

Teaching beyond Platforms: Business Perspectives on Filipino Online English Teachers' Transition to Freelancing

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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation has reshaped global work and education, expanding online English teaching opportunities for Filipino educators. This study explores how teachers transition from platform-based employment to independent freelancing, emphasizing autonomy, identity reconstruction, entrepreneurial adaptation, and business sustainability. Using a qualitative descriptive design and reflexive thematic analysis, ten Filipino online English teachers shared their experiences navigating this transition. The findings revealed that the transition to freelancing was primarily driven by their desire for autonomy, fairness, and flexibility. Participants valued the freedom to design their schedules, teaching methods, and pricing strategies while developing direct relationships with students. However, freelancing also demanded emotional and cognitive resilience, as teachers faced challenges such as unstable internet connections, inconsistent client flow, and administrative workload. Three major themes emerged: reclaiming autonomy, navigating the emotional and cognitive demands of entrepreneurship, and building sustainable freelance careers through strategic differentiation and community support. The study proposes a Freelancing Adaptation Cycle that illustrates how Filipino online teachers evolve from algorithmic dependence to empowered teacherpreneurship, balancing professional independence, business awareness, and continuous learning.

Keywords: freelancing, teacherpreneurship, digital labor, platform economy, professional autonomy

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, rapid advances in digital connectivity and communication technologies have profoundly reshaped the world of work (Kolade & Owoseni, 2022). These transformations have also reconfigured education, allowing teachers and learners to connect across geographical and cultural boundaries through digital platforms (World Bank, 2022). Within this global shift, online English Language Teaching (ELT) has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors of digital education. The Philippines is known for its English proficiency, cultural adaptability, and cost-effectiveness. And, it has become a major hub for online English instruction, with Filipino educators playing a central role in meeting global demand for English learning (Marcial et al., 2024; Panaligan & Curran, 2022; Pontillas, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, many Filipino teachers successfully pivoted to online teaching to sustain employment and serve international learners; a significant portion have since adopted hybrid or fully remote setups (Marcial et al., 2024; Pulignano et al., 2021).

Most Filipino teachers enter the international ELT market via platform-based companies (e.g., 51Talk, Preply, iTalki, Cambly). These platforms lower entry barriers by handling student matching, payment processing, and scheduling, but they also govern work through algorithmic mechanisms that can limit professional autonomy. Research on digital labor and gig work shows that algorithmic ranking and performance metrics often embed forms of surveillance and control, restricting workers' agency. In such environments, teachers may face a paradox: increased access to global students but decreased control over their work (Balod, 2025; Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024; Pablo, 2022; Pontillas, 2021).

Emerging evidence suggests many teachers eventually transition from platform dependence to freelancing, viewing the latter as more empowering, flexible, and aligned with their personal and professional values (Panaligan & Curran, 2022). Freelancing allows educators to set their own pricing, design curriculum, and build

direct relationships with students. However, with these opportunities come trade-offs: freelancers must assume multiple roles: educator, marketer, administrator, and entrepreneur while navigating risks such as income instability, workload fluctuations, and client acquisition challenges (Pulignano et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the digital work environment introduces added strain. Technostress and cyber fatigue, driven by constant connectivity, prolonged screen time, and pressure to stay responsive, have been documented as negatively affecting well-being and performance among remote workers (Ayyagari et al., 2011; Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008; Muslimin et al., 2024). For Filipino online teachers, many of whom work across time zones and at irregular hours, these challenges can be exacerbated by infrastructural issues such as unstable internet and irregular power interruptions that limit successful freelance practice (Sabidalas & Esparar, 2022).

At the same time, freelancing offers spaces for creativity, self-determination, and professional growth. Unlike platform-mediated work, it allows teachers to experiment with pedagogical approaches, tailor materials to client needs, and build personal teaching brands. Prior studies on professional development emphasize that many online educators acquire marketing, pricing, and instructional design skills through self-directed learning and peer collaboration rather than formal training (Binnie & Wedlock, 2022; Mirza & Rashid, 2024). Social media and online communities often become platforms for resource sharing, pedagogical exchange, mentorship, and peer support (Rerung, 2021; Mirza & Rashid, 2024).

However, freelancing unfolds within global hierarchies of English language teaching: native-speaker norms continue to influence perceptions of credibility, marketability, and pricing power (Cargill & Burgess, 2017). As non-native English-speaking professionals, Filipino teachers may need to work harder to build legitimacy, distinguish their services, and earn student trust (Pontillas, 2021; Cargill & Burgess, 2017; Wright, 2024). Taken together, these findings expose a tension between opportunity and vulnerability in the online teaching landscape. Platform-based systems offer accessibility but limit freedom; freelancing promises autonomy but demands business acumen, emotional resilience, and strategic positioning. In this complex terrain, Filipino online English teachers are redefining what it means to teach, merging educational purpose with entrepreneurial practice and challenging traditional notions of employment and professional identity.

Thus, this study aims to explore the business-related dimensions of freelancing among Filipino online English teachers, including pricing, marketing, workload management, client relationships, and long-term sustainability, while examining how they balance pedagogical quality and personal well-being in the shift from structured employment to freelance entrepreneurship.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore how Filipino online English teachers transition from platform-based employment to independent freelancing, focusing on their pursuit of autonomy, entrepreneurial adaptation, and business sustainability. It also seeks to understand how teachers balance pedagogical integrity with self-management and resilience in the evolving digital education landscape. Through this inquiry, the study provides insight into the broader transformation of English language teaching within the platform economy.

Significance of the Study

The study contributes insights for teachers, training institutions, policymakers, and scholars. Teachers can benefit from understanding the essential entrepreneurial skills needed to stabilize freelance careers. Teacher education institutions may consider integrating digital marketing, branding, and pricing strategies into their Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) curricula. Policymakers may draw from findings to improve taxation, social protection, and labor support systems for independent educators. Scholars gain a deeper understanding of digital labor transformations in Filipino ELT contexts.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Filipino online English teachers navigate

the transition from platform-based teaching to independent freelancing. First, it seeks to compare teachers' experiences across both work models, particularly in terms of income, autonomy, workload, and business-related responsibilities. The study also aims to identify the key challenges educators encounter as they manage freelancing as a business, including issues related to financial stability, client acquisition, marketing, and technological competence. Finally, the research examines the strategies teachers develop to sustain long-term freelance careers and support their ongoing professional growth. Through these objectives, the study highlights the complexities and opportunities embedded in the shift toward teacher-led online entrepreneurial practice.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws on three interrelated theoretical perspectives. Sociotechnical Systems Theory (Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024) highlights how technological tools and social structures interact to shape work environments. Platform teaching often misaligns these systems, generating tensions that push teachers to seek alternative arrangements.

Labor Process Theory (Balod, 2025; Pulignano et al., 2021) explains how control, autonomy, and risk shift in changing work contexts. In freelancing, teachers gain autonomy but simultaneously assume greater entrepreneurial risk as they internalize responsibilities for pricing, marketing, and client retention.

The Teacherpreneurship Framework (Liu et al., 2024; Lasekan et al., 2020; Rerung, 2021) provides a lens for understanding educators who merge pedagogical expertise with business competencies. This framework supports analysis of how online teachers develop entrepreneurial identities and competencies, such as opportunity recognition, branding, and value creation, while still centering students' learning needs.

Together, these frameworks form a conceptual model positioning digitalization and platform constraints as push factors, freelancing autonomy as a pull factor, and business adaptation strategies as mediators of long-term sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A qualitative descriptive design was utilized to capture the lived experiences of online English teachers transitioning from platform-based work to freelancing. This design is particularly suited for practice-oriented inquiries that aim to present participants' accounts in clear, natural language without imposing heavy theoretical interpretation (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024). By focusing on the everyday perspectives of the willing teachers regarding their field, qualitative description allowed the study to highlight the practical, emotional, and business-related realities of freelance ESL work as narrated directly by the participants.

The collected data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2023) reflexive thematic analysis, which offers a flexible and conceptually grounded method for identifying and interpreting patterns across qualitative datasets. Their updated recommendations emphasize the importance of researcher reflexivity, transparency in decision-making, and the explicit documentation of how codes and themes are developed. Following this approach, the analysis proceeded through familiarization with the data, systematic coding, iterative theme construction, and the refinement of overarching thematic narratives.

To strengthen the rigor and trustworthiness of the study, several validation strategies were employed in alignment with qualitative research standards. An audit trail was maintained to document methodological decisions and analytic processes, ensuring transparency and dependability. Member checking allowed participants to verify the accuracy of their interview transcripts and the preliminary interpretations drawn from their narratives. Thick description was used to provide detailed contextual accounts of teaching environments and freelancing practices, supporting transferability. Throughout the research process, reflexive journaling enabled the researcher to critically evaluate personal assumptions, positionality, and potential influences on the analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Together, these strategies ensured that the findings remained credible, grounded, and authentically reflective of participants' experiences.

Locale and Population of the Study

This study involved ten Filipino online English teachers who had transitioned from platform-based employment to independent freelancing. A purposive sampling strategy was utilized to ensure that each participant met specific inclusion criteria: (a) at least six months of experience teaching on an online platform, (b) at least six months of freelancing experience, (c) current engagement in freelance ESL instruction, and (d) willingness to participate in a recorded semi-structured interview. Purposive sampling is widely recognized in qualitative research for its capacity to identify information-rich cases that yield in-depth insight into the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Palinkas et al., 2015).

To extend participant reach beyond the initial pool of identified contacts, snowball sampling was employed, enabling participants to recommend peers within their professional networks who met the same eligibility criteria. This approach proved particularly valuable within professional and online teaching communities, where members are highly interconnected and where potential participants are not easily identifiable through conventional directories or public databases (Noy, 2008). In such settings, snowball sampling fosters trust-based referrals, allowing the researcher to engage educators who possess firsthand, contextually grounded experiences. Moreover, Kirchherr and Charles (2018) emphasize methodological refinements that promote diversifying referral sources to enhance the credibility, diversity, and representativeness of snowball samples. Through this combined approach, the researcher effectively accessed a network of qualified educators within the interconnected ecosystem of Filipino online English teachers, thereby ensuring a participant pool that reflected both depth of experience and diversity of perspective.

A final sample size of ten was deemed appropriate for this qualitative descriptive study. Consistent with established qualitative research literature, a range of six to twelve participants is generally sufficient to achieve thematic saturation, the point at which no new themes or insights emerge from the data (Guest et al., 2006; Hennink et al., 2017). The final sample represented diverse profiles across teaching specializations (e.g., IELTS, Business English, and Conversational English), freelancing strategies, and student markets. This diversity supported a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Filipino teachers' transition from platform-based employment to independent online freelancing.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study's qualitative focus prioritizes depth over breadth, limiting the generalizability of its findings. The purposive and snowball sampling strategy may introduce selection bias, favoring participants connected within existing networks. Self-reported data are also subject to recall bias and social desirability effects. Nonetheless, the research design's methodological safeguards, clear inclusion criteria, audit trails, member checking, and systematic thematic analysis mitigate these limitations and support the credibility of the findings.

Data Gathering Tools

The study utilized a self-developed semi-structured interview guide to ensure that all essential information related to teachers' experiences in transitioning from platform-based online English teaching to freelancing was thoroughly explored during the interviews. The questions in the interview guide were constructed based on an extensive review of literature on digital labor, online English teaching, freelancing, and teacher entrepreneurship. Semi-structured interviews were employed because they use pre-planned questions while still allowing participants the freedom to elaborate on their experiences, perspectives, and challenges through open-ended responses (Consalvo, 2023).

The interview guide focused on major areas relevant to the study, including teachers' motivations for transitioning, their business practices, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they adopted to sustain freelancing. To support accurate data collection, digital audio recording was used during all interview sessions, and the researcher took field notes to capture additional contextual insights and observations. These tools collectively ensured that the data gathered were comprehensive, detailed, and aligned with the study's research objectives.

Data Gathering Procedures

Data collection followed a systematic and ethically guided process to ensure the credibility and integrity of the information gathered. After securing ethical clearance from the researcher's institution, participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling within online teaching communities and professional networks. Those who expressed interest received an information sheet outlining the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality measures, and subsequently provided informed digital consent. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom, Google Meet, or other platforms based on participants' preferences, allowing flexibility for teachers who are working across different schedules. Each interview lasted approximately 25 to 35 minutes and was guided by open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed narratives about teachers' career transitions, business practices, and challenges encountered in freelancing.

With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to preserve the accuracy and richness of their responses. The participants were invited to engage in member checking, during which they reviewed their transcripts to verify the accuracy of the data and offer clarifications if necessary. Throughout the process, all audio files, transcripts, and consent documents were securely stored in password-protected digital folders and de-identified using pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality and protect participant privacy. These procedures ensured that data were collected rigorously, ethically, and in alignment with qualitative descriptive research standards.

Treatment of Data

The gathered data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2023) six-phase thematic approach. Themes reflect recurring patterns across autonomy, marketing, income strategies, identity work, and peer support. Trustworthiness measures included audit trails, member checking, and thick description of context. This involved familiarization with the data through repeated readings, generating initial codes, organizing codes into provisional themes, reviewing thematic coherence across the dataset, defining and refining themes, and constructing the final analytic narrative. Reflexivity was practiced throughout, acknowledging that the researcher plays an active role in meaning-making rather than acting as a neutral observer.

Saldaña's (2021) coding strategies supported the systematic progression from descriptive codes to interpretive themes, while constant comparison ensured that emerging patterns accurately reflected participant accounts. Thematic development prioritized conceptual clarity and alignment with the study's research questions and theoretical frameworks.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical conduct is central to this research, particularly because it involves teachers' professional experiences, financial realities, and identity-related concerns. Before participating, individuals received a clear and comprehensive explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and expected contributions. Participation was entirely voluntary, and teachers were informed that they could decline to answer questions or withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

To safeguard privacy, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants, and any identifiable information, such as names of specific students, employers, or online teaching platforms, was removed or anonymized during transcription and reporting. All digital recordings, transcripts, and related documents were stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. These materials will be permanently deleted after analysis and completion of the study to ensure long-term confidentiality.

Because discussions about income, job performance, and client relationships can be sensitive, interviews were conducted with empathy, respect, and attentiveness to participants' comfort levels. The researcher remained mindful of power dynamics and emotional cues, allowing participants to skip questions or redirect the conversation when necessary. Findings were reported honestly and responsibly, ensuring that participants' experiences, which are based on the responses of the willing educators, were represented in a genuine way and without exaggeration.

Consistent with Nowell et al.'s (2017) criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research, multiple strategies were integrated into the study's ethical procedures. Credibility was reinforced through member checking, allowing participants to confirm the accuracy of their transcripts and the preliminary interpretations of their narratives. Dependability was supported by a detailed audit trail documenting coding decisions, analytic memos, and theme development processes. Transferability was strengthened through rich, thick descriptions of teaching contexts, freelancing environments, and participant backgrounds. Finally, confirmability was enhanced through reflexive journaling, which enabled the researcher to critically examine assumptions, minimize bias, and maintain transparency throughout the analytic process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings on the Transition of Filipino Online English Teachers from Platform-Based Work to Freelancing

The primary objective of this study was to explore how Filipino online English teachers experience their transition from platform-based teaching to freelancing, focusing on business-related, professional, and personal factors. Through the participants' narratives, several themes emerged that reflect their perceptions, challenges, and strategies in managing freelancing as both a teaching career and a business venture. These themes are presented and discussed below.

Perceptions of Online English Teachers on Freelancing Compared to Platform-Based Teaching

Reclaiming Autonomy through Self-Determined Work

All ten participants perceived that freelancing was an empowering alternative to platform-based teaching, which allowed them to regain ownership of their time, creativity, and income potential, a freedom they felt was restricted. Teachers described platform work as restrictive and profit-oriented, whereas freelancing liberated them to shape their own teaching identity and business model. For example, Participant 2 shared: "Teaching on a platform hinders my freedom... I always need to stick to their schedule, lesson style, and salary. I always need to stick to their schedule, lesson style, and salary. While freelancing, I can advertise my own teaching, set my own schedule, and establish long-term student relationships." Participant 4 added that freelancing offered "maximum earnings and freedom but also higher risk and workload." Similarly, Participant 7 noted, "As a single parent, freelancing allows me to stay at home and still earn more than I did on the platform."

These narratives resonate with labor process perspectives that highlight how workers seek greater autonomy when institutional or managerial control limits their creative agency (Balod, 2025; Pulignano et al., 2021). Freelancing allowed teachers not only to craft their own working hours and teaching methods but also to align work with personal life and well-being. Participant 1 emphasized how freelancing reduced stress from public transportation and provided a greater presence for the family. This aligns with evidence that remote and flexible work structures can help reconfigure work-life boundaries in favor of worker agency (Pulignano et al., 2021; Ciolfi & Lockley, 2018). For these teachers, freelancing represented not only economic freedom but also personal fulfillment, marking a shift from compliance under platform rules to self-directed professional practice.

Challenges in Managing Freelancing as a Business Venture among Online English Teachers

Entrepreneurial Challenges as Emotional and Cognitive Labor

While freelancing provided autonomy, participants acknowledged that it also demanded emotional resilience, creativity, and constant adaptability. They faced recurring challenges, including marketing their services, dealing with unstable internet connections, and managing fluctuating student demand. As Participant 10 put it: "It's a one-man business... you have to look for students, handle bookings, and manage payments, everything." Participant 6 similarly remarked: "In the academy, I just had to teach. Now I'm my own manager, accountant, and marketer." This was seconded by participant 2, who admitted that "teachers must learn branding and social media promotion," emphasizing that technical skills are now part of a teacher's toolkit.

Most of the participants reported income instability and infrastructural issues, such as intermittent internet connectivity or power disruptions, which amplified uncertainty. Participant 5 recalled: “Calamities like typhoons affect classes and attendance, so we need generators or backup plans.” This highlights how, in developing contexts, structural factors such as internet reliability and energy access deeply shape the viability of freelance digital work (Sabidalas & Esparar, 2022).

Beyond logistical burdens, freelancers described the psychological strain of constant availability and online visibility. Some clients expected rapid improvement or delayed payments, putting teachers under pressure to perform emotionally and professionally. Participant 3 shared: “Some parents are demanding... they expect fast improvement and delay payments.” These experiences reflect what previous scholarship calls “digital bleed,” wherein blurred boundaries between personal and professional life can be exacerbated by continuous connectivity, leading to emotional labor and fatigue (Ciolfi & Lockley, 2018; Ayyagari et al., 2011).

Still, many participants developed resilience. Participant 4 stressed the importance of “business discipline” to sustain freelancing, while others adopted coping strategies such as diversifying their client base, using flexible pricing, and implementing structured schedules. These strategies reflect the self-directed learning, peer support, and entrepreneurial mindfulness emphasized in emerging teacherpreneurship research (Liu et al., 2024; Lasekan et al., 2020; Rerung, 2021) and documented among online ESL communities (Mirza & Rashid, 2024).

Strategies of Online English Teachers in Sustaining Their Freelancing Careers

Building Sustainable Freelance Careers through Differentiation and Community

Participants underscored that sustainable freelance teaching demanded more than pedagogical skills and required business acumen, strategic differentiation, and community networks. Many engaged in continuous professional development (e.g., taking TESOL or specialized business English courses), invested in certifications, and stayed abreast of global business trends, particularly important when teaching professionals in corporate or academic settings.

They also leveraged online teaching communities to exchange materials, teaching strategies, market insights, and peer support. Participant 7 joined teaching communities in Vietnam to “exchange ideas and improve teaching techniques,” while Participant 4 invested in certifications to “keep methods fresh and evidence-based.” Another mentioned posting testimonials and lesson videos on social media to attract new clients. This aligns with evidence that social media and online networks serve dual purposes as pedagogical and marketing platforms for teacherpreneurs (Rerung, 2021; Liu et al., 2024).

In addition, teachers highlighted the importance of transparent client communication, trust-building, and flexible pricing (e.g., month-to-month payment models or package deals) to appeal to a global clientele. Such adaptability mirrors findings from gig-economy studies showing that freelancers often balance perceived value with accessibility to sustain competitiveness (Balod, 2025; Panaligan & Curran, 2022).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, participants described deliberate efforts to establish boundaries between work and personal life: setting rest days, turning off notifications after work, and reserving time for family. One participant shared: “When I’m with my child, I avoid checking my messages.” Another asserted: “We work to live, not live to work.” These reflections echo prior research on boundary-setting as crucial for long-term well-being in digital work (Ciolfi & Lockley, 2018; Pulignano et al., 2021).

Integrative Framework: The Freelancing Adaptation Cycle

Synthesizing the participants’ experiences, this study developed an integrative framework called the Freelancing Adaptation Cycle, which illustrates the dynamic evolution of Filipino online English teachers from platform dependence to empowered teacherpreneurship. The model unfolds through four interrelated stages that capture teachers’ gradual transformation into independent digital educators.

The first stage, Platform Frustration, represents the initial dissatisfaction experienced under rigid systems characterized by fixed pay, limited autonomy, and algorithmic control. This stage serves as a critical turning point that motivates teachers to seek professional independence and creative freedom.

Transitioning from this phase leads to Autonomy Activation, wherein teachers begin to exercise self-management by setting their own schedules, designing customized lessons, and establishing direct relationships with students. At this point, they reclaim ownership of their work and begin to define their professional identities on their own terms.

However, the shift to independence is not without challenges. The third stage, Entrepreneurial Shock, captures the adjustment period where teachers confront the realities of managing their careers as business ventures. They face fluctuating income, marketing pressures, client acquisition challenges, and the administrative burden of sustaining a freelance practice. This phase demands emotional resilience, financial literacy, and strategic adaptability, as educators learn to balance their pedagogical expertise with business acumen.

Finally, the process culminates in the fourth stage, Strategic Differentiation and Community Sustainability, where teachers attain greater stability and confidence. At this stage, they begin to specialize in niche markets, such as Business English, IELTS preparation, or conversational coaching, while leveraging peer networks and online communities for collaboration and support. Continuous professional development, branding, and community engagement become essential to maintaining competitiveness and sustainability in the global online teaching landscape.

Overall, the Freelancing Adaptation Cycle affirms that freelancing is both emancipatory and demanding. Teachers navigate ongoing cycles of independence, adjustment, and growth as they cultivate resilience, creativity, and entrepreneurial identity. Through this process, Filipino online educators redefine what it means to be a modern teacher, transforming from algorithm-driven workers into innovative teacherpreneurs who embody self-determination, adaptability, and purposeful professional growth (Pulignano et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2024; Lasekan et al., 2020).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The transition from platform-based teaching to freelancing among Filipino online English teachers represents a profound process of professional reinvention driven by the pursuit of autonomy, flexibility, and fairness. This shift empowers teachers to redefine their professional identities by exercising full control over their time, teaching methods, and income (Balod, 2025; Pulignano et al., 2021). However, it also introduces a new set of entrepreneurial and emotional challenges, as educators must learn to navigate business-oriented tasks such as marketing, client management, and financial planning while maintaining the quality of instruction. Freelancing, therefore, demands both pedagogical expertise and entrepreneurial discipline, transforming teachers into self-reliant professionals capable of managing the dual pressures of education and enterprise (Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024; Ciolfi & Lockley, 2018).

Three interrelated dimensions capture this transformation. First, Reclaiming Autonomy emphasizes how teachers reevaluate their professional agency by taking charge of scheduling, pricing, and lesson design, thus liberating themselves from platform control. Second, the challenges of freelancing are reflected in the Emotional and Cognitive Labor of Entrepreneurship, where educators must maintain professionalism and self-motivation while adjusting to varying workloads and financial uncertainty. Third, Sustainable Freelancing through Differentiation and Community emphasizes the importance of continuous professional growth, trust-based client relations, and collaborative learning networks that support long-term career viability (Rerung, 2021; Liu et al., 2024; Lasekan et al., 2020; Binnie & Wedlock, 2022). Collectively, these dimensions affirm that Filipino ESL teachers are evolving into teacherpreneurs, professionals who skillfully merge pedagogy, technology, and entrepreneurship within an increasingly competitive digital economy.

To fully realize this potential, several strategic actions are recommended. For online English teachers, developing a well-structured business plan that integrates marketing, branding, and financial management is essential to ensure stability and growth. Continuous professional development through TESOL and digital pedagogy training

enhances credibility and instructional quality (Binnie & Wedlock, 2022). Teachers should also uphold healthy work–life boundaries to avoid burnout (Ciolfi & Lockley, 2018) and foster supportive peer networks that encourage collaboration, referrals, and mentorship (Mirza & Rashid, 2024; Sabidalas & Esparar, 2022).

For teacher-education institutions, integrating courses on digital entrepreneurship, self-branding, and financial literacy into TESOL or education programs would better prepare educators for the realities of freelancing. For policymakers, recognizing freelance teachers within formal labor frameworks and creating systems for fair taxation and social protection are crucial steps toward legitimizing freelancing as a sustainable profession (Balod, 2025; World Bank, 2022). Lastly, for future researchers, conducting longitudinal and comparative studies on freelancing’s long-term sustainability, emotional demands, and socioeconomic impacts will deepen understanding of how digital teaching reshapes professional identities (Pulignano et al., 2021).

In conclusion, freelancing offers Filipino online English teachers a transformative pathway toward self-directed professional fulfillment. It not only empowers them to achieve economic independence and creative freedom but also enables them to contribute meaningfully to the evolving landscape of global online education. By embracing continuous learning, strategic innovation, and community engagement, these educators exemplify the spirit of modern teacherpreneurship, teaching not only beyond classrooms but also beyond platforms.

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