ELT is essential for creating inclusive and empowering learning environments. For curricula and materials to truly reflect the richness of human experience, including that of LGBTQ+ identities, they must be re-envisioned to ensure that all students have the opportunity to thrive.

LGBTQ+ students' motivation in learning English

Research on LGBTQ learners' motivation and investment in English language learning has garnered increasing attention, highlighting the unique and complex factors influencing their educational experiences. This review synthesizes findings from various studies to comprehensively understand how learners' sexual and gender identities, motivation, and investment intersect.

Based on a recent study, LGBTQ+ students seek overseas education because their motivation is to develop themselves, express their identities more freely, and be in more welcoming and safer environments (Campbell et al., 2024). Nguyen and Yang (2015) also highlight the same reasons for motivation as they studied how a Korean transgender student's desire to live authentically and achieve professional success fueled her motivation to learn English, seeking opportunities she felt were limited in her home country. Similarly, queer learners in Thailand showed how their identities positively influenced their motivation to learn English. These learners often view proficiency in English as a means to gain societal acceptance and improve their speaking skills (Suebkinnon & Sukying, 2021). Four immigrant LGBTQ+ English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners in the San Francisco Bay Area also shared similar reasons for learning the language, such as professional advancement, independence, and identity affirmation. One LGBTQ+ participant wanted to pursue education so she could contribute to society by conducting research that is fundamental to the creation of inclusive social policies for the LGBTQ+ community. Another participant emphasized that he had to achieve more, so his professional achievements would be more important than his gender or sexual identity. Similarly, one participant stressed the importance of English proficiency because she could not be successful in her business in a city where English is a native language (Kaiser, 2017). It can be culled from these studies that LGBTQ learners want to learn English for personal and professional advancements, to express their identity, and to gain acceptance.

However, as much as LGBTQ+ students want to learn, the expectations of others may negatively influence their learning. For instance, some teachers set the same expectations for everyone, and the (un)intentional non-recognition or non-acknowledgment of gender identity and the non-existence of designated programs for LGBTQ+ students make them feel like they do not belong in any group, thus leading to being double marginalized (Campbell et al., 2024). On the other hand, other LGBTQ+ students used the heteronormative expectations of others to look for more inclusive communities. The expectations of his hometown, such as having a stable job, being married, and having children, caused an LGBTQ+ student to dream of escaping and being in a society where he can construct and perform his definition of masculinity (Kaiser, 2017). In contrast, other LGBTQ+ people have to conform to the expectations and cultural norms such as getting married, having children, and walking more macho, because if not, they will be alienated and not be part of familial and communal ties (Peña-Talamantes, 2013).

Apart from others' expectations, LGBTQ+ learners also have to face several issues in their language learning environments, which affect their motivation and engagement in learning. Some of them encountered difficulties in asserting their gender identities within their heteronormative classroom context (Kaiser, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2015). Queer Filipino young adults also had to face discrimination, rejection, and other forms of microaggression in families, schools, or local churches (Cornelio & Dagle, 2022). Additionally, curricular materials are part of the language learning environment. As previous research indicates, the persistence of heteronormativity and lack of LGBTQ+ representation in global ELT materials can marginalize LGBTQ+ learners and negatively impact their well-being (Gray, 2013; Paiz, 2015; Pakuła et al., 2015; Ruiz-Cecilia et al., 2021; Salami & Ghajarieh, 2016; Selvi & Kocaman, 2021). This predicament highlights the importance of fostering inclusive learning environments that support the diverse identities and aspirations of LGBTQ+ students. Creating supportive and inclusive spaces promotes engagement, well-being, and optimal learning outcomes for all students, including LGBTQ+ youth (Hanson et al., 2019; Lim, 2018).

LGBTQ+ students' investment in learning

Motivation is complemented by investment. Students may be motivated but may not invest or engage in language learning. Likewise, students may not be motivated but choose to still engage in language learning. Ultimately, they may not be motivated and invested at the same time. In any case, within these contexts, LGBTQ+ students negotiate their identities and construct their imagined identities and communities.

For instance, Chinese lesbian and bisexual women had to negotiate their identities in different contexts. In the student clubs where they belong, they feel secure and confident, so they can freely express themselves. Contrastingly, due to increasing segregation and discrimination in the whole university, they were not able to freely express their identities. Similarly, they concealed and repressed their gender identities in their families because of traditional cultural norms and values (Hang & Zhang, 2023).

Another example is when an LGBTQ+ student overheard her classmate saying that they should avoid a certain neighborhood because there were gay people there who were described to be weird and crazy. So, she decided to make gay marriage the topic of one of her presentations to challenge the assumptions of her classmates (Kaiser, 2017). This shows how she asserted her identity by challenging the prejudice. This action of the participant is aligned with the result of another previous study (Rondón Cárdenas, 2012), where LGBTQ+ students shift their positions through different discourse strategies.

After analyzing short-range narratives, Rondón Cárdenas (2012) concluded that LGBTQ+ students shift their positions from powerful to powerless and vice versa in various ways. One strategy is through emancipatory discourse to resist heteronormative discourses in the classroom. However, the consequence of this, at least in the context of Rondón Cárdenas's study, is that the participant had to come out of the closet. Because of the lack of knowledge and personal assumptions, people tend to (un)intentionally position the LGBTQ+ members in heteronormative circumstances. Thus, the people from the rainbow community stand against these biases through emancipatory discourse, which in turn compels them to disclose their gender and sexual identities. The second strategy, on the one hand, is through using a discourse of vulnerability where the LGBTQ+ students had the urge to resist but eventually remained silent and accepted their minority role due to the fear of being victimized and rejected. The last strategy, on the other hand, is through taking up overt homophobic discourse to put LGBTQ+ members as abnormal. With all these, Rondón Cárdenas' (2012) study showed that LGBTQ+ students constantly shifted positions and performed their gender, assuming simultaneously powerful and powerless stances in the EFL classroom. On a side note, it implies that Rondón Cárdenas' respondents faced various challenges like other students in other countries.

These complex power dynamics and positioning strategies directly influence how LGBTQ+ students engage with language learning. As LGBTQ+ students negotiate their identities in various ways, they still must make a choice – to invest or not in language learning. In a study, a seemingly neutral question, “What did you do last weekend?” caused two LGBTQ+ students to be demotivated because they felt unsafe sharing their lives in their language classroom.

This led them to quit their English classes (Moore, 2016). Despite facing challenges such as marginalization and conflict in language classrooms, LGBTQ+ students also actively resist oppression through critical literacy practices and language use that creates safe spaces and promotes agency (Schreuder, 2021). For some queer language learners, their marginalized sexual identities can actually facilitate access to certain language communities, aiding their learning process (King, 2008). Investment in language learning, both individually and within communities, significantly impacts learners' identity development and influences their decisions to continue language studies when faced with challenges. They try to find and go to the communities or environments where they can freely express their identities.

Given these challenges with investment and participation, it is unsurprising that LGBTQ+ learners dream of having learning environments where they feel accepted. For example, they want learning communities that allow them to speak honestly as themselves, although inclusivity is not guaranteed (Moore, 2016). Some even migrate to other countries because these countries are more welcoming and safer than their homes (Campbell et al., 2024). Interestingly, a South Korean transgender student said that she went to the US to be a successful professional, but she believed she could not have stayed in her native country (Nguyen et al., 2015). Many of these pull factors are opposites of the learning environments the LGBTQ+ students experience. As shared in the previous section, many LGBTQ+ individuals experience discrimination and the inability to express themselves, which leads them to aspire to more inclusive, safer, and more welcoming environments.

Lee (2022) emphasizes the role of learners' aspirations of what they want to be and their envisioned or imagined communities in stimulating language learning. The concept of imagined identities plays a critical role in motivation, highlighting the importance of balancing actual and imagined identities in educational contexts. This balance is crucial for maintaining learners' motivation and ensuring sustained investment in language learning. Mushtaque et al. (2022) identify various investment practices among ESL learners, such as reading newspapers, sending text messages, learning vocabulary, and watching movies. The medium of instruction significantly impacts investment levels, indicating that language policies and instructional methods need to be carefully considered to maximize learner investment. Others also use social media as new language platforms to construct their envisioned safe space communities to express their desires and identities (Schreuder, 2021).

In conclusion, the literature demonstrates the multifaceted challenges and strategies LGBTQ+ students employ in language learning contexts, often influenced by their need to negotiate identity, secure investment, and envision inclusive communities. For LGBTQ+ learners, motivation alone is often insufficient for sustained engagement; the concept of investment,

involving their choices and efforts to engage with language despite challenges, plays a pivotal role. This investment is strongly tied to their identity negotiation as they navigate environments that may either support or marginalize them. Studies reveal that LGBTQ+ students must often balance between asserting their identities and facing marginalization or adapting to heteronormative spaces, sometimes through resistance or silence, depending on the context (Hang & Zhang, 2023; Kaiser, 2017; Rondón Cárdenas, 2012). These identity negotiations illustrate the complexities of maintaining motivation and investment in learning. Additionally, LGBTQ+ students seek or imagine communities where they can freely express themselves, which becomes a powerful driver of both language learning motivation and investment. Imagined identities and inclusive environments provide these learners with a vision of a supportive future, often fueling their language-learning journey despite adverse circumstances (Lee, 2022; Schreuder, 2021). However, inclusivity remains a challenge in many educational settings, pushing some learners to seek safer learning spaces abroad or construct supportive communities online (Campbell et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2015). Ultimately, this literature underscores the importance of creating educational policies and practices that foster inclusive and affirming environments, allowing LGBTQ+ students to fully invest in language learning and envision themselves as active, accepted members of their learning communities.

Theoretical framework

This study investigates the motivations and investments of 11 Filipino LGBTQ+ students in English language learning through the lens of two complementary frameworks: the Identity Approach to Second Language Acquisition (Norton & McKinney, 2011) and the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2009). Recent research demonstrates how these frameworks intersect in the unique experiences of LGBTQ+ language learners.

The L2 Motivational Self System illuminates how LGBTQ+ learners' identities shape their language learning aspirations and experiences through three key components – the ideal L2 self, the ought-to self, and the second language (L2) learning experience. The ideal L2 self reflects learners' aspirations tied to language proficiency. Research shows that LGBTQ+ learners often envision English proficiency as a pathway to personal authenticity and professional success (Nguyen & Yang, 2015; Kaiser, 2017). Their ideal L2 selves frequently incorporate desires for self-development, identity expression, and career advancement in more accepting environments (Campbell et al., 2024; Suebkinnon & Sukying, 2021). Meanwhile, the ought-to self captures external pressures and expectations. Studies reveal how LGBTQ+ learners navigate heteronormative expectations in their learning environments (Campbell et al., 2024). Some learners use these expectations as motivation to seek more inclusive

communities (Kaiser, 2017), while others feel compelled to conform to cultural norms to maintain social connections (Peña-Talamantes, 2013). Lastly, the L2 learning experience encompasses immediate learning environment factors. Research highlights how heteronormative classroom contexts (Kaiser, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2015), discrimination (Cornelio & Dagle, 2022), and lack of LGBTQ+ representation in materials (Gray, 2013; Pakuła et al., 2015) significantly impact learners' motivation and engagement.

The Identity Approach to Second Language Acquisition, on the other hand, complements Dörnyei's framework by examining how learners' social identities influence their language learning through investment, identity negotiation, and imagined communities and identities. Investment extends beyond motivation to explain learners' commitment despite challenges. Studies demonstrate how LGBTQ+ learners' investment decisions are deeply tied to identity expression and safety (Moore, 2016). Some learners resist oppression through critical literacy practices (Schreuder, 2021), while others leverage their identities to access certain language communities (King, 2008). Identity negotiation, meanwhile, reveals how learners navigate different contexts. Research shows LGBTQ+ learners constantly shift between expressing and concealing their identities depending on the environment (Hang & Zhang, 2023). They employ various strategies, from emancipatory discourse to silence, in response to heteronormative pressures (Rondón Cárdenas, 2012). Finally, imagined communities and identities represent learners' aspirational spaces and selves. Studies indicate that LGBTQ+ learners often envision communities that offer acceptance, safety, and freedom of expression (Moore, 2016; Campbell et al., 2024). These imagined communities can motivate learning even in challenging circumstances (Lee, 2022).

This integrated theoretical framework guided our research instrument development, ensuring interview questions captured the complex interplay between LGBTQ+ learners' identities, motivations, and investments. The questions systematically probe how participants' sexual and gender identities influence their ideal and ought-to selves, negotiate their identities in various learning contexts, and how their imagined communities shape their language learning investments. This approach allows us to examine not just what motivates LGBTQ+ learners but how their identities and experiences fundamentally shape their language learning trajectories.

Research Questions

The primary objective of this research is to identify the motivations and investments in English language learning of 11 Filipino LGBTQ+ students. Specifically, it would like to answer the following questions:

- What are the participants' ideal L2 selves, ought-to selves, and L2 learning experiences?
- How can identity negotiation, investments, and imagined communities and identities of the participants be described?

By exploring these aspects, this study addresses a critical gap in understanding the experiences of some Filipino LGBTQ+ students in English language learning contexts. While the findings may not represent all Filipino LGBTQ+ learners, the insights gained contribute valuable perspectives to the growing literature on language learning motivation, identity, and investment among marginalized communities. Although previous studies have examined L2 motivation and identity in various contexts, research on LGBTQ+ language learners in the Philippines remains scarce. This study thus aims to address this gap by centering the voices and experiences of Filipino LGBTQ+ students, contributing to both theoretical understanding and practical applications in inclusive language education. Furthermore, on an international scale, this research holds significance as it contributes to the global discourse on inclusive language education and intersectional approaches to second language acquisition. The findings can inform language teaching practices and policies beyond the Philippines, particularly in other multilingual societies where LGBTQ+ students navigate complex linguistic and identity landscapes.

Methods

Research Design

A qualitative case study approach was employed to achieve the objectives. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences and perceptions, providing rich, detailed data that can address the research questions effectively. In addition, a case study as a research design thoroughly examines typical and/or exemplary cases (Tight, 2022) that are contemporary phenomena happening in a real-world context (Yin, 2018). This means that case studies can best understand an issue or a problem by collecting and integrating qualitative data gathered through interviews, analyzing documents, and making observations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the context of this work, the cases of 11 LGBTQ+ members were the subjects of thorough examination through interviews, which were then thematically analyzed.

We chose a qualitative case study approach because it provides rich, contextual data on the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ learners. This method aligns with our research objectives by

allowing for in-depth exploration of individual narratives and the complex interplay between investment, motivation, and language learning.

Sampling and Participants

The study employed a snowball sampling technique to recruit 11 self-identified LGBTQ+ participants aged 18 to 25. Snowball sampling leverages existing social networks to identify potential participants, which was deemed appropriate for this study due to the topic's sensitive nature. Initial participants were selected from the researchers' former students, ensuring familiarity and trust, facilitating confidentiality, and minimizing the risk of gender stereotyping. These initial participants then referred other potential participants from their social circles, resulting in a diverse group representing various backgrounds and experiences. This diversity is crucial for capturing a wide range of experiences and perspectives within the LGBTQ+ community.

After an extensive three-month recruitment period, only 11 individuals willingly volunteered to participate in the study. This limited number reflects both the sensitive nature of the research topic and the personal choice of potential participants to maintain their privacy. The researchers respected these boundaries and proceeded with those who expressed genuine interest and willingness to share their experiences.

The final sample was composed of three bisexuals, three transgender individuals, four gay individuals, and one queer participant. All participants had completed junior high school, were not current students of the researchers, and fell within the age range of 18 to 25 years. Given the sensitive nature of the research, this age range ensured that participants had experiences relevant to the study's focus and simplified logistical considerations.

Finally, we acknowledge the limitations of our small sample size in terms of generalizability, potential bias, and lack of representativeness. However, the depth of qualitative data obtained provides valuable insights into individual experiences. Our sample includes diverse representations within the LGBTQ+ spectrum, allowing for the exploration of both shared and unique experiences. While we recognize that each subgroup may have distinct characteristics, our analysis focuses on identifying common themes across LGBTQ+ experiences in language learning. Future research with larger samples could further examine subgroup-specific patterns.

Informed Consent

Before the interviews, the research ethics committee of a university reviewed the proposal, the informed consent form, and the interview guide. After securing clearance to proceed, the researchers gave participants a copy of the informed consent outlining the research focus, purpose, data use, participation reasons, expected interview duration, and potential risks. Confidentiality was assured; the participants' identities would remain anonymous even if the findings were published. After completion, the ethics committee reviewed the study for compliance and issued a certification confirming adherence to the institution's code of research ethics.

Data Collection

The researchers conducted individual semi-structured interviews, which allowed for more personalized and detailed responses. The first part of the interview, which lasted approximately 30 minutes, involved reviewing the informed consent form and establishing rapport with the participant. The second part, focused on in-depth discussions about the participants' English language learning experiences during high school, lasted approximately 90 minutes. The interview questions were systematically developed to address specific variables identified in our research questions:

For Research Question 1 (What are the ideal L2 selves, ought-to selves, and L2 learning experiences of the participants?):

The ideal L2 self was explored through questions about participants' aspirations as English language users about their LGBTQ+ identity

The ought-to self was examined through a question about perceived expectations from teachers and classmates

The L2 learning experience variable was investigated through questions about supportive and challenging classroom experiences, participation patterns, and representation in learning materials.

For Research Question 2 (How can identity negotiation, investments, and imagined communities and identities of the participants be described?):

Identity negotiation was probed through questions about adopting or asserting different personas in the classroom and managing expectations versus identity expression.

Investment was examined through questions about continued participation despite demotivation and engagement levels in various classroom activities

Imagined communities and identities were explored through questions about desired LGBTQ+ representations in learning materials and aspirations as English users

To better explain the connection between the variables and their theoretical underpinnings, Table 1 presents a detailed mapping:

Table 1: Interview Questions and Their Theoretical Underpinnings

Theoretical Underpinning	Interview Guide
Dörnyei's Ideal L2 Self (What kind of language user one would like to be)	Relative to being an LGBTQ+ member, what kind of English language user would you like to be?
Dörnyei's Ought-to Self (What people believe are their duties, obligations, and responsibilities to meet others' expectations)	What do you think are your teachers' and classmates' expectations of you as an English user?
Dörnyei's Ought-to Self + Norton's concept of (multiple) identity	Are these expectations aligned with your identity as a member of the LGBTQ+ community?
Dörnyei's L2 learning experience (What is the kind of immediate learning environment and experience that influenced one's L2 learning)	Have you had any experience inside the classroom that you were supported/respected as a member of the LGBTQ+ community? - If so, can you tell me how it was? Have you also had any bad experience inside the English classroom that caused you to lose your motivation to learn English because of being an LGBTQ+ member?
Dörnyei's L2 learning experience + Norton's concept of investment	Did you still participate in that class even though you already lost your motivation? If yes, what caused you to still participate? How engaged were you in that activity?
Dörnyei's L2 learning experience + Norton's concept of (multiple) identity	Did you adopt a "straight-like" persona or did you assert your identity as LGBTQ+ member? Can you further tell me how you dealt with it?
Dörnyei's L2 learning experience	If no, can you tell me why you chose not to participate? How did you feel about the situation?
Dörnyei's L2 learning experience	Do you remember any LGBTQ+ representations in the textbooks or any instructional materials that your teachers used when you were studying English in high school? If there are, what are they? Would you still like LGBTQ+ to be included/represented? If yes, what kind of representation would you like LGBTQ+ to be portrayed as? If no, why would you not want LGBTQ+ community to be represented?
Dörnyei's L2 learning experience + Norton's concept of imagined communities	If you do not remember any LGBTQ+ representations, would you like them to be represented in the textbook? If yes, what kind of representation would you like LGBTQ+ to be portrayed as? If no, why would you not want LGBTQ+ community to be represented?

The interview guide included open-ended questions that were directly derived from our theoretical framework, ensuring alignment with both our research objectives and the specific variables we aimed to investigate. The systematic connection between our research questions, theoretical constructs, and interview questions strengthens the methodological rigor of our thematic analysis approach. Furthermore, these questions

Data Analysis

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews with LGBTQ+ participants were meticulously analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, adhering to the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis was structured to address the specific variables outlined in the research questions: ideal L2 selves, ought-to selves, L2 learning experiences, identity negotiation, investments, and imagined communities and identities. The specific steps undertaken were:

- Step 1: Familiarization. The researchers transcribed the interviews verbatim and conducted a thorough reading to engage with the participants' experiences deeply.
- Step 2: Initial Coding. The data were systematically segmented and coded according to theoretical frameworks: Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (addressing ideal L2 selves, ought-to selves, and L2 learning experiences) and Norton's concepts (addressing identity negotiation, investments, and imagined communities).
- Step 3: Theme Searching. Researchers identified patterns within the codes, constantly refining and grouping them into potential themes. For instance, responses about LGBTQ+ identity in English learning contexts were analyzed for themes related to ideal L2 selves, while questions about classroom participation and engagement focused on investment and identity negotiation.
- Step 4: Theme Review. Tentative themes were assessed to ensure coherence, consistency, and distinctiveness. Each theme was aligned with core data segments to represent participant insights accurately.
- Step 5: Defining Themes. The researchers clarified how each theme related to the specific variables, ensuring each connection was well-defined within the theoretical frameworks.
- Step 6: Writing the Analysis. Refined themes informed the report's structure, supported by vivid data extracts illustrating the connections between themes and the research variables. For instance, participants' reflections on LGBTQ+ representation in learning materials were analyzed for insights into L2 learning experiences and imagined communities. This analysis offers a nuanced portrayal of LGBTQ+ students' motivational trajectories and strategic investments in English learning, addressing all key research variables.

To validate the interpretations, the researchers shared the analysis with the participants through email, allowing them to affirm or contest the themes derived from their narratives. This triangulation step enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings, particularly in ensuring that the themes accurately represented the participants' experiences across all variables.

Results

Our analysis revealed several key themes directly addressing our research objectives regarding LGBTQ+ students' motivation and investment in English language learning. These themes include (1) proficient and sensitive users of English, (2) neutral to high-performing expectations, (3) supportive and hetero-cis-normative learning experiences, (4) conforming to expectations and asserting authenticity, (5) sustained investment despite adversities, and (6) inclusive L2 communities and empowered individuals. Each theme is explored below, explicitly connecting to our research questions and existing literature. Our findings both confirm and extend previous research, offering new insights into the unique experiences of some LGBTQ+ learners in the Philippine context.

LGBTQ+ students' motivation in learning English

Ideal L2 selves: Proficient and sensitive English users

The concept of the Ideal L2 Self is vividly illustrated by LGBTQ+ participants' aspirations to achieve both English language proficiency and sensitive communication skills.

The experience of Participant B, a bisexual participant in this study, exemplifies the impact of social interactions on language learning motivation. Driven by encounters with verbal bullying and microaggressions related to his sexual orientation, he aspired to become a sensitive English user. His experience of a prejudiced comment after portraying a female character in a performance motivated him to use gender-sensitive language. His anecdote highlights how discriminatory incidents can have a profound impact on LGBTQ+ students' motivations to learn English, shaping their desire for language skills that promote inclusivity and understanding.

Beyond sensitivity, some participants desired general English proficiency to connect with diverse people and counteract prejudice and stereotyping. This goal aligns with the Identity Approach by showcasing how language proficiency can empower LGBTQ+ students to negotiate their identities within a broader social context. As Participant F articulated,

achieving proficiency in the English language is seen as a way to 'connect to different people,' highlighting the potential of language skills to facilitate broader social engagement. To quote, *I would want to become a proficient English language user because I feel like if I am proficient enough in speaking English language, I could connect to different people.*

Proficiency becomes a bridge for LGBTQ+ individuals to overcome negative perceptions and build connections by utilizing English as a tool for communication and understanding. However, other participants revealed motivations linked to societal perceptions of English language prestige. 'Bakla' is a term in Filipino generally referring to gay men, which Participant I feels is perceived more negatively in the local context compared to using its English translation or counterpart.

It seems like we have the belief that if you are bakla [gay] ... it seems negative in Filipino, and we should eliminate that. But I'm more comfortable when I use English. It seems like it is higher. Like, 'I'm gay, and I'm intellectual because I can speak English.'

The association of English proficiency with intelligence and superiority motivated some LGBTQ+ students to study harder, potentially finding a sense of pride and accomplishment in mastering English to compensate for negative stereotypes encountered in Filipino. While this belief underscores the perceived prestige of English, it also highlights an underlying challenge to LGBTQ+ identity in the local culture, suggesting a complex interplay between language proficiency and societal acceptance.

In conclusion, this analysis demonstrates the multifaceted nature of LGBTQ+ students' aspirations. These motivations encompass a desire for sensitive language use, the need to connect with diverse people, and the allure of social prestige associated with English proficiency. Through the lens of the Ideal L2 Self, these findings reveal a complex tapestry of motivations that drive LGBTQ+ students towards English language acquisition, with implications for educators to create more inclusive and identity-affirming learning environments.

Ought-to selves: Neutral to high-performing

The interview data revealed a spectrum of expectations surrounding LGBTQ+ students' English language use, impacting their Ought-to Selves. Some participants, like Participants C and A, reported experiencing neutral treatment from teachers, fostering non-discriminatory classroom environments. However, they still perceived high academic and English proficiency expectations from their classmates. This experience suggests that peer expectations can significantly influence how LGBTQ+ students perceive their Ought-to Selves, shaping their motivations and goals for English language learning.

In contrast, other participants described external pressures stemming from broader societal stereotypes. Participant D's narrative exemplifies this, highlighting the pressure to uphold perceived notions that LGBTQ+ individuals inherently possess exceptional intellect and creativity:

They (referring to society at large) think that LGBTQ+ members are naturally intelligent and creative. This thought also impacted the pressure I felt in using the English language.

This pressure to live up to such stereotypes can create a significant burden on LGBTQ+ students' Ought-to Selves.

Similar societal expectations emerged concerning leadership roles. Participant F's statement describes the assumption from both teachers and classmates that queer students should actively participate, display strong communication skills, and lead group tasks:

Even outside the school environment, this has been the general expectation... so my classmates, my teachers, [they often] appoint me as leader of the group as they are expecting that if you are part of the LGBT, you need to perform well; you need to be good.

While these expectations might align with some students' internal motivations for leadership, they can also create significant distress for others who might not possess or desire such roles.

In conclusion, navigating the classroom environment presented a complex landscape of expectations for the LGBTQ+ participants. While some experienced neutral or even supportive environments, others faced significant pressures shaped by peer expectations and broader societal stereotypes. These external factors significantly impacted their perceptions of their Ought-to Selves, highlighting the multifaceted nature of their experiences within the English language learning context.

L2 learning experiences: Supportive and hetero-cis-normative

The LGBTQ+ participants recounted diverse L2 learning experiences, ranging from supportive and affirming environments to those marked by challenges and microaggressions. One key aspect influencing these experiences was the role of language in negotiating support within the classroom.

Participant B's experience of being called "Barbie" by a close classmate exemplifies this point. He highlighted that the classmate's seeking consent before using the term transformed a potentially offensive term into a playful one within their specific friendship dynamic. This anecdote illustrates how LGBTQ+ students navigate language use based on interlocutor familiarity and relational context to create more inclusive learning spaces.

Supportive learning environments were crucial for participants like G, A, and D, who thrived academically and emotionally due to positive interactions with classmates, teachers, and

friends. This significance of allyship and representation underscores the importance of diverse role models in fostering positive L2 learning experiences, especially for Participant G, who felt safe expressing his sexuality because of a teacher with a shared LGBTQ+ identity.

Despite these pockets of support, many LGBTQ+ students still faced significant adversity as they were subjected to hetero-cis-normative environments. Instances of smart shaming, stereotyping, and limitations on portraying diverse characters highlighted the difficulties in creating genuinely inclusive educational spaces.

Smart shaming, a form of anti-intellectualism, emerged as a common obstacle. Participant H described being mocked by classmates despite academic excellence:

They smart shamed me... I was the Top 1... I actively participated in the discussion. Every time I answered, I saw a group of straight guys [copying] me. I know [that] their way of looking at me, they were mocking me.

This derogatory behavior even targets students when they achieve high standards, undermining their 'Ought-to Self'—the expectation for LGBTQ+ students to excel academically. In tandem with smart shaming, bullying was identified in various forms. Several participants recalled verbal abuse where terms such as “*bakla*”, “*bading*”, and “*binabae*” (*Bakla*, *bading*, and *binabae* are all Tagalog words synonymous with gay) were used pejoratively, subverting words that should neutrally denote gender identity or sexual orientation. Additionally, physical aggression was reported. For instance, Participant J shared a traumatic experience during a flag ceremony where classmates repeatedly punched them.

It was a flag ceremony. I was the smallest in class, so I was the first in the line. Some of the male classmates plotted to punch in my nape. They took turns in punching me... Because I was weak, they tried to belittle me.

Meanwhile, Participant F offered a poignant insight into the emotional environment within the classroom:

For me, I haven't experienced [being] supported or respected inside the classroom, but I would say tolerated... Teachers have already a standard that if you're a queer kid, you must be [good]. For me, it feels like it is a normal thing that you have to be okay; you have to be good. So, I don't really feel supported or respected, only tolerated.

This perspective highlights the difference between tolerance and genuine acceptance from the viewpoint of an LGBTQ+ participant. Participant F's statement suggests a double standard, where LGBTQ+ students feel pressured to excel in English proficiency and communication skills to gain a semblance of acceptance within the classroom. This experience connects to the

concept of the Ought-to Self, where external pressures shape students' perceptions of their desired L2 selves.

These testimonies illustrate not only the overt aggression faced by LGBTQ+ students but also the subtle psychological pressures that affect their learning experience. They emphasize the need for significant shifts in attitude and policy to transform classrooms into spaces where every student's identity is affirmed and educationally supported.

In summary, the L2 learning experiences of LGBTQ+ participants were multifaceted. While some thrived in supportive environments, finding encouragement that fueled their language proficiency and engagement, others faced challenges related to microaggressions, tolerance versus genuine acceptance, and the pressure to conform to hetero-cis-normative expectations. These negative experiences can adversely affect their motivation and participation, which are crucial for successful language acquisition. It underscores the importance of fostering inclusive classrooms that celebrate diversity and create a safe space for all students to learn, express themselves authentically, and fully realize their language learning potential.

LGBTQ+ students' investment in learning English

Identity negotiation: Conforming to expectations and asserting authenticity

Norton's concept of identity as positioned, multiple, and dynamic serves as a valuable lens through which to examine the experiences of LGBTQ+ participants in this study. Their narratives reveal a complex negotiation between conforming to dominant expectations and asserting authentic selfhood within the classroom environment.

Some participants described a sense of dissonance when attempting to adopt "straight" personas to navigate social spaces. Participant D's statement, *"It felt like it was not me; I felt caged whenever I tried to do so,"* exemplifies the inauthenticity and discomfort associated with such strategies. Similarly, Participant E highlights the internal conflict: *"I am very true to myself; I've never pretended to be someone that I'm not... because I feel like it affects my inner self, and it feels wrong."* These experiences underscore the psychological strain associated with suppressing one's authentic identity.

In contrast, other participants, like Participants F, J, and I, emphasized the importance of asserting their identities within the classroom, regardless of external pressures. Participant J's statement exemplifies this perspective: *"I do not have to change myself for others. I have accepted my identity."* By openly expressing their LGBTQ+ identities, these participants challenge heteronormative expectations and contribute to a more inclusive classroom environment.

These contrasting narratives highlight the multifaceted nature of identity exploration for LGBTQ+ students. While some navigate the pressures to conform and potentially experience psychological distress, others prioritize self-acceptance and actively resist assimilation. Understanding these complexities is crucial for fostering inclusive L2 learning environments that celebrate diversity and empower LGBTQ+ students to express their authentic selves.

Investment: Sustained despite adversities

Asserting LGBTQ+ identities within the classroom environment was not without consequences, particularly impacting participants' language learning experiences. The acceptance or rejection that they encountered influenced demonstrably their investment in English learning.

Despite facing negative experiences such as bullying, many participants invested substantially in their learning. Some, like Participant C, described coping through increased studying: *"Through reading, I was able to divert myself to another dimension."* Similarly, Participant J highlighted using effort as a strategy:

I did not pay attention to them [bullies]. I told myself that I would strive harder in my studies so that I would not be bullied again. That's why I became more active and participative. If they see me like that, they will change their perception of me.

These narratives indicate that participants employed various coping mechanisms, including focusing on academic pursuits, to navigate challenges and maintain investment in their learning. Norton's identity approach helps to understand this phenomenon. When LGBTQ+ students experience acceptance within the classroom, it can foster a sense of belonging and motivate them to invest more in their L2 learning. Conversely, negative experiences create a sense of alienation, potentially leading to decreased motivation. However, the participants' narratives in this study also reveal resilience. Despite facing challenges, their commitment to learning persisted, showcasing their determination to excel academically.

Imagined communities and identities: Inclusive and empowered

Participants' narratives powerfully illustrate how the interconnected concepts of imagined communities and imagined identities serve as forms of resistance and empowerment. Constrained by societal expectations, LGBTQ+ students envisioned not only inclusive learning environments (imagined communities) but also empowered and successful selves (imagined identities) within those communities. These combined visions served as sources of motivation and inspiration, especially for those marginalized within mainstream society.

The desire for imagined communities of acceptance emerged as a critical theme. Participants yearned for classrooms that embrace diversity, celebrate LGBTQ+ experiences, and openly discuss LGBTQ+ issues. This longing for acceptance transcended the immediate classroom and reflected a desire for broader societal change. For instance, participants expressed a need for educational materials that represent LGBTQ+ stories and diverse family structures, highlighting their potential to foster a sense of belonging and to challenge heteronormative narratives.

Moreover, envisioned identities reflected aspirations to be inspirational leaders, empowered individuals, and socially conscious citizens, countering negative stereotypes and showcasing the potential of LGBTQ+ individuals. *"We can serve our country... We can be successful... Up to this very day, there is discrimination. However, LGBTQ+ members have a lot to offer society,"* one participant asserted, conveying the desire to dismantle discriminatory assumptions and affirm the positive contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Participants' imagined identities were also tied to positive role models, emphasizing success, empowerment, and societal contributions. These narratives stemmed from a profound desire to challenge societal perceptions and enact positive change. Participant C shared, *I want someone who will inspire and motivate all students to succeed despite their gender identity. There are many successful LGBTQ+ members.*

Likewise, Participant J stated, *I want LGBTQ+ members to be positive role models and successful in life. When I hear positive representations, I'm happy because they can change how people view us. I hope we will inspire others someday.*

Through envisioning inclusive learning spaces (imagined communities) and empowered, successful selves (imagined identities), LGBTQ+ students find the motivation to face challenges within L2 learning environments. The concept of imagined communities and identities emphasizes the critical need for educational spaces that celebrate diversity and empower LGBTQ+ students to express their authentic selves while dismantling discriminatory stereotypes. In conclusion, creating learning environments that reflect these imagined communities can empower LGBTQ+ students to thrive academically and contribute meaningfully to society. These environments enable LGBTQ+ individuals to visualize a future where their contributions are valued, their identities are affirmed, and their aspirations are attainable — transforming the education landscape into a catalyst for wider societal acceptance and inclusion.

Discussion

We acknowledge that the case study design helped us identify the motivation and investment of the 11 LGBTQ+ students; however, we have to note that their experiences may not be the same as others. Nevertheless, these findings enhance the understanding of LGBTQ+ students' experiences in L2 learning environments, corroborating and expanding upon previous research.

A primary point of agreement concerns the “ideal L2 selves” or the aspirations of LGBTQ+ participants to become proficient and sensitive English language users. This goal resonates with Kaiser's (2017) study, in which LGBTQ+ individuals sought to contribute to inclusive social policies and nurture communities that encourage gender expression. They would also like to improve themselves for personal and professional reasons similar to the motives of other LGBTQ+ students (Campbell et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2015; Suebkinnon & Sukying, 2021). What is striking about this study's participants is their deep desire to be sensitive or inclusive. Due to the pressure of their ought-to selves (expectations of others) and their L2 learning experiences, they then strive to combat the negative ideologies shaping their ideal L2 selves. In addition, the cases of the 11 participants expand the discourse about ideal L2 selves as they notably want to learn English to connect to different peoples and prove that they are better due to the language prestige accorded to English. They believe that if they can use English fluently, they can be accepted in the society.

In connection to this, the "ought-to selves" of participants find parallels in Teodoro's (2021) description of LGBTQ+ students in the Philippines as commendable and skilled. People expect them to be high-performing or achieving; if they are not, they risk not being accepted. This shapes their ideal L2 selves, where they aspire to be proficient, which will help them feel a sense of belonging. This echoes the experiences of some Thai queer learners who view learning English as a means to gain social acceptance (Suebkinnon & Sukying, 2021). Furthermore, this research deepens the narrative by showing that while some participants felt compelled to embody the "good student" archetype, others mirror the experiences of LGBTQ+ students in California who did not perceive exceptional expectations (Hanson et al., 2019). However, as demonstrated in another study (Campbell et al., 2024), This neutral expectation may lead to double marginalization. Thus, there is indeed a need to reflect on classroom practices to account for the diversity of these insights, which emphasizes the complexity of expectations within different educational settings.

Concerning L2 learning experiences, this study corroborates the diverse experiences of LGBTQ+ students. Echoing Teodoro (2021) and Tarrayo et al. (2021), some participants

reported feeling accepted by teachers in supportive classrooms. Nevertheless, many also faced difficulties such as hetero-cis-normative environments, unsupportive family relationships, smart shaming, and bullying. These adverse experiences are consistent with Evripidou's (2018) observations of LGBTQ+ disengagement due to heteronormative pressures. This study's findings further elucidate the prevalence of heteronormativity, a theme recurrent in numerous studies (Dalley & Campbell, 2006; Gray, 2013; Paiz, 2015; Sunderland & McGlashan, 2015; Salami & Ghajarieh, 2016; Ruiz-Cecilia et al., 2021). Moreover, the challenge of smart shaming appears as a significant impediment for participants striving to succeed academically.

The influence of personal characteristics, school community, broader social milieu, and macro-context factors on motivation, as discussed by Assalahi (2019), is evident among the participants. Their motivation to learn English was intertwined with their aspirations for future success, societal acceptance, and potential migration to more inclusive environments. A particularly nuanced understanding emerged around the concept of acceptance. An LGBTQ+ participant distinguished acceptance from tolerance, offering a nuanced interpretation of acceptance from the LGBTQ+ perspective—a distinction that merits further exploration. This echoes the insights from Lee (2022) on the importance of acceptance over mere tolerance in fostering a supportive environment for LGBTQ+ individuals.

From this idea of establishing a supportive environment, the 11 LGBTQ+ participants in this study have imagined communities characterized by inclusivity and empowerment. As discussed in this paper, these participants have many negative experiences that shaped or influenced their desire to create imagined communities where they can feel safe and freely express themselves. They want to be empowered and represented in these communities since they feel disempowered and mis/underrepresented in their immediate milieu. These findings, therefore, draw parallels to the experiences of other LGBTQ+ students from different countries. (Campbell et al., 2024; Lee, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2015; Schreuder, 2021).

In the nexus of their ideal L2 selves, ought-to selves, L2 learning experiences, and imagined communities and identities, the 11 LGBTQ+ participants negotiated their identities to convey their gender identity in the classroom. With their ought-to selves, they conformed to the expectations in exchange for acceptance but highlighted that they bargained through asserting identity as they also prioritized self-acceptance. The strategies employed by these LGBTQ+ participants in language classrooms offer valuable additions to the existing body of knowledge. Echoing Dalley and Campbell (2006) and Rondón Cárdenas (2012), some participants adopted "straight-like" personas, perhaps as a protective response to fears of outing, isolation, bullying, or stigma. In contrast, others resisted harmful ideologies and

affirmed their gender and sexual identities, drawing parallels with Kaiser (2017) and Hang and Zhang (2023). These contrasting approaches illustrate the intricate identity negotiation within L2 learning environments.

Finally, despite the pressuring ought-to selves, negative L2 learning experiences, and adoption of straight-like personas (identity negotiation where they have to disconnect from their authentic selves), the LGBTQ+ participants invested in their language learning, albeit to varying degrees. They pursued and showed resilience because they wanted to be proficient (ideal L2 and ought-to selves) and sensitive (ideal L2 selves). This again mirrors similar experiences. (Hang & Zhang, 2023; Kaiser, 2017; Rondón Cárdenas, 2012) implying that the cases of 11 Filipino LGBTQ+ students can contribute to the ongoing and expanding discourse on motivation and investment.

Implications

The results of this study on the motivation and investment of 11 Filipino LGBTQ+ learners in learning English reveal significant implications for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. Understanding these learners' unique motivations and investments is essential for fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment.

First, the participants' ideal L2 selves include being proficient and sensitive. They view L2 as a pathway to building supportive communities, personal and professional development, gaining social acceptance, and connecting with diverse groups of people. Thus, language learning programs should incorporate inclusive practices and materials that validate these aspirations while providing opportunities for students to develop linguistic and cultural competence.

Second, the ought-to selves face high-performance expectations in exchange for acceptance. Some also experience neutral expectations. With this, educators must be mindful of the pressure these expectations create and work to establish balanced, supportive environments that do not tie acceptance to academic performance.

Third, the L2 learning experiences vary significantly, but all participants shared negative experiences inside the classroom. Therefore, comprehensive teacher training on creating inclusive environments and addressing various forms of discrimination is needed, as is developing support systems that extend beyond the classroom.

Fourth, the participants have imagined communities described by their safety, proper representation, and inclusivity. Hence, educational institutions should work towards creating these envisioned spaces by implementing inclusive policies, promoting representation, and fostering safe environments for all students.

Fifth, the LGBTQ+ participants employ various strategies for their identity negotiation. Some adopt straight-like personas for protection, while others resist through gender identity assertion. In this light, language learning environments must be structured for authentic self-expression while ensuring student safety and comfort.

Sixth, despite challenges, the participants still invested in their language learning. They showed resilience in order to achieve their aspirations/motivations. Educational programs should acknowledge and support this resilience while working to remove barriers that might hinder full investment in language learning.

Finally, the implications of this study extend beyond the Philippines, highlighting the potential for international scalability. The experiences and insights gained from Filipino LGBTQ+ learners draw parallels with the experiences of other LGBTQ+ participants from different countries. Therefore, this paper can help inform global educational practices. By understanding and addressing the unique needs of LGBTQ+ students in different cultural contexts, educators worldwide can develop more inclusive and supportive learning environments. This study underscores the universal importance of inclusivity and equity in education, providing a valuable framework that can be adapted to various educational settings internationally.

Recommendations

Based on this study's findings and implications, several key recommendations are proposed to address the unique needs and experiences of LGBTQ+ learners in English language education and the limitations experienced in conducting this research.

Firstly, future studies should include larger and more diverse samples of LGBTQ+ students to represent the community's spectrum better. Given that there were only 11 participants, this study cannot fully account for the experiences of Filipino LGBTQ+ learners. Additionally, other researchers may consider longitudinal studies to track how LGBTQ+ students' L2 motivations and investments evolve.

Secondly, teacher training programs should include comprehensive modules on LGBTQ+ sensitivities and inclusive classroom strategies. These programs should encourage fostering inclusive dialogue and the establishment of respect guidelines to create supportive learning environments. Teachers equipped with this training will be better prepared to support LGBTQ+ students and create a more inclusive classroom atmosphere.

Thirdly, LGBTQ+ learners shared their negative stories about their L2 learning experiences. Hence, schools should implement clear anti-discrimination policies and provide targeted support groups and resources for LGBTQ+ students. Engaging the broader community is crucial to promoting a culture of acceptance and inclusivity. These policies and support systems can help mitigate the negative impact of heteronormative pressures on LGBTQ+ learners.

Additionally, classroom environments should be revisited. Considering their identity negotiation, classrooms should allow flexible identity expression, implement gender-neutral language practices, and create opportunities for authentic self-expression. Thus, there should be activities that celebrate diversity. As for the ought-to selves, classrooms should avoid linking acceptance to academic performance, celebrate various forms of achievement, and create collaborative rather than competitive environments.

Lastly, further research is needed, particularly longitudinal studies involving more extensive and diverse populations, to track changes over time and deepen the understanding of the elements required to create universally supportive educational environments for LGBTQ+ students. Such research will provide valuable insights into the long-term effectiveness of inclusive educational practices and policies.

Conclusion

This study identified the complexities of 11 Filipino LGBTQ+ students' motivation and investment in English language learning. Addressing our first research question about ideal L2 selves, ought-to selves, and L2 learning experiences, the findings revealed that LGBTQ+ students aspire to become not only proficient but also sensitive users of English. Their ideal L2 selves are shaped by a desire to contribute to inclusive communities and gain social acceptance through language proficiency. The ought-to selves of these students reflect a spectrum of expectations, ranging from neutral to exceptionally high academic performance, which can motivate and pressure learners. Their L2 learning experiences encompass supportive environments and challenging hetero-cis-normative contexts, highlighting the complex dynamics they navigate in their language learning journey.

In response to our second research question regarding identity negotiation, investments, and imagined communities, the study uncovered that LGBTQ+ students employ various strategies in negotiating their identities, primarily through conforming to expectations while simultaneously asserting their authentic selves. Despite facing adversities, these students demonstrated a sustained investment in their language learning, driven by personal aspirations (ideal L2 selves) and social pressures (ought-to selves). Their imagined communities reflect a vision of inclusive L2 spaces where they can emerge as empowered individuals, free from discrimination and marginalization.

These findings have significant implications for L2 education in the Philippines. The participant's preference for self-affirmation over identity concealment speaks to their resilience in addressing power disparities within the educational system. However, the ongoing challenges affecting their self-confidence and motivation underscore the urgent need for more inclusive learning environments. The varied experiences reported by participants - from supportive classrooms to heteronormative pressures - emphasize the critical role of educators and institutions in creating spaces that acknowledge and support LGBTQ+ learners' diverse needs and experiences.

This research calls for a fundamental shift in how educational institutions approach LGBTQ+ inclusion in L2 learning contexts. Stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and community leaders, must work collaboratively to implement policies and practices that celebrate diverse identities and experiences. By fostering environments where LGBTQ+ students can authentically express themselves while pursuing their language learning goals, we can move closer to the inclusive and empowering communities these students envision. Future research should expand upon these findings by examining larger and more diverse samples of LGBTQ+ students, potentially exploring how these experiences vary across different Philippine contexts and how supportive practices can be effectively implemented in L2 classrooms.

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