

From Learners to Tutors: Professional Identity Development of Teaching Clinic Alumni in Pare

Efriswan Situmorang¹, Farida Repelita Waty Kembaren²

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan, Email: efriswansitumorang21@gmail.com*

²Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan, Email: faridarepelita@uinsu.ac.id

*Penulis Korespondensi

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Abstrak: Pengembangan profesional guru (*Teacher Professional Development/TPD*) dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris sering kali masih berorientasi pada teori, sehingga guru pemula kurang siap menghadapi tuntutan praktis di kelas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana partisipasi dalam program *Teaching Clinic* (TC) berkontribusi terhadap pengembangan profesional tutor bahasa Inggris di Pare, Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (IPA), penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana para alumni memaknai transisi mereka dari pembelajar bahasa menjadi tutor profesional. Tiga alumni TC yang telah menyelesaikan program pelatihan selama sepuluh bulan dan memiliki pengalaman mengajar minimal enam bulan dipilih secara purposif sebagai partisipan penelitian. Data dikumpulkan melalui dua putaran wawancara semi-terstruktur dan didukung dengan analisis dokumen berupa rencana pembelajaran, bahan ajar, dan jurnal reflektif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perkembangan tutor dipengaruhi oleh rutinitas belajar yang intensif, komunitas belajar berbasis dukungan sebaya, hubungan mentoring, serta praktik mengajar yang kaya umpan balik. Identitas profesional tutor menjadi lebih kuat ketika peserta mulai memandang kegiatan mengajar sebagai tanggung jawab terhadap pembelajaran siswa, bukan sekadar proses meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa pribadi. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya pelatihan berbasis praktik dalam mendukung pengembangan tutor sekaligus menunjukkan kebutuhan penguatan pada aspek bahasa Inggris akademik dan pedagogi digital.

Kata kunci: pengembangan profesional guru; pengajaran bahasa Inggris; identitas profesional; pelatihan berbasis praktik.

Abstract: *Teacher professional development (TPD) in English language teaching often remains theory-oriented, leaving novice teachers insufficiently prepared for practical classroom demands. This study explores how participation in the Teaching Clinic (TC) program contributes to the professional development of English tutors in Pare, Indonesia. Using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach, the research examines how alumni interpret their transition from language learners to professional tutors. Three TC alumni who had completed the ten-month training program and had at least six months of tutoring experience were purposively selected. Data were collected through two rounds of semi-structured interviews and supported by document analysis of lesson plans, teaching materials, and reflective journals. The findings indicate that tutor development is shaped by intensive learning routines, peer-supported learning communities, mentoring relationships, and feedback-rich teaching practice. Professional identity becomes stronger when participants begin to perceive teaching as a responsibility toward learners rather than merely a process of improving their own language skills. The study highlights the value of practice-based training in supporting tutor development while also identifying the need for further development in academic English and digital pedagogy.*

Keyword: *teacher professional development; English tutoring; professional identity; practice-based training*

INTRODUCTION

Teacher professional development (TPD) plays a central role in improving the quality and sustainability of English language teaching (ELT). Beyond strengthening instructional knowledge, effective professional development supports teachers' confidence, engagement, and long-term commitment to the profession (Hatuye Helate et al., 2023; Vieira et al., 2024). In contemporary ELT contexts, teachers and tutors are required to make rapid pedagogical decisions, address diverse learner needs, and maintain learner motivation. These demands require not only linguistic competence but also adaptive pedagogical skills and emotional readiness. Consequently, professional learning is increasingly understood as a continuous and practice-oriented process rather than a single training event (Vieira et al., 2024).

Despite this recognition, many teacher education and training programs still struggle to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom practice. Research in various contexts indicates that prospective English teachers often face challenges related to language proficiency, pedagogical competence, and limited opportunities for authentic teaching practice (Suar et al., 2025). Similar tensions have been reported in teacher education systems where theoretical instruction dominates training programs, leaving novice teachers insufficiently prepared for real classroom demands (Phillips & Condy, 2023; Steele &

Zhang, 2016). In other contexts, teachers report difficulties implementing communicative or student-centered approaches due to limited methodological support and practical rehearsal during training (Orosz et al., 2021). These findings suggest that professional competence in ELT cannot be developed solely through conceptual knowledge; rather, it requires opportunities for teaching practice, feedback, and reflection.

Practice-based and reflective approaches to professional development have therefore received increasing attention in ELT research. Reflection during practicum experiences allows novice teachers to connect theoretical understanding with classroom decision-making while gradually strengthening pedagogical competence (Miftah et al., 2025). At the same time, teacher competence has been shown to have measurable implications for student learning outcomes, particularly when teachers demonstrate pedagogical content knowledge and instructional adaptability (Johansson et al., 2015). Recent discussions also emphasize the importance of technological and digital pedagogical competencies in contemporary ELT, as technology-integrated training can support innovative teaching practices (Aydemir Altaş & Babacan, 2025). Together, these studies highlight that effective TPD should integrate teaching practice, mentoring, feedback, and reflective learning.

Another important dimension of teacher development concerns the

formation of professional identity. Teacher identity is not fixed but develops through participation in professional communities where individuals negotiate their roles, beliefs, and responsibilities as educators (Gomila-Grau et al., 2025). Motivation often serves as an initial factor influencing individuals' decision to enter teaching or teacher training programs (Saito, 2024). However, identity formation continues as teachers interpret their experiences in authentic teaching environments and gradually internalize professional expectations. Reflective practice plays a critical role in this process because it enables teachers to examine their assumptions, evaluate instructional choices, and align their teaching practices with professional values (Miftah et al., 2025). In addition, teaching involves emotional and relational work, requiring teachers to regulate emotions and maintain productive relationships with learners. Emotional self-management is therefore increasingly recognized as a component of professional competence in ELT (Najjarpour, 2024). These perspectives suggest that teacher development is shaped not only by knowledge and skills but also by identity construction, emotional regulation, and social interaction within learning communities.

Experiential learning environments are particularly influential in strengthening teachers' self-efficacy and professional readiness. Teachers who experience active learning during training are more likely to develop confidence in

their teaching abilities and adopt student-centered instructional practices (Pablo-Lerchundi et al., 2023). Higher levels of teacher self-efficacy are associated with stronger classroom management, instructional innovation, and professional resilience (Vieira et al., 2024). Moreover, training that incorporates social, emotional, and cultural competencies can enhance teachers' well-being and support the development of collaborative learning environments (Romano et al., 2025). These insights suggest that effective teacher development programs should combine experiential learning, reflective practice, and supportive mentoring structures.

Within the Indonesian context, one environment that reflects these practice-oriented principles is the Teaching Clinic (TC) program implemented by an English course institution in Pare, East Java. Pare is widely known as an informal English learning hub where numerous language courses and tutoring programs operate. The Teaching Clinic is a scholarship-based ten-month training program designed to prepare participants to become English tutors through intensive language learning, pedagogical training, mentoring, microteaching, and on-the-job teaching practice. Unlike many formal teacher education programs, the Teaching Clinic emphasizes daily practice, observation of experienced tutors, and guided reflection as part of its training structure. Through these activities, participants are expected to develop not only linguistic competence

but also teaching skills, professional attitudes, and confidence in interacting with learners.

Although the Teaching Clinic has gained recognition as a training pathway for aspiring English tutors, limited research has examined how participants experience this program and how it influences their professional development after graduation. Most existing studies on ELT professional development focus on formal teacher education programs or school-based teachers, leaving informal tutoring contexts underexplored. As a result, little is known about how practice-based programs in tutoring environments shape tutors' professional identity, pedagogical competence, and career trajectories. Understanding these experiences is important because tutoring institutions increasingly contribute to language education and teacher formation in many regions.

Therefore, this study investigates the lived experiences of Teaching Clinic alumni and how they interpret their transition from learners to professional English tutors. Specifically, the study aims to explore how participation in the Teaching Clinic contributes to alumni's professional identity development, pedagogical competence, reflective practice, and teaching self-efficacy. The study also examines how the program influences alumni's career trajectories and engagement in the tutoring profession, as well as the challenges and opportunities they encounter before, during, and after the program. By examining these

experiences through an interpretative phenomenological lens, this research seeks to provide deeper insight into how professional becoming is constructed within a practice-based tutoring ecosystem.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the professional development of English tutors within an informal tutoring environment rather than within formal teacher education institutions. By examining the lived experiences of Teaching Clinic alumni in Pare, this study highlights how intensive practice, mentoring relationships, peer learning communities, and real teaching responsibilities interact to shape tutors' professional identity and competence. The findings are expected to contribute to the broader discussion of ELT teacher professional development by offering context-sensitive insights into how practice-rich programs can support the transition from language learners to professional educators in non-formal learning settings.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach with an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) design to explore how Teaching Clinic alumni interpret their experiences of becoming professional English tutors. IPA is suitable for investigating individuals' lived experiences and how they make sense of significant personal and professional transitions (Oluka, 2025; Smith et al., 2022). Within the field of language teacher development, this

approach allows researchers to examine how participants interpret their learning experiences, professional responsibilities, and identity formation in specific social contexts. The present study therefore focuses on understanding how alumni perceive the contribution of the Teaching Clinic program to their pedagogical competence, professional identity, and career development as English tutors.

The research was conducted in Pare, Kediri, East Java, Indonesia, an area widely known as a center of informal English language learning where numerous language courses and tutoring programs operate. The participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that those involved could provide rich and relevant information related to the research focus. Three alumni of the Teaching Clinic program participated in this study. To ensure the depth of experiential data required in IPA studies, the participants met several criteria: they had completed the ten-month Teaching Clinic training program, were actively working as English tutors in Pare, and had at least six months of post-program teaching experience. The participants were given pseudonyms (Raf, Win, and Tan) to maintain confidentiality and ethical protection of their identities.

The primary research materials consisted of participants' experiential narratives related to their professional development during and after the Teaching Clinic program. Data were generated through two rounds of semi-structured interviews with each

participant. Each interview lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or online depending on participants' availability. The interview protocol focused on several aspects relevant to teacher professional development, including motivations for joining the program, learning experiences during the training process, mentoring interactions, teaching practice experiences, identity changes, challenges encountered in tutoring contexts, and perceptions of professional growth. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy of the data.

To strengthen the credibility and contextual richness of the findings, document analysis was also conducted as a supporting data source. The documents included participants' lesson plans, teaching materials, program guidelines, and reflective journals produced during the training program. These materials helped provide additional insight into participants' pedagogical learning processes and reflective development throughout the program. Reflection documents were particularly useful in understanding how participants evaluated their teaching practices and interpreted their professional growth over time, which aligns with the role of reflection in teacher development research (Miftah et al., 2025).

Several research tools were used during the data collection process. These included an interview guide designed to explore participants'

lived experiences, audio recording devices to capture interview data, and field notes to document contextual observations during interviews. Afterward, qualitative data analysis procedures were conducted manually by the researcher to maintain close engagement with the data.

Data analysis followed the systematic procedures of interpretative phenomenological analysis as outlined by Smith et al. (2022). The analysis began with repeated reading of the interview transcripts to achieve deep familiarity with the participants' accounts. During this stage, the researcher conducted initial noting to identify significant statements, reflections, and experiential descriptions relevant to professional development. The second stage involved developing emergent themes by interpreting how participants made sense of their experiences. These themes captured patterns related to learning processes, mentoring relationships, teaching competence, and identity development. In the third stage, connections between themes were examined within each participant's account to construct a coherent narrative of individual experience. Finally, cross-case analysis was conducted to identify shared patterns across participants while preserving the idiographic focus of IPA. This process resulted in several overarching themes representing how Teaching Clinic alumni experienced their transition from learners to professional English tutors.

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided voluntary consent before participating. They were assured that their participation was confidential and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Pseudonyms were used in all research reports, and all digital data were stored securely to protect participants' privacy. These procedures were implemented to ensure ethical integrity and respectful representation of participants' experiences in accordance with qualitative research standards in educational research (Emery & Anderman, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study explores how Teaching Clinic (TC) alumni interpret their transition from learners to professional English tutors and how the program contributes to their professional identity, pedagogical competence, and career development. The analysis reveals several interconnected themes that explain participants' professional development processes: (1) entry motivations and imagined professional futures, (2) disciplined learning through an intensive training ecology, (3) mentoring and peer community as psychosocial support, (4) competence development through practice–feedback cycles and observation, (5) professional identity formation through responsibility for learners, and (6) professional

challenges and ongoing development after graduation. Together, these themes explain how professional becoming is constructed within a practice-based tutoring ecosystem.

Entry Motivations and Imagined Professional Futures

Participants entered the Teaching Clinic program with different motivations and expectations about their professional futures. These initial orientations shaped how they interpreted the learning experiences within the program and influenced the development of their professional identities.

Raf joined the program with a clear long-term professional goal related to establishing his own English course. He explained: “I was focused on improving my English because I want to build my own English course in the future. When I heard about the TC, it sounded exactly like what I was looking for—training that develops professional English tutors.”

This statement shows that Raf viewed the program as a pathway toward entrepreneurial engagement in language education. His motivation was therefore strongly career-oriented and instrumental.

Tan, in contrast, initially viewed the program as preparation for academic and professional readiness rather than specifically for teaching. She stated: “I joined Teaching Clinic as preparation for my future plans—especially to support my goal of pursuing a master’s degree and to help me be ready for work after graduating with my bachelor’s degree.”

Her statement indicates that the program initially functioned as a transitional step between undergraduate education and future opportunities.

Win’s motivation was more pragmatic and influenced by family encouragement. She explained: “I joined the TC because I realized how important English is. My family also encouraged me to learn it, and in the short term I wanted to continue my studies.”

Interestingly, she also admitted that she did not initially imagine becoming a tutor: “Before joining the program, I didn’t expect to become an English teacher.”

These narratives demonstrate that participants did not begin the program with a uniform teacher identity. Instead, they entered with diverse motivations—entrepreneurial ambitions, academic preparation, and pragmatic language improvement. This finding supports research suggesting that professional identity in teaching often develops through experience rather than emerging solely from initial career intentions (Saito, 2024). Within the Teaching Clinic environment, participants’ initial motivations gradually evolved into a stronger identification with the tutor role.

Discipline Through an Intensive Learning Ecology

A defining characteristic of the Teaching Clinic experience was its intensive learning structure, which required participants to follow a highly disciplined daily routine. Participants

consistently described the program as academically demanding but transformative in shaping their learning habits.

Raf described a significant shift in his learning routine: “Before joining TC, I mostly went to class and did homework, but I didn’t have a structured daily learning routine. After joining TC, the schedule pushed me to practice every day.”

He further explained that the routine required consistent practice: “I had to memorize vocabulary, practice speaking, and follow a clear daily target. Because of that routine, my English improved much faster than before.”

Similarly, Tan emphasized the intensity of the training schedule: “Before joining the program, I expected the TC would be very demanding and stressful because the schedule looked intense—like having up to seven classes a day.”

Despite this expectation, she later realized that the program was manageable due to support from mentors and peers.

Win also described how the intensive schedule required adaptive learning strategies: “The lessons were very intensive and the material was packed, so I couldn’t fully understand everything during class.”

To cope with this challenge, she joined an additional study group: “In the study club, friends who had already understood the material helped guide those of us who were still struggling.”

These statements illustrate how the intensive program structure

fostered disciplined learning habits and collaborative problem-solving. Rather than functioning solely as academic pressure, the program created a learning ecology where peer interaction and structured routines supported sustained development. Such collaborative learning environments are consistent with the concept of professional learning communities that support teacher development through shared practice and mutual support (Gomila-Grau et al., 2025).

Mentoring and Peer Community as Psychosocial Support

Mentoring played a crucial role in shaping participants’ learning experiences and professional confidence. Participants described mentoring as extending beyond technical teaching guidance to include personal development and emotional support.

Raf explained that mentoring influenced his personal development: “The mentoring in the TC focused more on self-development—things like how to behave toward others, make decisions, socialize, build confidence, and handle different types of students.”

He further noted that mentoring influenced his personality: “It really changed my character and the way I think, especially by helping me shift away from being very introverted.”

Win similarly emphasized the emotional dimension of mentoring: “The mentors were very helpful—especially because they guided us in a

warm, family-like way. That created a safe space for me to share personal stories or concerns.”

Tan also highlighted how mentor support helped participants cope with the demanding training schedule: “The supportive environment and the mentors’ guidance really motivated me and helped me get through each stage.”

These statements indicate that mentoring served not only as pedagogical guidance but also as psychosocial scaffolding that supported participants’ confidence, persistence, and personal growth. The Teaching Clinic context appears to have enabled this process by providing a structured yet supportive environment in which participants received ongoing guidance, personal feedback, and emotional support from mentors. Within this setting, participants were not only trained to teach but were also encouraged to reflect on themselves, build confidence, and adapt to social and professional demands. Such mentoring relationships are widely recognized as important factors in strengthening teacher self-efficacy and professional engagement (Vieira et al., 2024).

In terms of professional identity formation, this suggests that becoming a tutor is shaped not only by the acquisition of pedagogical skills, but also by participation in a relational and emotionally supportive community that fosters identity development, self-efficacy, and a sense of professional belonging.

Competence Development Through Practice-Feedback Cycles and Observation

Participants consistently emphasized that their teaching competence developed through repeated cycles of practice, feedback, and reflection. Micro-teaching sessions provided structured opportunities for participants to practice teaching and receive detailed evaluations.

Raf described the impact of feedback during micro-teaching: “After every performance, I received detailed feedback on my teaching media, learning materials, and pedagogical approach.”

He further explained the value of peer feedback: “The feedback didn’t only come from the tutor; it also came from other participants. That gave me multiple perspectives.”

For Tan, micro-teaching represented her first authentic teaching experience: “Micro-teaching in the TC was my first real teaching experience because my academic background isn’t in education.”

She also learned essential pedagogical skills: “It helped me understand what it means to be a tutor through hands-on practice—designing a syllabus, preparing teaching materials, and managing a class.”

Win emphasized the relational dimension of teaching competence: “From the micro-teaching sessions, I learned that being a tutor isn’t only about explaining material. A good tutor also needs to understand the students and keep the class active.”

Class observation also contributed to participants' professional learning. Raf explained: "Class observation really helped me because I was able to see new teaching methods from other professional tutors."

Similarly, Tan noted that observing classes allowed her to understand the learner perspective: "It helped me understand how students feel when they are taught using certain methods."

These experiences demonstrate that competence was developed through experiential learning processes involving observation, practice, and feedback. Such processes align with research emphasizing the importance of experiential learning in teacher education (Pablo-Lerchundi et al., 2023).

Professional Identity Formation Through Responsibility

A critical turning point in participants' professional development occurred when they began teaching real students during the on-the-job training phase.

Raf described this moment clearly: "I started to feel like a tutor during the OJT program. That's when I was assigned to teach real students, not just practice in training."

He further explained the shift in responsibility: "I realized I had a responsibility—not only to improve myself, but also to help students understand the material."

Tan reported a similar turning point when she became responsible

for teaching dormitory classes: "I realized I wasn't only responsible for improving my own English anymore—I also had a responsibility to guide the students to learn and grow."

These experiences show that professional identity developed when participants began to perceive teaching as a responsibility toward learners rather than merely as a learning activity. This transition reflects broader discussions of teacher identity development, which emphasize responsibility for learners as a central component of professional identity formation (Gomila-Grau et al., 2025).

Professional Challenges and Continuing Development

After completing the program, participants encountered various challenges within Pare's tutoring ecosystem, particularly related to classroom management, emotional regulation, and communication with diverse learners.

Raf described difficulties managing certain student behaviors: "One challenge I faced was teaching very active students—especially those who were difficult to manage in class."

However, he interpreted these challenges as opportunities for professional growth: "Those challenges actually pushed me to improve. They trained me to manage my emotions."

Win reported similar experiences related to emotional regulation: "Sometimes students' behavior made me feel frustrated or angry. However, I gradually learned to

control my reactions because I realized that, as a teacher, I need to stay professional.”

Tan identified challenges related to teaching older learners: “Some students were older than me, sometimes even around my parents’ age. At first, I felt insecure and lacked confidence.”

However, through experience she developed strategies for respectful communication.

Participants also recognized areas for further professional development. Raf explained: “I feel confident teaching general English, but I still need to improve my grammar mastery and strengthen my academic English skills, especially because I plan to take IELTS.”

Tan similarly emphasized the need for digital teaching skills: “Most of the teaching relies on offline materials like printed handouts, so I’m still learning how to integrate more digital media into my lessons.”

These reflections indicate that professional development continues beyond the training program and also point to several limitations of the program as perceived by the participants. While the Teaching Clinic appeared to strengthen participants’ confidence in basic teaching practice, it seems to have provided less support for the development of academic English, IELTS preparation and digital teaching skills. This suggests that emotional regulation, adaptive communication, and continued skill development remain essential aspects of tutor professionalism that were not fully addressed within the program.

Emotional competence, in particular, has been recognized as an important component of effective teaching and teacher well-being (Najjarpour, 2024).

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Teaching Clinic program contributes to tutor development through a combination of intensive learning routines, supportive mentoring relationships, peer learning communities, and feedback-rich teaching practice. These elements collectively support the development of pedagogical competence, professional identity, and teaching confidence.

Most importantly, the transition from trainee to professional tutor occurs when participants begin to interpret teaching as a responsibility toward learners. This responsibility-based identity shift represents a critical stage in the professional becoming of English tutors within practice-based training environments.

By examining these processes within the tutoring ecosystem of Pare, the study provides new insights into how informal teacher development programs can effectively support the transformation of language learners into professional educators.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how participation in the Teaching Clinic program contributes to the professional development of English tutors in Pare by exploring alumni’s lived experiences after completing the

training. The findings indicate that the program supports tutor development through an integrated learning ecology consisting of intensive learning routines, peer-supported learning, mentoring relationships, and feedback-rich teaching practice. These elements collectively create a developmental environment in which participants gradually move from language learners to professionals capable of managing real teaching responsibilities.

The study shows that professional identity as a tutor does not emerge simply from acquiring teaching techniques. Instead, it develops when participants begin to interpret teaching as a responsibility toward learners. Experiences such as on-the-job teaching practice, mentoring guidance, and repeated cycles of teaching and feedback help trainees internalize this responsibility and develop confidence in their instructional role. In this sense, professional becoming in the Teaching Clinic context is characterized by a transition from self-oriented learning to learner-oriented responsibility.

The findings also reveal that working within Pare's tutoring ecosystem requires tutors to develop relational and emotional competencies in addition to pedagogical skills. Alumni reported that managing diverse learners, responding to challenging classroom situations, and maintaining professional communication were important aspects of their development. These experiences demonstrate that tutor professionalism in informal language

learning environments is shaped not only by methodological knowledge but also by emotional regulation, adaptive communication, and interpersonal engagement.

Although the program provides a strong foundation for teaching practice, alumni also indicated areas for continued professional development, particularly in academic English, IELTS preparation, and digital pedagogy. These needs suggest that practice-based training programs can be further strengthened by providing clearer pathways for advanced specialization and by integrating more contemporary instructional technologies.

Overall, this study contributes to the discussion of English language teacher professional development by highlighting how practice-rich training environments can support the transformation of language learners into professional tutors in non-formal educational contexts. The findings demonstrate that professional growth in such settings is constructed through sustained practice, mentoring relationships, and the gradual internalization of responsibility for learners' development.

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