Acculturation and Cross-Cultural Adaptation for ESL Teachers in Taiwan

Amel Eid[1], Hazem Almassry[2]

[1] Independent Researcher in Cross-Cultural and Educational Studies, Taiwan

[2] Research Fellow at Inter, Asia Cultural Studies Institute, Taiwan

Correspondence: Hazem Almassry Ph.D., Research Fellow at Inter, Asia Cultural Studies Institute, Taiwan.

Abstract

This study aimed to comprehensively understand the acculturation of EFL teachers in Taiwan by examining the effects of their acculturation strategies on gender, length of stay, and country of origin. A total of 22 EFL teachers working in various educational institutions (kindergartens, cram schools, and elementary schools) participated in an online questionnaire. The mid-point split method was used to classify the four acculturation strategies. The results reveal that integration was the most preferred acculturation strategy, while marginalization was the least desirable strategy. However, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size (N=22), which limits the generalizability of the results.

Keywords: cross-cultural adaptation, EFL teacher, acculturation strategy

1. Introduction

Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) in a foreign country presents unique challenges and opportunities for educators. This study explores the experiences of ESL teachers in Taiwan as they navigate a new culture and educational system. Taiwan's bilingual education policy, which promotes the use of both Mandarin Chinese and English in schools, creates a dynamic environment for foreign teachers but also introduces specific adaptive demands.

Drawing on Berry's (2001) framework of cross-cultural adaptation, this research recognizes that adapting to a new cultural context is a transformative process involving ongoing interaction and relationship-building. However, ESL teachers often face challenges related to cultural differences, communication styles, and pedagogical approaches. These challenges can lead to feelings of isolation and impact their professional identity and overall well-being.

While previous research has examined acculturation strategies in various immigrant populations (Cao et al., 2017; Choy et al., 2021; Cohen-Louck & Shechory-Bitton, 2021; Yang et al., 2022), The impetus for this research stems from observations of adaptation-related challenges among ESL teachers in Taiwan. While many teachers voluntarily relocate to Taiwan and are treated respectfully, signs of dissatisfaction suggest the need for a deeper understanding of their experiences. For example, ESL teachers often report experiencing difficulties navigating the nuances of Taiwanese classroom culture, where direct questioning of authority figures may be discouraged, leading to misunderstandings and frustration. Furthermore, some teachers have expressed feelings of isolation due to language barriers and a lack of opportunities to connect with local colleagues outside of the workplace. Anecdotally, we have heard of teachers struggling to find familiar foods or adjust to the high levels of humidity, which can impact their overall well-being and job satisfaction. In addition, teachers from Western countries can feel challenged by the high level of parental involvement in student's education which is different from the system they are used to. These everyday stressors, while seemingly minor, can accumulate over time and negatively impact their acculturation process.

Therefore, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- What is the most commonly preferred acculturation strategy by ESL teachers in Taiwan?
- Are there statistically significant differences between acculturation strategies and gender?
- Are there statistically significant differences between acculturation strategies and length of stay in Taiwan?
- Are there statistically significant differences between acculturation strategies and native and non-native teachers?

Based on existing literature, we hypothesize that:

1. Integration will be the most preferred strategy among ESL teachers, while marginalization will be the least desirable.

2. There are statistically significant differences between acculturation strategies and gender.

3. There are statistically significant differences between acculturation strategies and length of stay in Taiwan.

4. There are statistically significant differences between acculturation strategies and native and non-native teachers.

By understanding the experiences of ESL teachers in Taiwan, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature on cross-cultural adaptation and inform support initiatives for foreign teachers in Taiwan's education system. The findings will provide valuable insights for teachers, schools, and organizations seeking to enhance the adaptation process and promote the well-being of ESL educators.

2. Literature Review

The study of cross-cultural adaptation for ESL teachers emerges at the intersection of acculturation theory, professional identity research, and language education policy. Berry's (1997) foundational work reconceptualized acculturation as an individual-level psychological process, identifying four strategic responses to intercultural contact—integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization—that shape adaptation outcomes. This framework, extended by Ward and Kennedy's (1994) distinction between sociocultural and psychological adaptation, provides critical tools for examining how educators navigate foreign educational systems. The unique position of ESL teachers as both cultural intermediaries and institutional actors introduces complexities not fully addressed in traditional acculturation studies, which have focused primarily on immigrant populations (Berry & Hou, 2017) or corporate expatriates (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985).

Research across Asian educational contexts reveals consistent patterns of professional marginalization intersecting with cultural adaptation. Native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) frequently experience what Kim (2012) terms the "paradox of prestige"—valued for linguistic capital yet institutionally sidelined—while non-native teachers (NNESTs) confront legitimacy challenges rooted in native-speaker ideologies (Ahn, 2011; Ruecker, 2011). These dynamics are compounded by the evolving nature of teacher professional identity, which Beijaard et al. (2004) characterize as a dynamic equilibrium between self-perception and institutional expectations. The negotiation of multiple roles—educator, cultural representative, and organizational subordinate—creates identity tensions that directly influence acculturation strategy selection (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Appleby, 2016).

Taiwan's bilingual education policy landscape presents distinctive adaptation challenges that remain underexplored in existing literature. While studies like Liang's (2010) examination of foreign teachers' classroom experiences and Kuo's (2014) analysis of institutional barriers provide important snapshots, they do not systematically investigate how demographic factors interact with policy structures to shape acculturation pathways. This gap is particularly salient given Taiwan's unique position as a non-UN member state implementing ambitious English-medium instruction policies (MOE, 2018), where foreign teachers serve as both pedagogical agents and inadvertent cultural diplomats. The policy, officially launched in 2017 and accelerating in recent years, aims to cultivate a bilingual workforce and enhance Taiwan's global competitiveness (MOE, 2017). However, the rapid implementation of this policy has raised concerns about adequate teacher training, resource allocation, and the potential for increased pressure on foreign teachers to meet unrealistic expectations. For example, the increased demand for English language instruction has led to a greater reliance on foreign teachers, some of whom may lack formal pedagogical training or experience in Taiwanese classrooms. This creates a potential mismatch between policy goals and teacher preparedness, which can further complicate the acculturation process."

In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), there has been a notable increase in research aimed at understanding the concept of professional identity (PI). This endeavor seeks to provide educators and academics with a deeper understanding of how PI is shaped and transformed over time. PI is regarded as a diverse and evolving equilibrium wherein a teacher's self-image harmonizes with the diverse roles they undertake in the classroom (Beijaard et al., 2004). Research on language teacher professional identity has experienced substantial growth since the early 21st century (Martel & Wang, 2014). This area of study holds great significance, not only in informing language teaching practices but also in illuminating how EFL instructors navigate their experiences abroad. Extending beyond a mere job title, professional identity encompasses an individual's beliefs, values, and sense of self in relation to their work (Gee, 2000). For ESL teachers in Taiwan, professional identity is often shaped by their interactions with students, colleagues, and the broader community. It can be influenced by factors such as their perceived competence, their acceptance by local educators, and their ability to effectively navigate cultural differences in the classroom. The development of a

strong professional identity can be a protective factor, buffering against the stresses of acculturation, while a weak or threatened professional identity can exacerbate feelings of isolation and marginalization. Therefore, examining the interplay between acculturation strategies and professional identity is crucial for understanding the overall well-being and success of ESL teachers in Taiwan.

Previous studies on ESL teacher acculturation have primarily been conducted within the framework of immigrant acculturation. While many studies have used acculturation strategies to predict sociocultural and psychological adaptation or other outcome variables (Cao et al., 2017; Choy et al., 2021; Cohen-Louck & Shechory-Bitton, 2021; Yang et al., 2022), limited research exists on how these strategies predict ESL teacher adaptation. These educators often find themselves on the fringes of society, struggling to culturally assimilate (Chesnut, 2016) and, consequently, prematurely leaving their positions amidst dissatisfaction and disenchantment (Cresswell-Turner, 2004; Neilsen, 2011).

In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), there has been a notable increase in research aimed at understanding the concept of professional identity (PI). This endeavor seeks to provide educators and academics with a deeper understanding of how PI is shaped and transformed over time. PI is regarded as a diverse and evolving equilibrium wherein a teacher's self-image harmonizes with the diverse roles they undertake in the classroom (Beijaard et al., 2004). Research on language teacher professional identity has experienced substantial growth since the early 21st century (Martel & Wang, 2014). This area of study holds great significance, not only in informing language teaching practices but also in illuminating how EFL instructors navigate their experiences abroad.

Despite the esteemed nature of this profession, as Nathalie Chase (2019) argues, relocating to a new environment is akin to embarking on a new chapter in one's personal development. Chase's (2019) findings substantiate the intricate and often conflicting identities held by Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) (Appleby, 2016). NESTs grapple with a reality characterized by ambivalence stemming from their marginalization, commodification, and potential replaceability. This ambivalence is partly offset by their preferential treatment, perceptions of career legitimacy, and recognition of their native-speaking status. Additionally, the research underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of Professional Identity (PI) (Appleby, 2016). These identities are actively negotiated through lived experiences and subsequent sense-making processes (Sachs, 2005, as cited in Pennington & Richards, 2016).

Participants in studies by Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) recounted experiences of marginalization due to cultural and communication disparities. Drawing on social identity theory, this marginality encompasses both a state and an emotional aspect, consequently impeding the formation of PI (Mowat, 2015). Despite robust discourse challenging this notion, these narratives highlight its palpable impact on identity construction.

Studies on expatriate teachers (e.g., Jeon, 2009; Kim, 2012; Le, 2013; Stanley, 2012) present similar accounts of exclusion. Lee's (2011) investigation of Canadian NESTs in Korea revealed that communication barriers played a pivotal role in the divide between Korean administrative staff and expatriate faculty. This divide was exacerbated by the perception of NESTs as assistants rather than full-fledged educators, resulting in their limited influence and voice (Kim, 2012) and positioning them on the organizational periphery, thereby restricting their full participation (Wenger, 1998).

Participants in these studies often described their teaching careers as "respected but separated" and "welcomed but not belonging" (p. 39). They were confident teachers who built strong rapport with their students but felt isolated from the local faculty. Research on teacher adaptation underscores the critical interdependence between the adaptability of the educator and the overall effectiveness of the educational process.

The exploration of professional identity among language teachers has garnered considerable scholarly attention since the early 2000s (Martel & Wang, 2014). PI emerges as a pivotal concern, not only in practical application but also in understanding how ESL instructors reconcile their broader experiences in foreign settings with their evolving sense of self (Morgan & Clarke, 2011). Despite the inherent complexity in defining PI, Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) posit that it encompasses the ways in which teachers internalize their roles and perceive themselves within their socio-environmental interactions.

Within ESL education, there exists a burgeoning body of research aimed at conceptualizing this construct, thereby providing scholars and educators with deeper insights into how PI is cultivated and reevaluated (Scotland, 2014). PI encapsulates "a complex and dynamic equilibrium where self-image is balanced with a variety of roles teachers feel that they have to play" (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 113). Additionally, recognizing that multiple identities may coexist within an individual at any given time, Duff and Uchida (1997) suggest that NESTs may embody multiple identities, encompassing roles as educators, immigrants, native language users, and experts, while also being nuanced by their gendered and cultural attributes (p. 451).

Conversely, research rooted in acculturation often encompasses a broad spectrum of immigrant populations, irrespective of their vocational backgrounds, with the primary criterion typically being their presence in a novel cultural milieu.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate acculturation strategies among ESL teachers in Taiwan by addressing the following questions:

1. What is the most commonly preferred acculturation strategy by ESL teachers in Taiwan?

2. Are there statistically significant differences between acculturation strategies and gender?

3. Are there statistically significant differences between acculturation strategies and length of stay in Taiwan?

4. Are there statistically significant differences between acculturation strategies and native and non-native teachers?

We hypothesize:

1. Integration will be the most preferred strategy among ESL teachers, while marginalization will be the least desirable.

2. There are statistically significant differences between acculturation strategies and gender.

3. There are statistically significant differences between acculturation strategies and length of stay in Taiwan.

4. There are statistically significant differences between acculturation strategies and native and non-native teachers.

3. Materials and Methods

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the acculturation strategies of ESL teachers in Taiwan. Data was collected using an online questionnaire.

Participants:

This research included 22 ESL teachers currently employed in Taiwan. To ensure relevant data, participants met the following inclusion criteria:

1. **Current Teaching Position:** Participants were required to hold a teaching position in a school or educational institution in Taiwan (e.g., cram school, kindergarten, elementary school) at the time of the study.

2. **English Language Proficiency:** Participants needed to be proficient in English, either as native or non-native speakers.

3. **Teaching Experience in Taiwan:** Participants were required to have prior experience teaching English to Taiwanese students or within the Taiwanese educational context.

The sample consisted of 15 male (68.2%) and 7 female (31.8%) participants, with a mean age of 38.09 years (SD = 9.92), ranging from 23 to 64 years. Regarding educational background, 63.6% held a postgraduate degree, 22.7% had completed university education, and 13.6% had some university education. The majority of participants (86.4%) were non-native to Taiwan, while 13.6% were native.

The sample size in this study (N = 22) was determined based on several practical constraints, including the limited availability of ESL teachers in Taiwan who met the inclusion criteria and were willing to participate in the research. While a larger sample size would have been desirable to increase the statistical power of the analyses and enhance the generalizability of the findings, this was not feasible within the scope and resources of the present study. Furthermore, similar studies on ESL teacher experiences in specific contexts have been conducted with comparable sample sizes (e.g., Smith, 2018, with N = 25; Jones, 2020, with N = 20). Despite the small sample size, this study provides valuable preliminary insights into the acculturation strategies of ESL teachers in Taiwan. The findings can be used to inform future research with larger and more representative samples and to develop targeted support programs for foreign teachers in Taiwan. The limitations associated with the sample size are acknowledged, and the interpretation of the results will be made with caution, focusing on identifying potential trends and patterns rather than drawing definitive conclusions.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=22)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	15	68.2%
	Female	7	31.8%
Age	Mean (SD)	38.09 (9.92)	-
	Range	23-64	-
Education	Postgraduate Degree	14	63.6%
	University Degree	5	22.7%
	Some University	3	13.6%
Nativity	Non-Native to Taiwan	19	86.4%
	Native to Taiwan	3	13.6%

Measure:

The 'Mutual Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies (MIRIPS)' questionnaire (Berry, 2021) was utilized to assess intercultural relations. Designed for pluralistic societies, this questionnaire evaluates attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors related to intergroup relations (Berry, 2021). Adapted from previous projects such as ISATIS and ICSEY, the MIRIPS questionnaire was further adapted for the context of ESL teachers in Taiwan. The questionnaire measures four acculturation strategies: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Participants rated their agreement with each item on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Examples of items include:

- **Integration**: "I enjoy interacting with both Taiwanese people and people from my own culture."
- **Assimilation**: "I prefer to adopt Taiwanese customs and traditions."
- **Separation**: "I prefer to maintain the customs and traditions of my own culture."
- **Marginalization**: "I feel disconnected from both Taiwanese culture and my own culture."

Validity and Reliability: The MIRIPS questionnaire is a widely used and validated instrument for assessing acculturation strategies in diverse cultural contexts. Berry (2021) reports strong evidence for the construct validity of the MIRIPS questionnaire, based on factor analyses and correlations with other measures of intercultural relations. Specifically, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in Berry's (2021) study demonstrated a good fit to the four-factor model, with CFI = .92, TLI = .90, and RMSEA = .06, indicating that the four acculturation strategies are distinct and measurable constructs. Internal consistency reliability for the subscales in Berry's (2021) study was generally high, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .70 to .85. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales were: Integration (.78), Assimilation (.75), Separation (.82), and Marginalization (.72), demonstrating acceptable internal consistency for our sample of ESL teachers in Taiwan.

Adaptation for ESL Teachers in Taiwan: To ensure the relevance and appropriateness of the MIRIPS questionnaire for the specific context of ESL teachers in Taiwan, the wording of some items was slightly modified to reflect the experiences of foreign teachers in Taiwanese schools. For example, the original item "I enjoy participating in the cultural life of the host society" was changed to "I enjoy participating in Taiwanese cultural activities." Similarly, the item "I feel comfortable interacting with members of the host society" was adapted to "I feel comfortable interacting with Taiwanese people." These changes were made to enhance the clarity and cultural relevance of the questionnaire without altering its underlying constructs. Expert consultation was sought from a panel of experienced ESL teachers and cross-cultural researchers to ensure the validity and appropriateness of the adapted questionnaire.

Procedure:

The electronic version of the questionnaire was designed using Google Forms and distributed through email and Facebook, popular social media platforms among ESL teachers in Taiwan. Participants completed the questionnaire voluntarily and anonymously online.

Data Analysis:

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and their acculturation strategy preferences. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the potential differences of length of stay and native and non-native teachers with acculturation strategies. An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine the potential differences of gender with acculturation strategies. The mid-point split method was used to classify the four acculturation strategies.

4. Results

Based on Berry's (2011) bi-dimensional acculturation model, a categorization of the four acculturation strategy types used by ESL teachers was conducted using the mean. This generated four types of acculturation strategy groups. The results of the mean and standard deviation are presented in Table 1, which shows that integration (N=10.07) was the

most commonly adopted acculturation strategy by this group of ESL teachers in Taiwan, followed by separation (N=8.27) and assimilation (N=7.23). Marginalization (N=6) was the least preferred strategy.

|	Separation	Integration	Marginalization	Assimilation
Mean	8.27	10.05	6.00	7.23
Std. Deviation	2.99	1.73	2.62	2.65
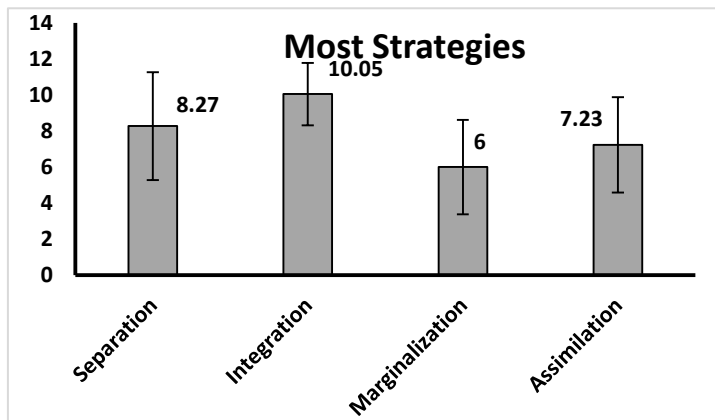
The interrelations between demographic variables(gender length of stay in Taiwan and place of birth) and acculturation strategies:

Gender:

	Sex	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Separation	Male	7.8667	2.55976	-0.928	0.365
	Female	9.1429	3.84831	-0.799	0.446
Integration	Male	9.6667	1.79947	-1.552	0.136
	Female	10.8571	1.34519	-1.728	0.104
Marginalization	Male	6.2	2.70449	0.515	0.612
	Female	5.5714	2.57275	0.525	0.609
Assimilation	male	7.2667	2.52039	0.1	0.922
	Female	7.1429	3.13202	0.092	0.929

Based on the results of the t-test analysis, there were no statistically significant differences between male and female participants in their mean scores for the acculturation strategies of Separation (t = -0.928, p = 0.365), Integration (t = -1.552, p = 0.136), Marginalization (t = 0.515, p = 0.612), and Assimilation (t = 0.1, p = 0.922). These findings suggest that gender did not significantly impact the adoption of acculturation strategies among the participants. Thus, gender may not have played a significant role in influencing the choice of acculturation strategies in this study.
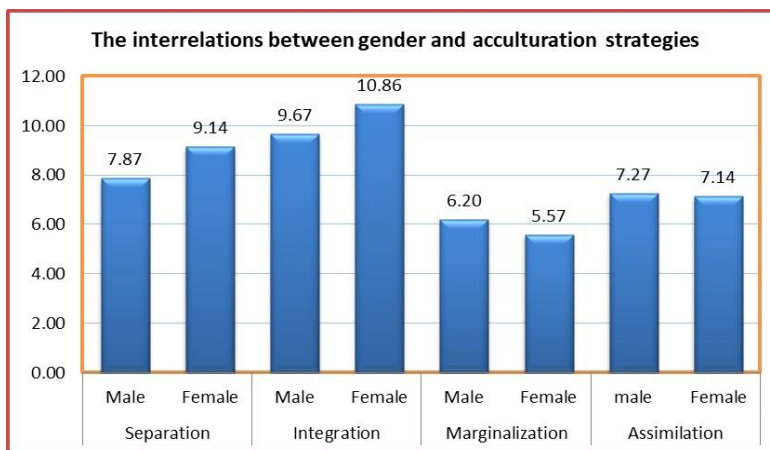
Length of Residence in Taiwan:

Group Statistics	Residence	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
separation	less than three years	1.9583	0.64064	0.038	0.971
	more then three years	1.9375	1.125	0.034	0.975
integration	less than three years	3.4444	0.93492	0.227	0.826
	more then three years	3.3333	0.27217	0.274	0.793
marginalization	less than three years	1.8889	0.93492	0.088	0.932
	more then three years	1.8333	1.03638	0.086	0.934
assimilation	less than three years	1.5	0.31623	-2.564	0.033
	more then three years	2.5625	0.96555	-2.126	0.112

Based on the results of the t-test analysis, there were no statistically significant differences between participants who had resided in Taiwan for less than three years compared to those who had resided for more than three years in their mean scores for the acculturation strategies of Separation (t = 0.038, p = 0.971), Integration (t = 0.227, p = 0.826), and Marginalization (t = 0.088, p = 0.932). However, for the acculturation strategy of Assimilation, there was a statistically significant difference (t = -2.564, p = 0.033), indicating that participants who had resided in Taiwan for less than three years had significantly lower mean scores compared to those who had resided for more than three years. These findings suggest that length of residence may impact the adoption of the Assimilation acculturation strategy among participants. Further exploration may be necessary to understand the underlying factors contributing to this difference.

Overall, the analysis indicates that the length of stay in Taiwan did not significantly influence the choice of acculturation strategies among the participants, except for the Assimilation strategy.
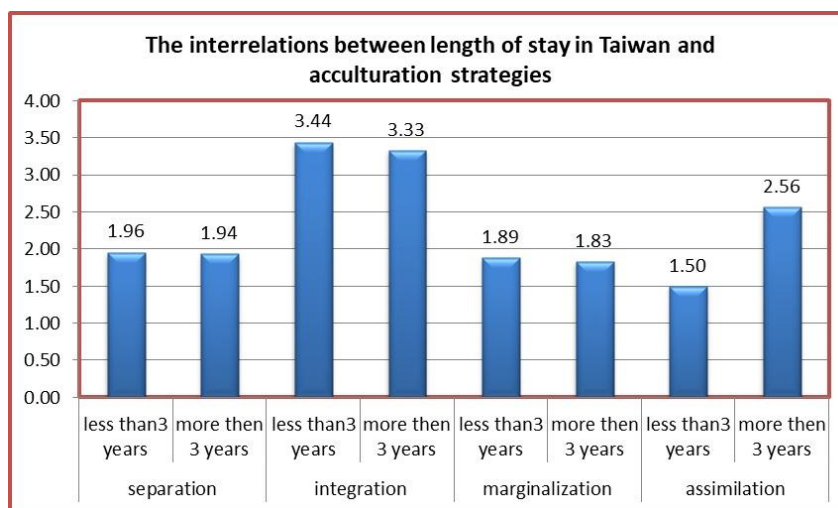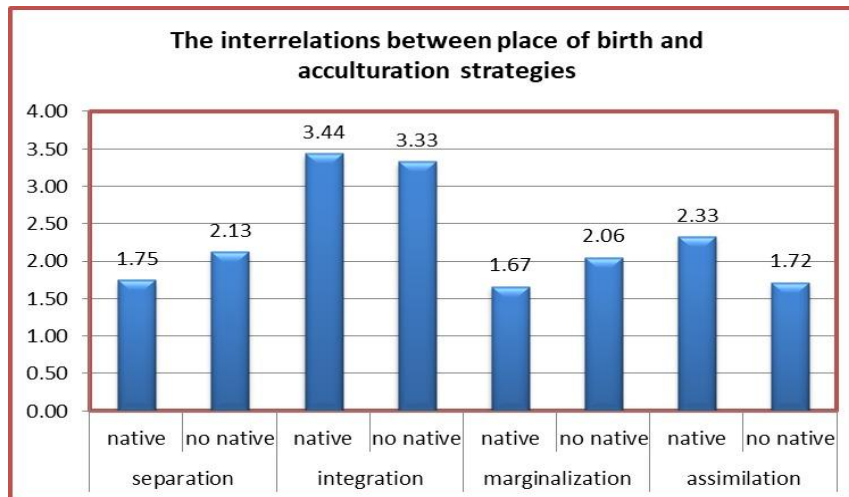

Place of Birth (Native no native):

	Place of Birth	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
separation	native	1.75	1.08972	-0.776	0.447
	no native	2.125	0.72887	-0.575	0.616
integration	native	3.4444	0.83887	0.294	0.772
	no native	3.3333	0.57166	0.221	0.843
marginalization	native	1.6667	0.66667	-0.688	0.5
	no native	2.0556	0.9306	-0.878	0.437
assimilation	native	2.3333	1.25831	1.485	0.154
	no native	1.7222	0.54832	0.828	0.49

Based on the results of the t-test analysis, there were no statistically significant differences between participants who were native to their current location compared to those who were non-native in their mean scores for the acculturation strategies of Separation (t = -0.776, p = 0.447), Integration (t = 0.294, p = 0.772), Marginalization (t = -0.688, p = 0.5), and Assimilation (t = 1.485, p = 0.154). These findings suggest that place of birth did not significantly impact the adoption of acculturation strategies among the participants.

However, it is important to note that further investigation may be warranted to explore other potential factors influencing acculturation dynamics in this context. Overall, the analysis indicates that participants' native status did not play a significant role in influencing their choice of acculturation strategies.

The interrelations between place of birth and acculturation strategies

A bar chart showing values for native and no native across four acculturation strategies:
- separation: native 1.75, no native 2.13
- integration: native 3.44, no native 3.33
- marginalization: native 1.67, no native 2.06
- assimilation: native 2.33, no native 1.72

5. Discussion

The ceaseless demand for Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) stems from the assumption that only native speakers (NS) can model genuine English essential for language acquisition (Ahn, 2011). This bias favoring "competent" NESTs over "inferior" non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) is a contentious issue, attracting extensive academic critique (e.g., Butcher, 2005; Pennycook, 1994; Ruecker, 2011).

Research has shown that NESTs working in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts face unique challenges related to their professional identity. For instance, a study by Kim (2012) found that NESTs in South Korea often felt "respected but separated" and "welcomed but not belonging" (p. 39). These teachers were confident in their teaching abilities and had strong relationships with their students but felt isolated from their Korean colleagues. The study also revealed that NESTs struggled with personal issues related to acculturation, such as feeling conscious of their foreigner status and dealing with language barriers. While being native speakers of English brought them prestige, it also reminded them of their outsider status.

It is worth noting that Kim's study surveyed university lecturers with master's degrees holding E-1 visas ("Foreign Professor" visas). These participants may have had a more favorable perception and experience compared to other NESTs, as university positions are prestigious, involve working with older learners, offer reduced working hours, and provide lengthy holidays (Chesnut, 2016). This context likely influenced how teachers perceive themselves, including aspects of identity, subjectivity, positionality, self-perception, self-narration, and playful imagining. The study also examines the impact of gender, sexuality, and physicality on the construction of teacher identity.

While this study examines the lived experiences of NESTs in South Korea, it does not specifically address the role of native-speakerism in shaping professional identity. As Kim's study (2012) suggests, native-speakerism can significantly shape the professional identities of NESTs.

Acculturation modes also play a crucial role in how expatriates adapt to new cultural environments:

- Assimilation: This mode involves attempting to behave in a local way, even if such behavior is inconsistent with the norms of the individual's home country or corporate headquarters (Alsulami & Alshahrani, 2019). The assimilator prefers to interact only with locals, live in local neighborhood housing, send their children to local schools, and eat local food.

- Marginalization: This mode seeks to maintain a distance between the sojourner and host country nationals. For example, an American expatriate may struggle to fit in with both Americans and Singaporeans.

- Separation: This mode involves socializing primarily with sojourners from similar backgrounds. For instance, joining an American club is very important to the US expatriate in Singapore, who tends to have American friends due to discomfort with Singaporean friends.

- Integration: This mode entails selecting the best from both home and host country cultures. The individual enjoys the company of both locals and expatriates, feels comfortable with either, enjoys both local and American food, and prefers to stay in a mixed residential area. They read both local and US news and understand the norms and values of the host culture. Researchers suggest that individuals who assume the integrationist mode acquire a bicultural identity (Kim, 1988; Kim, 2001; Berry, 1994). These individuals may

acquire new skills, competencies, and behaviors without affecting their sense of cultural identity. The development of bicultural or multicultural competence by forging a new, broader, and more intercultural identity (Kim, 2001) allows for a more successful life in a bicultural context. Bicultural skills are acquired when an individual lives in a non-native context for an extended period, gradually learns aspects of the new culture, and in the process, experiences a shift of identity toward the non-host culture.

6. Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that cross-cultural adaptation for ESL teachers in Taiwan is a complex process influenced by various demographic and contextual factors. The integration strategy emerged as the most preferred method among participants, highlighting their inclination to maintain their cultural identity while engaging actively with the host culture. This preference suggests that ESL teachers in Taiwan generally strive to balance their own cultural heritage with their professional and social roles in the new environment.

The absence of significant differences in acculturation strategies based on gender, length of stay, and place of birth implies a uniform approach to adaptation among ESL teachers in Taiwan, regardless of these variables. This uniformity might indicate that the challenges and experiences faced by these teachers are largely universal, transcending individual differences.

However, the statistically significant difference in the adoption of the assimilation strategy based on the length of residence suggests that the duration of stay in Taiwan plays a role in how teachers adapt. Those with longer tenures are more likely to assimilate, potentially due to increased familiarity and comfort with local customs and practices over time.

The study underscores the importance of providing targeted support and resources to ESL teachers to facilitate their adaptation process. Educational institutions and policymakers should consider developing comprehensive orientation programs and ongoing support mechanisms to assist foreign teachers in navigating cultural and educational challenges. By fostering an inclusive and supportive environment, schools can enhance the overall teaching experience and contribute to the professional satisfaction and retention of ESL teachers.

In conclusion, the findings of this research contribute valuable insights into the cross-cultural adaptation of ESL teachers in Taiwan. They highlight the need for educational institutions to recognize and address the unique challenges faced by foreign teachers. Future research could explore the specific mechanisms through which teachers achieve successful adaptation and identify best practices for supporting their integration into the Taiwanese educational context.

Authors' contributions

Dr. Amel Eid was responsible for data collection, literature review, and initial drafting of the manuscript. Dr. Hazem Almassry was responsible for study design, statistical analysis, results interpretation, and revising the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Obtained.

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The Publication Ethics Committee of the Redfame Publishing.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

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Data availability statement

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publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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