

Relationships between young/older Japanese women and Filipino/Western English teachers: Age, gender, ethnicity, and English-speaker status

Abstract

Pre-pandemic studies indicate that East Asian students' migration to ASEAN Outer Circle nations to study English by no means marks their departure from an idealized Anglophone English world. Via research conducted during the pandemic when online learning had become mainstream, this study further explores the significance of such students' English study with Outer Circle teachers. A questionnaire survey was administered to 200 Japanese female English learners aged 20-59 who have taken English lessons provided by both Western and Filipino teachers. The textual data analyses reveal that the respondents' essentialized appreciation of Filipino teachers' "Asianness" and their ESL background is caused by their identity as Asian English learners struggling to acquire "correct" English. Meanwhile, quantitative analyses identify the presence of many Japanese women who study English as a hobby irrespective of their age and teachers' ethnicity. This finding provides an additional insight about Japanese female English learners who are well-discussed in light of marginalized young Japanese women's longing for Western men from/in the idealized West. Moreover, based on the statistical analysis of age differences in reasons for taking private English lessons and concern about teachers' accent, this study discusses a possible impact of teacher – student age/gender matching on young or mature Japanese female English learners' perceptions about lessons provided by predominantly young Filipino women or Western men. It concludes with suggestions for future research that examines the significance of learning English from Filipino and other Outer Circle English teachers amid the pervasive native English norms tied to Inner Circle English teachers.

Keywords: Filipino female English teachers, Western male English teachers, Japanese female English learners, student-teacher differences in gender, age and race, English study as a hobby

Introduction

English learners in East Asia are exposed to native-speakerism that idealizes Anglophone English teachers as those who "represent 'a Western culture'" (Holliday, 2006: 385). Capitalizing on such ideology, a Taiwanese private English school produces a group photograph of seven Western English teachers who "are wearing conservative business attire" "in a 'v' configuration with the point of 'v' held by a white male" who

“is closer to the camera” and “wears a smile with his overall body language conveying an appearance of confidence” (Brown, 2018: 12). Japan’s four major private English schools also sell photos of “good-looking (as marked by their suits and ‘clean’ smiles) white men, presumably native speakers of English” (Piller and Takahashi, 2006: 65).

Before the outbreak of the coronavirus disease pandemic, this idealization of Westerners in suits and smiles in East Asia’s English teaching market seemingly coexisted with the increased popularity of Japanese and South Korean students’ one-on-one English lessons with Filipino teachers in the Philippines without identifying them as the target model (Haisa, 2016; Haisa and Watanabe, 2013; Jang, 2018; Kobayashi, 2018b; Kobayashi, 2020; Lee, 2021). These students’ pedagogical differentiation between English spoken by Filipino Outer Circle teachers and Anglophone Inner Circle teachers’ English (Kachru, 1992) may be sustained even during the pandemic when online English lessons have become mainstream. For instance, a Chinese newspaper article reports that surging interest among Chinese students in online English lessons taught by Filipinos during the pandemic is “no threat to popularity of native speakers of English” (Xi, June 8, 2020). It is, therefore, necessary to examine whether or not East Asian students, situated in at-home contexts during the prolonged pandemic, continue to adhere to native English norms even when taking Filipino-taught online lessons by differentiating them from online or in-person lessons taught by Inner Circle English teachers. This study aims to highlight the significance of addressing the change of learning *contexts* from study-abroad ones to at-home ones, not that of learning *formats* from offline to online.

Research background

The increasing popularity of online lessons taught by Filipino teachers is commonly ascribed to the extremely low-priced lessons. As Japan’s oldest and largest online English lesson provider, RareJob started its service in November 2007 by exclusively employing Filipino English teachers (<https://www.rarejob.co.jp/company/history>). RareJob’s most popular plan is a daily 25-min lesson plan, which costs 6,380 yen per month, with one lesson costing 206 yen (Data was accessed on 14 August 2022). By contrast, ECC, Japan’s premier eikaiwa [English conversation] school, provides eight eikaiwa lessons taught by “natives” per month at the rate of 31,680 yen or 3,960 yen for one 25-min lesson. This rate is 19 times higher than that for RareJob’s lessons (Data was accessed on 14 August 2022). A study conducted with 11 online Filipino teachers (Panaligan and Curran, 2022: 256) revealed that they “were acutely aware of Filipinos’ precarious position within the global hierarchy of online English teaching” where they are paid less because of their “not ‘native’” English speaker status, the Philippines’ low cost of living, and their non-whiteness. One teacher believes that within the hierarchical industry “we belong to the very bottom – bottom dwellers, to be frank” whereas “the top tier belongs to the native speaker” who is “white.”

The growing need for these remarkably low-cost lessons in Japan is often understood to arise from economically disadvantaged English learners. A study conducted with three Filipino teachers (Martinez, 2022) claims that their lessons “accommodate students who cannot afford more expensive lessons” by referring to one of the teachers who understands that their affordable lessons are the product of Japan’s recession: “The economy in Japan isn’t in a good shape unlike before. Offering more affordable options can make the business stay afloat or be more profitable, sadly at the expense of Filipino teachers” (p. 42). While Japan’s economic decline and shrinking middle class are the obvious, it is highly unlikely that Japanese students and (un)employed adults in financial difficulties consider investing in conversation-focused eikaiwa lessons for their educational or career advancement, rather than in educational support programs designed for them (e.g., free study sessions available in their local communities) or in vocational training programs for reemployment provided by local municipalities. After all, “In most markets, the consumers of English language education are the relatively well-off, already far beyond the stage of mere survival” (Bruthiaux, 2002: 290).

Nonetheless, there might be a certain number of Japanese students and adults who wish to improve their English by taking eikaiwa lessons and yet can only afford low-priced lessons taught by Filipinos. To exclude these potentially existing English learners from data, the current study conducts a study with English learners who have taken eikaiwa lessons both from Filipino and Inner Circle Western teachers and then explores non-financial reasons for such dual English study. The study should be able to contribute to a better understanding of Japanese eikaiwa learners whom the extant literature examined and argued as those who take lessons either from Filipino or Western teachers primarily for sexually oriented reasons, as reviewed below.

So far, two studies suggest that Japanese men take online eikaiwa lessons to converse with young “cute” Filipino women. Tajima’s study (2018) of the blog entries of four Japanese males and one’s interview data about their experiences of online English lessons provided by Filipino identifies “a recurring theme” of “young Filipina teachers as ‘a feast for the eyes’” (p. 106). These adult male learners in their 30s, 40s, and unknown, choose “young Filipina” in reference to their introduction page photos. Based on an analysis of the Japanese websites of four online eikaiwa schools that employ multinational English teachers, Morikawa and Parba (2022) agree with Tajima (2018) by arguing that: “This propensity for fetishising women among male JLEs [Japanese learners of English] is often expressed on websites that rank female online eikaiwa teachers mostly based on their looks” (pp. 11-12). Worthy of note is that the majority of Filipinos teaching online English lessons to East Asian students are young women (Panaligan and Curran, 2022). An interview survey conducted with Filipino English teachers working either in-person or online in the Philippines (Lee, 2021: 99) indicates the possibility of gender bias in hiring. One male teacher affirmed that some language schools hire local women only, a tendency observed more among online-based

language schools than conventional ones catering to international students studying in the Philippines.

Meanwhile, gender inequality persists in the Japanese workplace, which is being exasperated during the pandemic (Osumi, May 7, 2022; Yamaguchi, 2019). Oft-cited studies suggest that marginalized in the male-dominant Japanese society, young women study English by developing a sense of longing or *akogare* for the idealized West where they imagine being treated fairly by local Western men (Bailey, 2007; Kelsky, 2001; Piller and Takahashi, 2006). Furthermore, learning English is endorsed as a way for Japanese women to turn their marginalized and monotonous life into something fun and intellectual. Mizuta's study of eikaiwa schools' advertising (2009) shows that one school represents "a manga-type illustration" of an office lady who aims to "cultivate" herself through "[F]luent *eikaiwa* (acquired at an *eikaiwa* school) and flawless body (acquired at a beauty-treatment clinic)" (p. 48) [Italics and parenthesis in original]. A more recent textual analysis of more than 80 magazine articles intended for female readers also reveals that keywords such as *jibun migaki* [self-refinement] and *joshi ryoku* [women's power] are used to inspire women to take up foreign language study to make them more attractive (Kobayashi, 2015; Kobayashi, 2018a).

Previous studies are premised on Japanese women's association of English study with the idealized West and their willingness to take eikaiwa lessons from Western English teachers. These studies raise a question about Japanese women's reasons for taking eikaiwa lessons taught by predominantly female Filipino teachers. Do they take Filipino-taught lessons as a hobby and for self-refinement as for conventional eikaiwa students who take lessons from Inner Circle Western teachers? Or do they identify any particular non-financial advantage of taking Filipino-taught eikaiwa lessons? Are there any motivational differences between young women and middle-aged women? To examine these unexplored questions, this study conducts a questionnaire survey with Japanese women aged 20-59 who have taken eikaiwa lessons both from Filipino and Inner Circle English teachers.

The Study

Research questions

The review of the existing literature generates the following two research questions: (1) What are Japanese women's reasons for taking English lessons from Filipino teachers as well as Western ones, and are there any generational differences in the reasons? (2) Other than cost performance and convenience, what are Japanese women's perceptions of the advantages of taking lessons from Filipino English teachers, and are there any generational differences in the reasons?

Participants

Numerical and written survey data were collected from 200 Japanese female English learners aged 20-59 who have taken online or in-person English lessons taught by both

Filipino and Western teachers. The participants living across Japan were accessed through the database of a major research company in Japan. Having voluntarily registered, they were free to withdraw from the survey at any time, without reason. This primary data collection was preceded by a preliminary survey with the database to estimate the probability of the target English learners from each age group who have experienced these two types of private English lessons. The survey confirmed the availability of the target group and the feasibility of conducting the main survey with 200 respondents. Valid responses were collected from 200 participants composed of 50 female English learners per age group from their 20s to their 50s. The primary data collection was conducted at the beginning of February 2022, followed by the main survey administered in late February 2022.

Table 1. Respondents' occupational status

Occupational status	20s	30s	40s	50s
Full-time employment	36	39	33	26
Part-time employment	1	6	6	10
Full-time housekeeping	1	4	11	13
Students	11	0	0	0
Unemployed/job seeking	1	1	0	1

Data analysis

A convergent parallel mixed-methods study design (Creswell and Clark, 2018) was employed to collect the participants' responses to closed- and open-ended questions that are designed to examine Japanese English learners' reasons for studying English and taking private eikaiwa lessons taught by Filipino and Western teachers. Quantitative data generated from closed-ended questions were statistically analyzed to examine generational differences in motivations for taking eikaiwa lessons among Japanese female English learners. Textual data obtained from participants' responses to open-ended questions were categorized into themes, based on the numerical frequency of the same and similar words and also guided by the existing literature knowledge base (e.g.,

English/language study as a hobby for Japanese women, East Asian English learners' pedagogical differentiation between Filipino teachers and Western Inner Circle counterparts). In the questionnaire that avoided the use of biased terms such "native English teacher" or "non-native English speaker," the respondents were asked about online eikaiwa lessons taught by "Filipino instructors" and online/in-person lessons taught by "instructors who come from *oubei* English-speaking countries." This Japanese term, *oubei*, which literally means Europe and America, is commonly used among laypeople as a term synonymous with Western countries.

Results and discussion

Research question 1: Findings

The respondents were asked to choose reasons for taking lessons provided by Filipino teachers (multiple responses). Table 2 shows that taking English lessons as a hobby is the most popular reason among Japanese female English learners aged 20 to 59, whether their teacher is a Filipino or a Westerner. In particular, more than 70% of the respondents in their 20s and 30s were found to take online English lessons taught by Filipino teachers as a hobby. Moreover, the data seems to suggest that the younger the respondent, the more interested they are in taking online English lessons as a hobby: 74% (20s), 72% (30s), 48% (40s), 50% (50s) in the case of lessons taught by Filipino teachers. Chi-squared goodness of fit test was performed to test for statistical differences in the item. However, no statistical difference was found for two types of English lessons: Filipino teachers: Chi-square = 4.754, $df = 3$, $p\text{-value} = 0.190$; Western teachers: Chi-square = 3.991, $df = 3$, $p\text{-value} = 0.262$. Table 2 also seems to indicate that the older the respondent, the more interested they are in taking online English lessons to prepare for overseas trips: 40% (50s), 40% (40s), 30% (30s), 14% (20s) in the case of lessons taught by Filipino teachers. Chi-squared goodness of fit test was performed to test for statistical differences in the item. Although no statistical difference was found for the two types of English lessons, it was very close to the threshold in the case of lessons taught by Western teachers: Chi-square = 7.290, $df = 3$, $p\text{-value} = 0.063$. Thus, in theory, the result could be significant in a larger sample.

Table 2 Reasons for taking foreign teachers' English lessons

	Filipino teachers' lessons				Western teachers' lessons			
	20s	30s	40s	50s	20s	30s	40s	50s
As a hobby	37 (74%)	36 (72%)	24 (48%)	25 (50%)	34 (68%)	33 (66%)	24 (48%)	22 (44%)
To learn about their cultures	7 (14%)	16 (32%)	8 (16%)	11 (22%)	4 (8%)	10 (20%)	5 (10%)	5 (10%)
To prepare for overseas trips	10 (20%)	14 (28%)	19 (38%)	19 (38%)	7 (14%)	15 (30%)	20 (40%)	20 (40%)
To help foreign visitors	8 (16%)	12 (24%)	14 (28%)	14 (28%)	7 (14%)	9 (18%)	17 (34%)	16 (32%)
For job search or career	12 (24%)	14 (28%)	11 (22%)	11 (22%)	13 (26%)	7 (14%)	11 (22%)	12 (24%)
To study abroad	8 (16%)	3 (6%)	7 (14%)	4 (8%)	3 (6%)	6 (12%)	7 (14%)	3 (6%)
Others	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	6 (12%)	10 (20%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	4 (8%)	10 (20%)

Meanwhile, the choice of "Others" was statistically significant, meaning that, whether their teacher is a Filipino or a Westerner, the older the respondent, the more likely they take eikaiwa lessons for other reasons: Filipino teachers: Chi-square = 10.684, df = 3, p-value = 0.013*; Western teachers: Chi-square = 11.471, df = 3, p-value = 0.009***. This result indicates that mature women take eikaiwa lessons for unknown reasons other than popular ones for English study. Lastly, most respondents

were not expecting to learn about Filipino or Western culture when they decided to take eikaiwa lessons. For example, only 8% of those in their 20s were found to take Western English teachers' lessons to learn about their culture, and 14% for Filipino teachers' lessons. These findings suggest that the respondents' notion of "English lessons as a hobby" does not necessarily entail their cultural interest.

Research question 1: Discussion

The present study's finding about the presence of young Japanese women learning English as a hobby is consistent with previous findings. As reviewed earlier, their marginalized positioning at the male-dominant Japanese workplace diminishes their opportunities to use language skills for professional purposes. They are then encouraged to invest in language learning for personal improvement and a sense of fulfillment in the private sphere (Kobayashi, 2015; Kobayashi, 2018a; Mizuta, 2009). On the other hand, previous studies and discussion are focused on young Japanese women's and middle-aged men's sexually motivated reason for taking lessons from respectively Western male and Filipino female English teachers (Bailey, 2007; Kelsky, 2001; Morikawa and Parba, 2022; Piller and Takahashi, 2006; Tajima, 2018). This study provides an additional insight about Japanese women's motivation to study English by revealing that irrespective of teachers' nationalities, taking eikaiwa lessons as a hobby is the most popular reason among Japanese women, in particular those in their 20s and 30s. Given that Filipino and Western English teachers are relatively young, Japanese women in their 20s and 30s are more likely to identify common conversation topics with teachers of the same generation and come to identify English lessons themselves as a hobby. Conversely, unable to forge an intimate relationship with their young teachers, mature English learners may be more induced to take English lessons for purposes of English use outside the school context, such as preparation for overseas trips. This theme will be re-visited later.

Moreover, the present study yielded a new finding that many Japanese women take eikaiwa lessons as a hobby both from Filipino and Inner Circle English teachers without necessarily wishing to learn about foreign cultures from their teachers. This finding suggests that Japanese female English learners' notion of "English study as a hobby" can be independent of motivation to learn about foreign cultures from their teachers, including from Inner Circle English teachers who "represent 'a Western culture'" (Holliday, 2006: 385). Such English study motivation diverges from a dominant English ideology that learning about a Western culture constitutes an integral part of English study. For instance, Korean mothers abroad are quoted as saying (Choe and Son, 2018: 49): "My children will not live in Malaysia forever, so they don't have to learn Malaysia culture. Instead, they need to acquire British and American culture."; "I wanted them to focus exclusively on the English language [at school in the

Philippines] ... In other words, language in the Philippines, culture in the UK or the US.” More research is warranted to seek a better understanding of Japanese female English learners’ notion of language learning as a hobby.

Pertinently, reflecting on her own research conducted with Japanese male and female adults taking English lessons as a hobby, Kubota (2011: 487) “constantly faced some vexing questions of pedagogy: If learning does not really matter, why should I pay attention to this context as a focus of scholarly inquiry?” In a response to Kubota’s question of “Why should I problematise leisure that provides personal benefits of enjoyment?” and “How would my research contribute to critical reflection and action for social transformation?” the current study contends that problematizing leisure-oriented language learning could resonate well with the globally pervasive ideology that naturalizes the learning and teaching of Inner Circle English and Western culture for academic and professional mobility. Indeed, Kubota is a leading applied linguist who contends with native English norms (Kubota, 2016). Moreover, the continued presence of Japanese women who “study” English as a hobby is likely to be linked to the unsolved issue of gender inequality entrenched in the Japanese business world (Yamaguchi, 2019; Osumi, May 7, 2022). Thus, studies on Japanese women’s English study can “contribute to critical reflection and action for social transformation” because they can shed light on an intricate relation between their decision to “study” English as a leisure and their lack of access to opportunities and socioeconomic mobility as corporate workers.

Research question 2: Findings

The respondents were asked to describe the advantages of taking online English lessons taught by Filipino teachers. The most frequently used words and phrases were categorized into teachers’ personal or national positive character of being “cheerful [*akarui, youki*],” “friendly [*furendori, kisaku*],” “fun[*omoshiroi*],” “kind [*yasashii*],” and “approachable [*shitashimiyasui, hanashiyasui*].” These expressions were commonly used in sentences that describe visual commonalities as “the same” [*onaji*] Asians: “It was easy to talk with them because they were the same Asians. There were many friendly and smiley teachers. It was relaxing to talk with them.”; “I speak Japanese English, so Filipino teachers who are the same Asians are more approachable to me.”

As demonstrated in the examples above, many respondents feel comfortable talking to “the same” Asian Filipino teachers who have also studied English as a second language and thus are “considerable enough” to understand “us” [*kochira*], that is, a group of beginner-level Japanese English learners. A commonly used Japanese phrase is

Verb + *te* + *kureru*, or Verb + *te* + *moraeru*, which both means “do something for me or us as an act of kindness”:

- They have also studied English as a foreign language, so they can understand [*wakatte moraeru*] our [*kochira no*] feelings and struggles.
- Because they are the same Asians, they can understand [*wakatte kureru*] our English accent. It is good that we [*kochira ga*] are less pressured to try too hard to be perfect.
- They understand English learners’ positions, so they are kind enough to speak [*shabette kureru*] slowly in simple words.
- They have acquired English after studying it, so they can provide empathetic support [*yorisotte kureru*].

Although most respondents believe that Filipino teachers’ background as “the same” Asian English learners empowers them with the ability to understand Japanese English learners’ struggle with English learning, none of the respondents identify such teachers as their target model. They instead articulate their priority on Filipino teachers who speak English with “correct [*tadashii*],” “proper [*kichintoshita*],” and “clear [*kirei*]” pronunciation:

- I want to acquire native-like pronunciation, so I try to choose teachers who have acquired proper pronunciation, can appropriately correct our [*kochira no*] mistakes, and can lead us to correct pronunciation.
- I try to choose teachers who pronounce English correctly because, otherwise, I could acquire the wrong pronunciation when I repeat English after them.
- After having taken lessons from several Filipino teachers, I learned that there is a difference between those who speak English with a strong accent and others whose pronunciation is clear. I want to choose the latter type because, otherwise, I could pick up accented English.

Logistic regression was used to examine further this issue of pronunciation/accents by estimating the relationship between age (the continuous independent variable) and concern for accent (the yes/no dependent variable: “Do you mind Filipino/Western teachers’ English pronunciation/accents?”). Results have shown that there is a statistically significant association between age and answer frequency, $*p < 0.05$: Filipino teachers (p value 0.001*); Western teachers (p value 0.0003*). p value 0.001 indicates that the data seems to suggest that the more elderly the respondent, the more concerned they are about teachers’ pronunciation/accents and this result is based on the analysis on how much concern answers increase the per year increase (the Coefficient).

Table 3 Logistic regression predicting concern for accent from age

Filipino teachers' accent				Wald Test		
	Coefficient	Standard Error	z	Wald Statistics	df	p
Intercept	-0.975	0.574	-1.699	2.885	1	0.089
Age	0.050	0.015	3.326	11.064	1	0.001*

Western teachers' accent				Wald Test		
	Coefficient	Standard Error	z	Wald Statistics	df	p
Intercept	-1.044	0.606	-1.723	2.969	1	0.085
Age	0.058	0.016	3.604	12.988	1	0.0003*

p-statistical significance, *p<0.05

Research question 2: Discussion

Previous studies suggest that Asian English learners develop a sense of solidarity with other Asians, when they leave their Asian-dominant homeland, migrate to the West, and, for the first time, find themselves marginalized as the Asian minority (Fujita, 2009; Jackson, 2008; Kobayashi, 2010; Shin, 2015). This is despite the fact that they wish to be integrated into the mainstream middle-class white culture, i.e., “a Western culture” (Holliday, 2006: 385). However, these studies on international students’ friendship formation reveal that East Asian international students’ unexpected development of Asian identity and friendship with other Asian peers is triggered by their aspiration to integrate into the mainstream Western society and sense of failure to do so, which they attribute to the racial and linguistic distance between “we” and “they.”

The current study yields a compatible finding in a domestic, at-home English study context, where Japanese female English learners take eikaiwa lessons taught both by Filipino and Western teachers. Such learners’ seemingly celebratory appreciation of Filipino English teachers is developed in tandem with their aspiration to speak “correct” English, which they believe is owned only by Western English teachers. In other words, their wish to “acquire native-like pronunciation” and sense of struggle to do so act as a catalyst for evoking a sense of solidarity with “the same” Asian Filipino English teachers with “the same” English learner background who can understand “us” [*kochira*]. Relatedly, Japanese English learners identify Filipino teachers’ friendliness as one of the advantages of taking English lessons with them, although this study is characterized by a lack of interview data on how or to what extent Japanese English learners differentiate Filipino teachers’ amiable friendliness from that of Western

teachers, which is commonly featured in language schools' advertising. For instance, one such teacher is quoted as saying that they "have to act like the stereotypical loud, bright, and happy Westerner kind of thing" to comply with "the company's image" (Appleby, 2013: 135). Conceivably, given that Filipino teachers' friendliness is often noted in conjunction with their "Asianness," beginner-level Japanese English learners may feel their anxiety reduced more significantly when seeing friendly Asian Filipino teachers on the screen than equally friendly but non-Asian Western teachers whose appearance fails to bring about a sense of ethnic affinity (c.f., Kobayashi, 2021: a study focused on Japanese English learners taking Filipino-taught online lessons).

This study also revealed that Japanese female English learners' appreciation of Filipino English teachers and their lessons is based on the essentialized categorization of, on the one hand, Filipino teachers as "the same" Asian English learners as "us" Japanese English learners and, on the other hand, Western teachers as not the same Asians. Such a view is in conflict with the reality both in the Philippines and Anglophone Inner Circle countries. First, Filipino English teachers, who have often worked at call centers as well (Lee, 2021), represent a small number of privileged elites with "their ability to speak English in ways which are acceptable to industry standard" (e.g., call centers) (Tupas, 2019: 537). Thus, they and Japanese English teachers are not "the same" English learners. Second, the dominance of white male eikaiwa teachers in East Asia is not an accurate representation of the population of prospective and current English teaching professionals from/in Anglophone Inner Circle countries. Rather, it is the result of racial and sexual discrimination practiced in the hiring of expatriate English teachers for the eikaiwa industry and formal schooling in East Asia (Appleby, 2014; Braine, 2010; Kobayashi, 2014; Ruecker and Ives, 2015; Stanley, 2013).

Meanwhile, the current study suggests a possibility that Japanese female English learners' reasons and perceptions about learning English might differ by age. This is related to the results for Research Question 1 that suggest a tendency among mature respondents to take eikaiwa lessons for purposes of English use outside the school context. As reviewed earlier, the majority of Filipinos teaching online English lessons to East Asian students are young women (Panaligan and Curran, 2022; Lee, 2021). Thus, presumably, young Japanese women can identify eikaiwa lessons as an end in itself because they are more likely to share common interests with Filipino teachers of the same generation and gender as well as with relatively young Inner Circle English teachers. Not necessarily developing such an intimate relationship with their teachers, mature female eikaiwa students might be more concerned about their teachers' pronunciation and accent because they study English to ensure successful English communication with people other than their teachers. Future research is needed to investigate the impact of teacher – student age/gender matching on types of conversation topics they share with each other and its relationship with reasons for taking English lessons. In other words, it is worthwhile to conduct research with a wide

age group of English learners to examine not only reasons for taking private English lessons but also the degree of sharedness in conversation topics between those diverse English learners and young female Filipino or male white teachers.

Conclusion

This study has limitations. Although the research participants had voluntarily taken two types of eikaiwa lessons taught by online Filipino and online/in-person Western English teachers, there was a possibility that such dual learning was facilitated by two factors. The first one is the rise of online eikaiwa lessons during the pandemic, including those taught by Western teachers who used to be found mostly in in-person classes. Second, temporary closures of conventional eikaiwa schools that provide in-person lessons taught by Western teachers may have induced some Japanese English learners to take online English lessons taught by Filipino teachers and help them identify the attractiveness of such lessons, resulting in their dual English learning.

Despite these limitations, this study revealed that the attractiveness of Filipino English teachers is contingent on Japanese female English learners' identity as beginner-level Asian English learners. This is nurtured by their racial and linguistic essentialization of Filipino and Western English learners and identification of the latter group of teachers as the target model who can only speak "correct" English. Moreover, this study demonstrates the significance of conducting research with a wide age group of Japanese and other East Asian English learners to examine the effect of teacher – student age differences and teacher – student gender matching on English learners' decision to take or continue taking lessons from predominantly young female Filipino teachers or many young Western male English teachers. Such research should be able to fill the void in the existing literature that focuses on young Japanese women or middle-aged men who feel romantic desire for Western or Filipino teachers of the opposite sex and study English as a hobby (Bailey, 2007; Kelsky, 2001; Piller and Takahashi, 2006; Tajima, 2018). Assuming that online English lessons will continue to be popular in Japan, China (Litman, 2022; Xi, June 8, 2020) and beyond, it is also necessary to increase post-pandemic, longitudinal studies conducted with online lesson takers to explore their changing or unchanged perceptions of Filipino and Western teachers and their lessons.

Last but not least, it is critically important to have Filipino English teachers' voices heard and understand their perceptions of English teacher identity. Here, international and region English teachers' associations' commitment to reaching out to them are essential, because accessing Filipino instructors working in the private eikaiwa industry is extremely difficult for outsider researchers (e.g., Martinez, 2022: 34-35). Panaligan and Curran (2022) is a distinctly rare research collaboration between "a fellow Filipino

online English teacher—and a woman—” with her “insider” status (p. 253) and a university researcher, whereas such collaborative research is well implemented in the context of Inner Circle intensive English programs (Gass et al., 2018). An increased attention to online Filipino English teachers among individual English teachers and English teaching associations will hopefully be conducive to facilitating pedagogical and academic discussion on the positioning of non-traditional teachers in East Asia and beyond where native-speakerism and an essentialized view of English teachers prevail.

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