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Professional Development and Teaching Strategies of Non-Specialist English Teachers in Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu

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Abstract

Schools facing shortages of qualified English teachers may assign teachers from other disciplines to teach English, creating an out-of-field teaching context. This study examines this phenomenon at Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu (SIKK), an Indonesian Overseas School where recruitment constraints and limited access to specialized language educators make non-specialist English teaching relevant. The study investigates two aspects: the professional development pathways pursued by non-specialist English teachers and their influence on classroom teaching strategies. Using a qualitative descriptive design with narrative inquiry, data were collected from four non-specialist English teachers through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans and student work, and analyzed thematically. The findings are organized into two aspects. First, teacher learning occurred through self-monitoring, external workshops, and peer coaching. Second, these learning experiences shaped teaching strategies through two mechanisms: direct adoption of learned strategies and peer-validated refinement of strategies developed independently. Teachers implemented Project-Based Learning, differentiated instruction, Task-Based Language Teaching, role-play, and game-based or joyful learning, adapting these approaches to students' vocational contexts. The study further reveals a four-stage cognitive process through which professional learning reshaped teachers' perceptions of competence and translated into classroom practice. The findings suggest that, without institutionally tailored training, non-specialist teachers construct their own pathways for professional growth. School leaders and professional development providers should therefore establish structured peer mentoring, dedicated collaboration time, and subject-specific English training tailored to non-specialist teachers' contexts. By linking

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professional learning pathways with classroom strategy development, this study contributes insight into out-of-field teacher education in complex overseas school settings.

1. Introduction

Schools may assign teachers from other disciplines to teach English when qualified English specialists are unavailable, a practice documented in contexts including Japan, China, Austria, and Nigeria (Matsumura, 2020; Tan et al., 2022; Ghamarian et al., 2024; Ogidi, 2025). These teachers are commonly described as non-specialist teachers because they teach subjects outside their primary field of expertise (Darlington, 2017). Such out-of-field teaching is often associated with structural constraints, including teacher shortages, labor market imbalances, and recruitment conditions (Ogidi, 2025). Although teachers may possess general pedagogical knowledge that can be transferred across subjects, teaching outside their specialization can limit their subject-matter knowledge and their ability to conduct in-depth discussions and select appropriate instructional approaches (Biebricher, 2023; Hobbs & Törner, 2019). In English language teaching, this issue is particularly important because teachers are required to combine subject-specific knowledge with pedagogical knowledge and sufficient language proficiency.

Non-specialist English teachers (NSETs) therefore face challenges that extend beyond general teaching competence. Previous studies have reported limitations in pedagogical content knowledge, English proficiency, and confidence when NSETs teach English (Zaid et al., 2021; Matsumura, 2022; Widagsa et al., 2025). These challenges may become more complex in linguistically diverse classrooms, where teachers may have to respond to differences in students' English proficiency and classroom language demands (Matsumura, 2022). Out-of-field teachers may also experience difficulties in instructional strategies and classroom management, particularly when they have limited English proficiency or work with students whose proficiency levels vary. Thus, the challenges experienced by NSETs are not limited to a lack of disciplinary knowledge but also involve adapting existing pedagogical knowledge to the specific demands of English language teaching.

Professional development (PD) has consequently become an important mechanism for addressing these competency gaps. Guskey (2003) defines professional development as processes and activities intended to improve teachers' knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes with the goal of improving student learning outcomes. In language teaching, Richards and Farrell (2005) identify several procedures through which teachers can develop professionally, including workshops, self-monitoring, peer observation, teacher support groups, and peer coaching. Wenger-Trayner (2015) discussed A Community of Practice (CoP) is an important component of professional development because it transitions learning from static, individual instruction into ongoing peer-to-peer collaboration rooted in daily work. CoPs forge a direct link between learning and performance by enabling practitioners to exchange tacit knowledge, troubleshoot real-world challenges, and co-create shared tools and frameworks. Through sustained interaction within a shared domain of interest, members continuously refine their skills and drive collective professional growth.

These approaches are particularly relevant to NSETs because professional development can provide opportunities to develop subject-specific knowledge and instructional strategies that were not acquired through their original academic preparation.

However, previous studies suggest that the relationship between professional development and NSET development is not straightforward. Matsumura et al. (2024) found that professional development aimed at improving classroom English proficiency could enhance NSETs' self-efficacy and emphasized the importance of sustained professional development and peer support. In contrast, Widagsa et al. (2025) argued that general pedagogical and content knowledge alone is insufficient for effective English teaching and highlighted the need for specific disciplinary knowledge and structured professional development. Zaid et al. (2021) similarly found that NSETs required guidance from specialist teachers to strengthen their pedagogical content knowledge, with experienced colleagues playing an important role in their professional development.

Taken together, these studies indicate that PD can support NSET development, but they emphasize different aspects of the process: professional development may strengthen self-efficacy, provide subject-specific knowledge, or offer access to guidance from more experienced teachers. What remains less clear is how these different forms of professional learning are experienced by NSETs and how they are translated into classroom teaching strategies.

The Indonesian context provides an important setting for examining this issue. Previous research on Indonesian overseas schools has shown that teachers may be required to teach beyond their original field of education because of institutional and recruitment-related conditions (Matin et al., 2020). In such settings, teachers may need to adapt their existing knowledge to subjects outside their specialization while continuing to meet the academic demands of the school.

This situation is particularly relevant at Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu (SIKK), an Indonesian overseas school in Sabah, Malaysia, where English instruction at the vocational level is conducted by non-specialist English teachers. SIKK also provides a distinctive context because the professional development available to these teachers is not specifically designed for teachers who teach English outside their specialization. The school provides general In-House Training, but the teachers in this study relied more heavily on external professional development opportunities, including programs associated with SEAMEO, SEAQIL, and SEAQIS, as well as continuing peer coaching with the school's English specialist teacher.

This context distinguishes the professional development experiences examined in this study from a situation in which teachers receive systematic, subject-specific training within their institution. The thesis findings indicate that the four NSETs did not receive professional development specifically organized for non-English specialist teachers. Instead, they developed their professional learning through self-monitoring, external workshops, and peer coaching. The availability and usefulness of these opportunities also varied among teachers. For example, access to external training was not equally distributed, and one teacher experienced difficulty accessing an English-language training opportunity because the program targeted participants with a language background.

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These conditions suggest that professional development for NSETs at SIKK is not simply a matter of participating in formal training; it also involves how teachers independently seek opportunities and how they use available support within the school.

The role of peer coaching is particularly relevant in this context. Richards and Farrell (2005) describe peer coaching as a collaborative procedure through which teachers work together to improve aspects of teaching. In the present study, peer coaching occurred between NSETs and the school's English specialist teacher. However, the function of this support was not identical for all teachers. For some participants, peer coaching provided confirmation and refinement of lesson plans and instructional materials that they had already developed, whereas for another teacher, limited opportunities to meet reduced the interaction to less structured sharing. This variation is important because it suggests that the value of peer coaching depends not only on the presence of a specialist teacher but also on the accessibility and continuity of interaction.

The relationship between PD and classroom practice can therefore be understood through the conceptual framework of this study. Professional development provides different forms of learning input, including self-monitoring, external workshops, and peer coaching. These experiences may shape teachers' perceptions of their competence and understanding of English teaching. Teachers then use, adapt, validate, or refine what they have learned when developing teaching strategies for their classrooms. In this framework, peer coaching represents one form of professional development that may function both as a source of pedagogical input and as a means of validating or refining strategies that teachers have developed independently. The resulting teaching strategies are subsequently implemented in classroom practice and adapted to the academic and vocational needs of students.

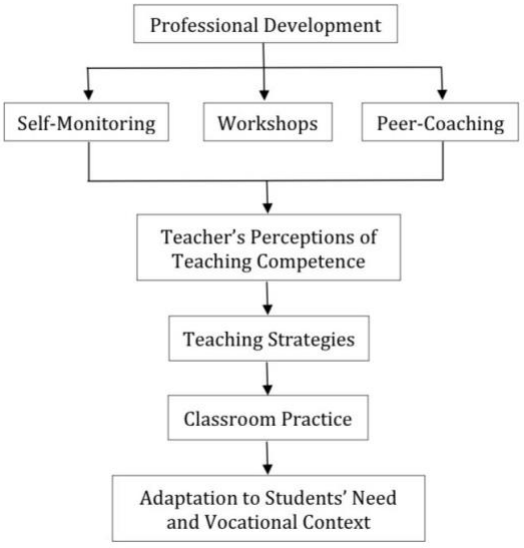


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

This framework is consistent with the focus of the study because professional development does not operate as a single uniform intervention. Rather, teachers may experience different forms of professional learning and translate them into classroom

practice in different ways. The findings of the thesis further show two mechanisms through which PD shapes teaching strategies: PD may directly provide new strategies, or peer coaching may validate and refine strategies that teachers have already developed independently. Through these mechanisms, the teachers implemented a wider range of strategies, including Project-Based Learning, differentiated instruction, Task-Based Language Teaching, and role play or gamification, which were adapted to the vocational needs of their students.

Although previous studies have established the challenges experienced by NSETs and the potential contribution of professional development, there remains a need to examine the process more closely within an Indonesian overseas school context. Existing studies have largely focused on NSETs' pedagogical knowledge, self-efficacy, or general professional development needs (Zaid et al., 2021; Matsumura et al., 2024; Widagsa et al., 2025). These studies provide important evidence that NSETs require additional support, but they do not fully explain how teachers themselves construct professional learning pathways when subject-specific institutional support is limited, nor how different forms of PD become connected to the teaching strategies observed in their classrooms. The SIKK context is therefore significant because it provides an opportunity to examine professional development as an ongoing process involving teachers' own efforts, external learning opportunities, and collaboration with a specialist teacher.

The present study uses narrative inquiry to examine this process through teachers' professional experiences. Narrative inquiry is particularly appropriate because it focuses on how individuals experience and make sense of their lives through stories within particular social, historical, and cultural contexts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Barkhuizen et al., 2024). Rather than treating professional development as a list of training activities, this approach allows the study to trace teachers' experiences over time and examine how their perceptions and classroom strategies develop in relation to those experiences. This is consistent with the study's use of interviews, classroom observations, and artifacts, which provide different perspectives on teachers' narrated experiences and their actual classroom practices.

Accordingly, this study addresses a gap in understanding how NSETs at SIKK construct and experience professional development in a context where institutionally tailored support is limited. It focuses on the types of professional development activities undertaken by NSETs and the ways in which professional development shapes the teaching strategies they employ in the English classroom. By examining both teachers' professional learning experiences and their classroom practices, the study seeks to provide empirical insight into how NSETs develop and adapt their teaching strategies while working outside their field of specialization. The study therefore addresses the following research questions:

1. What types of professional development activities have non-specialist English teachers at SIKK participated in?
2. In what ways does professional development shape non-specialist English teachers' teaching strategies in the English classroom?

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2. Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach within a narrative inquiry design to explore the professional development experiences of non-specialist English teachers and how these experiences were reflected in their classroom teaching strategies. A qualitative descriptive approach was used to describe and interpret the information obtained from the participants while maintaining a close connection to their accounts and experiences (Hill & Knox, 2021). Narrative inquiry was adopted because it focuses on understanding individuals' experiences through the stories they share within particular social and institutional contexts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Barkhuizen et al., 2024). This design was considered appropriate for examining the professional development activities experienced by non-specialist English teachers and exploring how these activities were reflected in their teaching strategies.

The study was guided by two research questions. It focused on teachers' accounts of their professional development experiences and the relationship between those experiences and their classroom practices. This study was conducted at Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu (SIKK), located in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, from April to May 2026. The school was selected because it provided a relevant context for examining non-specialist teachers who were assigned to teach English despite having academic backgrounds in other fields.

The participants were selected through purposive sampling, which involves selecting individuals who can provide relevant information about the research focus (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The main participants consisted of four non-specialist English teachers who had academic qualifications in fields other than English education but were assigned to teach English at the vocational level. Their academic backgrounds included Japanese Language, Early Childhood Education, Physics, and Indonesian Language Education. The school principal was also involved as a supporting informant to provide institutional information about the school's teaching context and professional development opportunities.

The selection criteria for the teacher participants were: (1) they had an academic background outside English education; (2) they were assigned to teach English at SIKK; and (3) they had experience participating in, or independently undertaking, professional development activities relevant to their teaching. The participants' teaching experience and length of service at SIKK.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and artifact analysis. These techniques were used to obtain information about the professional development activities experienced by the teachers and to examine how those experiences were reflected in their classroom teaching strategies.

Semi-structured interviews were the primary technique for exploring the teachers' professional development experiences. The interview guide was developed based on the research objectives and relevant literature reviewed in the study. The questions focused on the types of professional development activities in which the teachers had participated, the nature of those activities, and how the teachers applied what they learned in their English teaching practices. An interview guide provides a structure for eliciting information relevant to the research focus (Menzies et al., 2016).

The interviews were conducted individually in Indonesian and lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, as recorded in the research documentation. With the participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. A semi-structured format was used because it allowed the researcher to prepare questions in advance while providing participants with opportunities to explain their experiences and discuss relevant matters beyond the prepared questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Classroom observations were conducted to obtain first-hand information about the teaching strategies implemented by the non-specialist English teachers. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer, observing and recording classroom activities without participating in the teaching and learning process. This approach allowed the researcher to document classroom practices and interactions as they occurred (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The observations focused on lesson structure, teaching strategies, classroom interactions, the use of instructional activities, and the ways teachers supported students' learning. Field notes were used to document the observed practices. These observations were particularly relevant to the second research question because they provided evidence of how professional development experiences were reflected in the teachers' classroom strategies.

Artifact analysis was conducted to complement the interview and classroom observation data. Artifacts refer to material, written, or digital objects produced or used in the process of language teaching and learning (Barkhuizen et al., 2024). The artifacts examined in this study included teachers' lesson plans, teaching modules, students' assignments, and relevant digital instructional materials. These artifacts were reviewed to identify evidence of teaching strategies and instructional activities used by the teachers. They also provided supporting information for comparing teachers' interview accounts with their observed classroom practices and instructional materials. Therefore, artifact analysis primarily contributed to answering the second research question.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six phases proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022). This approach was used to identify and interpret patterns of meaning across the interview transcripts, classroom observation notes, and teaching-related artifacts. The analysis focused exclusively on the two research questions addressed in this article. For the first research question, the interview transcripts were examined to identify and categorize the types of professional development activities in which the non-specialist English teachers had participated. For the second research question, the analysis focused on how these professional development experiences were reflected in the teachers' classroom teaching strategies. Interview data were compared with classroom observation notes and instructional artifacts to examine the relationship between teachers' accounts and their observed or documented teaching practices.

The analysis followed six phases. First, the researcher familiarized herself with the data by reading the interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant artifacts repeatedly. Second, initial codes were generated from data relevant to the two research questions. Third, related codes were grouped to develop initial themes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed against the coded extracts and the overall dataset. Fifth, the themes were refined, defined, and named to represent the patterns identified in the data. Finally, the findings were written up using relevant data extracts and descriptions of classroom practices to address the two research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

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To strengthen the credibility of the findings, data from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and artifact analysis were compared. This use of multiple data sources enabled the researcher to examine whether the teachers' accounts of their professional development experiences were consistent with the teaching strategies documented through classroom observations and instructional artifacts.

3. Results

The results of interview data, classroom observations, and document review revealed that the professional development pursued by non-specialist English teachers at SIKK took three forms: self-monitoring, external workshops, and peer coaching. These activities, in turn, shaped classroom teaching strategies through two distinguishable mechanisms: professional development functioning as a direct source of new strategies, and professional development in the form of peer coaching that served to validate and refine strategies teachers had already built on their own.

Types of Professional Development Pursued by Non-Specialist English Teachers

The four participants reported different experiences of professional development. These activities included individual efforts to improve their English-related knowledge, participation in external training programs, and collaboration with an English specialist teacher at SIKK. The following sections describe each activity.

Self-Monitoring

The findings show that the teachers assigned outside their field, a participant, relied on self-monitoring which is observing and learning from their own teaching materials and their students' work to compensate for this gap. Mrs. D described how she rebuilt her command of English largely through her students' writing:

"*Jadi yang saya udah lama nggak belajar bahasa Inggris, akhirnya belajar lagi, melalui tulisan anak-anak*" (Mrs. D).

"So, because I haven't studied English for a long time, I ended up learning again through the kids' writing" (Mrs. D).

She explained that reviewing her students' written work repeatedly exposed her to vocabulary and structures she had not encountered in years, effectively turning her own classroom into an informal site of language learning.

Workshop

All four teachers reported experiences with external language-related or pedagogical training, although the nature, timing, and relevance of these opportunities differed. Some teachers attended programs through school assignments, while others took the initiative to participate independently.

Mrs. D attended an online language-development program organized by SEAMEO in 2018. However, she clarified that the program was not specifically designed for non-specialist English teachers:

"*Pernah, di tahun 2018. Tapi itu sebetulnya bukan kursus non-specialist. Dibilangnya pengembangan tentang kebahasaan, tahun 2018 itu jadi online. Yang ngadain itu SEAMEO*." (Mrs. D)

"Yes, in 2018. However, it wasn't actually a course for non-specialists. It was described as language development, conducted online, and organized by SEAMEO." (Mrs. D)

Her experience indicates that the training provided language-related development, but it did not specifically address the instructional needs of teachers assigned to teach English outside their academic specialization.

Mrs. N participated in a SEAQIL program in 2025. The program provided opportunities to discuss English teaching with professional English teachers and receive input on lesson-plan development. One of the approaches introduced during the training was joyful learning. She described the experience as follows:

"Ada SEAQIL dari Indonesia tahun lalu. Ada pencerahan untuk lesson plan dengan penerapan joyful learning untuk anak-anak." (Mrs. N)

"There was a SEAQIL program from Indonesia last year. It provided insights into lesson plans through the application of joyful learning for students." (Mrs. N)

The training introduced Mrs. N to ways of designing lesson plans that incorporated enjoyable learning activities. She also had opportunities to discuss teaching-related issues with professional English teachers. According to her account, this was a valuable opportunity because such training was not frequently available to her.

Mr. R had a different experience. He had attended an English-related training program approximately four years earlier, before becoming a teacher at SIKK. However, he did not complete the program. He also reported that he was not invited to a subsequent English training opportunity because the program targeted teachers with language-related academic backgrounds. He explained:

"*Empat tahun yang lalu pernah Bahasa Inggris. Mirip SEAMEO, tapi yang versi bahasa Inggris. Cuma sekali dan nggak tuntas. Pernah ada dari sekolah, tapi saya nggak diundang. Waktu itu saya malah diarahkan oleh litbang pelatihannya di IPA. Padahal saya pengen juga tuh yang bahasa Inggris*." (Mr. R)

"Four years ago, I participated in an English program. It was similar to SEAMEO, but it was the English-focused version. It only happened once and was not completed. There was another opportunity organized by the school, but I was not invited. Instead, the research and development department directed me toward science training, even though I actually wanted to attend the English program." (Mr. R)

He shows that his access to English-related professional development was limited. Although he expressed an interest in attending English training, the available opportunity was directed toward teachers whose academic backgrounds matched the training subject.

In contrast, Mr. P actively sought external professional development opportunities. He participated in programs organized by SEAQIS, including training related to differentiated learning and Project-Based Learning (PjBL), and also attended a program related to Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA). He described his experience as follows:

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"*Secara mandiri yaitu SEAQIS dan antaranya bahasa Inggris. Dari tiga tahun ini baru dua kali. Jadi pelatihannya memahami peserta didik dan strategi pembelajaran berupa PJBL. PJBL sudah dipraktikan di kelas. Kebetulan satu lagi, saya ikut bahasa Indonesia untuk penutur asing (BIPA). Saya belajar bagaimana menggunakan bahasa Inggris sebagai media. Di BIPA kita membuat bahan ajar.*" (Mr. P)

"On my own, I participated in programs such as SEAQIS and English-related training. In the last three years, I have attended two programs. The training covered understanding students and teaching strategies such as Project-Based Learning, which I have already practiced in class. I also joined a program on Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA), where I learned how to use English as a medium of instruction and develop teaching materials." (Mr. P)

The training provided Mr. P with opportunities to learn about differentiated learning, project-based activities, and the development of teaching materials. He also reported applying for PjBL in his classroom. Unlike the other participants, his account particularly emphasized his initiative to seek training independently and transfer some of the training content into classroom activities.

In addition, the participants' workshop experiences differed in terms of access, content, and initiative. While Mrs. D and Mrs. R reported limited opportunities for English-related training, Mrs. N and Mr. P described training experiences that provided more direct input for lesson planning and instructional strategies. These differences are presented as variations in the participants' reported experiences rather than as evidence that their academic backgrounds alone determined their professional development choices.

Peer-Coaching

A recurring activity across all four participants was informal consultation with Mr. A, SIKK's English specialist teacher. The intensity and purpose of this coaching, however, varied considerably among them. For Mrs. D, peer coaching served as a channel for both seeking feedback and contributing back to her colleague's work, conducted entirely in English as a form of practice:

"Saya suka tanya sama Mr A, kira-kira ini solusinya gimana nih... Ngomongnya kalau sama Mr A pasti pakai bahasa Inggris karena beliau kan guru spesialis ya" (Mrs. D).

"I like asking Mr. A, like, what could be the solution for this... When talking to Mr. A, I definitely use English because he's a specialist teacher, you know" (Mrs. D).

For Mrs. N, scheduling differences where she taught at the vocational level while Mr. A taught senior high school which reduced their interaction to occasional, informal exchanges rather than structured mentoring:

"Kami terlalu sibuk sendiri-sendiri... jadinya kayak curhat-curhatan karena anak-anak terlalu banyak kegiatan jadi tidak bisa kita fokuskan" (Mrs. N).

"We're too busy with our own things... so it ends up feeling like just venting because the kids have too many activities and we can't really focus on them" (Mrs. N).

Mr. R described a more deliberate, sustained pattern of weekly consultation focused on reviewing lesson plans and sourcing materials:

"Saya tanya beliau, diskusi mengenai lesson plan yang saya mau buat... beliau udah ngecek, terus ngevaluasi, ngasih masukan. Ya, sekitar 30 menit dalam tempo yang 1 minggu, saya rasa itu cukup lumayan" (Mr. R).

"I asked him about the discussion on the lesson plan that I wanted to make... he had already checked it, then evaluated it, gave feedback. Yeah, around 30 minutes in a one-week timeframe, I think that's pretty decent" (Mr. R).

Mr. P's collaboration with Mr. A went further still, evolving into a synchronized teaching arrangement in which the two divided instructional responsibility across proficiency levels:

"*Kita kerjasama nih, bagaimana kedua-duanya saling mendukung. Contoh di kelas 11 kemarin semester 1 kita mengajar langsung praktik front office SMK perhotelan itu... di bahasa Inggris tingkat lanjutnya sama Sir A dilanjutkan dengan role play-nya*" (Mr. P).

"We're collaborating, how both support each other. For example, last semester in 11th grade, semester 1, we directly taught the front office practice for the hospitality vocational school... in advanced English with Sir A, followed by the role play" (Mr. P).

Transformation of Teaching Strategies after Professional Development in the Classroom

The findings indicate that professional development shaped classroom teaching strategies through two main patterns. The first involved the direct application of strategies introduced through external workshops, as seen in the experiences of Mr. P and Mrs. N. The second involved the validation and refinement of existing strategies through peer coaching, as illustrated by Mr. R. Mrs. D's experience also shows how self-monitoring and consultation were associated with her classroom practices, although the data do not establish a specific newly introduced strategy resulting directly from these activities.

Professional Development as a Direct Source of New Strategies

The first pattern was found in the experiences of Mr. P and Mrs. N, whose workshop participation provided instructional approaches that they subsequently applied in their English classrooms.

For Mr. P, training on differentiated learning influenced the way he organized learning activities according to students' proficiency levels. He explained that the training helped him recognize students' potential and classify them into different levels:

"Setelah mulai ikuti pelatihan, jadi paham bagaimana cara melihat potensi peserta didik, bagaimana cara menggolongkan mana tingkatan rendah, sedang, tinggi." (Mr. P)

"After I started attending the training, I understood how to identify students' potential and how to classify them into low, medium, and high levels." (Mr. P)

This understanding was reflected in his use of differentiated assessments. According to the teaching documents described in the thesis, students at different levels were assigned tasks with different cognitive demands: C3 tasks for identifying, C4 tasks for analyzing, and C6 tasks for creating a product. This arrangement allowed the learning tasks to be adjusted to students' demonstrated levels.

Mr. P also applied Project-Based Learning through structured writing projects. He described the process as follows:

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"Waktu itu lebih ke strategi pembelajaran PJBL... itu sudah dipraktikan di kelas.... Jadi kita memberikan instruksi untuk membuat hasil karya produk berbentuk karya tulis. Lalu siswa diberikan waktu dan mendapatkan kesempatan untuk beberapa kali revisi." (Mr. P)

"The learning strategy focused more on Project-Based Learning, which has already been practiced in class. We give instructions to produce a written work as the final product. Students are then given time and opportunities to revise it several times." (Mr. P)

Classroom observations and students' work provided further evidence of the range of activities used in Mr. P's lessons. During an observed online learning session on "Expressions," he used Direct Instruction to present the material and asked higher-order questions to encourage student participation. He also praised students who volunteered to speak. The documented student assignments included analyzing narrative texts through Padlet, creating cooking-procedure videos for social media, and working in groups to produce scripts and comic strips. Online games were also used as part of the learning activities.

These observations and student artifacts show that Mr. P used a variety of instructional activities, including differentiated tasks, technology-supported assignments, and project-based products. The evidence is consistent with his interview account of applying ideas gained from professional development, particularly differentiated learning and PjBL.

Mrs. N's experience provides another example of workshop content being transferred into classroom practice. Her participation in SEAQIL introduced her to joyful learning as an approach to lesson planning. She explained:

"Methodnya... Untuk lesson plan... Untuk menghadapi students yang bermacam-macam... penerapannya dengan joyful learning." (Mrs. N)

"The method was for lesson planning, to deal with students with different characteristics, and it was applied through joyful learning." (Mrs. N)

The lesson plan she prepared for the topic "Body Parts" included four instructional methods: Direct Instruction, Interactive Learning, Group Work, and Game-Based Learning. These methods were implemented through an activity called "Stick the Body Parts," in which students worked in teams to attach the names of body parts and earned points through the activity.

Classroom observation confirmed that Mrs. N used the four methods listed in her lesson plan. She began the lesson with a recall activity and used spelling exercises to check individual students' abilities. In addition, her classroom tasks included daily conversations and procedure texts, such as cooking recipes, which were relevant to the students' Culinary major. She also used daily journals to monitor students' writing activities.

The lesson plan and classroom observation therefore support Mrs. N's account of applying joyful learning through interactive, group-based, and game-based activities. Her classroom practices also show the adaptation of these activities to the vocational context of her students.

Taken together, the cases of Mr. P and Mrs. N demonstrate that external workshops provided instructional approaches that were subsequently reflected in classroom planning and teaching. In Mr. P's case, the strategies included differentiated learning and

Project-Based Learning, while Mrs. N applied joyful learning through interactive and game-based activities.

Professional Development as Peer Coaching that Validates and Refines Existing Strategies

The second pattern was identified in Mr. R's experience. Unlike Mr. P and Mrs. N, whose workshop experiences introduced strategies that were subsequently applied in their classrooms, Mr. R's consultations with Mr. A mainly helped review and refine strategies that he had already developed.

Mr. R described the consultations as opportunities to discuss lesson plans, teaching materials, and resources. He explained:

"*Saya tanya beliau, diskusi mengenai lesson plan yang saya mau buat. Terus kadang minta media 1-2 kali. Media ajar, minta link yang bagus untuk workshopnya anak-anak.*" (Mr. R)

"I ask him to discuss the lesson plan I want to create. Sometimes I also ask for teaching materials or useful links for the students' activities." (Mr. R)

The teaching module entitled "Who is the Better Mechanic?" provides documentary evidence of the strategies used by Mr. R. The module incorporated a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach and organized vocabulary around vehicle components. The materials were designed to connect English learning with the students' automotive field.

Classroom observation further showed that Mr. R used TBLT activities and role-play through a simple jigsaw technique. He also used cue cards for a word-search activity and assigned students to complete an inspection checklist in English. The writing task required students to analyze technical reports in their notebooks. Other student tasks included videos and the completion of technical forms, such as the Multi-Point Vehicle Inspection Checklist.

The teaching module, classroom observation, and student tasks provide supporting evidence of the instructional strategies reported in Mr. R's account. Together, these sources show that his peer-coaching experience was associated with the review and refinement of lesson plans and teaching materials, while the strategies themselves had already been developed through his own planning.

Summary of the Result

The findings identified three types of professional development activities among non-specialist English teachers at SIKK: self-monitoring, external workshops, and peer coaching. Self-monitoring was reflected in Mrs. D's practice of learning English through reviewing her students' written work. External workshops provided different opportunities for the four teachers, ranging from general language development to training in joyful learning, differentiated learning, and Project-Based Learning (PjBL). Peer coaching involved consultation and collaboration with Mr. A, the English specialist teacher, although the frequency and nature of these interactions varied among the participants.

Regarding the influence of professional development on teaching strategies, the findings revealed two main patterns. First, external workshops served as a direct source of instructional strategies for Mr. P and Mrs. N. Mr. P applied differentiated learning and PjBL through proficiency-based tasks and project-oriented assignments, while Mrs. N

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incorporated joyful learning through interactive, group-based, and game-based activities. Second, peer coaching served as a means of validating and refining existing teaching strategies, as demonstrated by Mr. R's consultations with Mr. A. His teaching module and classroom practices reflected the use of TBLT, role-play, and vocationally relevant learning tasks. Overall, the findings show that professional development shaped teaching strategies through different forms of learning, application, and professional collaboration.

Table 1. Summary of Professional Development Activities and Their Influence on Teaching Strategies

Research Question	Theme	Participant(s)	Supporting Evidence and Findings
RQ1: Types of professional development activities	Self-Monitoring	Mrs. D	Reviewed students' written work to revisit English vocabulary and language structures.
RQ1: Types of professional development activities	Workshops	Mrs. D	Participated in SEAMEO online language-development training in 2018, which was not specifically designed for non-specialist teachers.
RQ1: Types of professional development activities	Workshops	Mrs. N	Participated in SEAQIL training in 2025, which introduced lesson-plan development and joyful learning.
RQ1: Types of professional development activities	Workshops	Mr. R	Attended an English-related training program approximately four years earlier but did not complete it. Reported limited access to subsequent English training.
RQ1: Types of professional development activities	Workshops	Mr. P	Independently participated in SEAQIS training on differentiated learning and PjBL, as well as BIPA-related training.
RQ1: Types of professional development activities	Peer coaching	Mrs. D	Consulted Mr. A about teaching-related problems and used English during their interactions.

RQ1: Types of professional development activities	Peer coaching	Mrs. N	Engaged in occasional and informal exchanges with Mr. A because of different teaching schedules and responsibilities.
RQ1: Types of professional development activities	Peer coaching	Mr. R	Conducted approximately 30-minute weekly consultations with Mr. A to discuss lesson plans, teaching materials, and feedback.
RQ1: Types of professional development activities	Peer coaching	Mr. P	Collaborated with Mr. A to coordinate general and advanced English instruction, including hospitality-related front-office practice and role-play.
RQ2: Ways professional development shapes teaching strategies	Direct application of workshop content	Mr. P	Applied differentiated learning through proficiency-based tasks and PjBL through structured writing projects, revisions, and other student products. Supported by classroom observations and student work.
RQ2: Ways professional development shapes teaching strategies	Direct application of workshop content	Mrs. N	Applied joyful learning through Direct Instruction, Interactive Learning, Group Work, and Game-Based Learning. Supported by her lesson plan and classroom observation.
RQ2: Ways professional development shapes teaching strategies	Validation and refinement through peer coaching	Mr. R	Consultations with Mr. A supported the review and refinement of lesson plans and teaching materials. His teaching module and classroom observation showed TBLT, role-play, simple jigsaw activities, and

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vocationally relevant tasks.

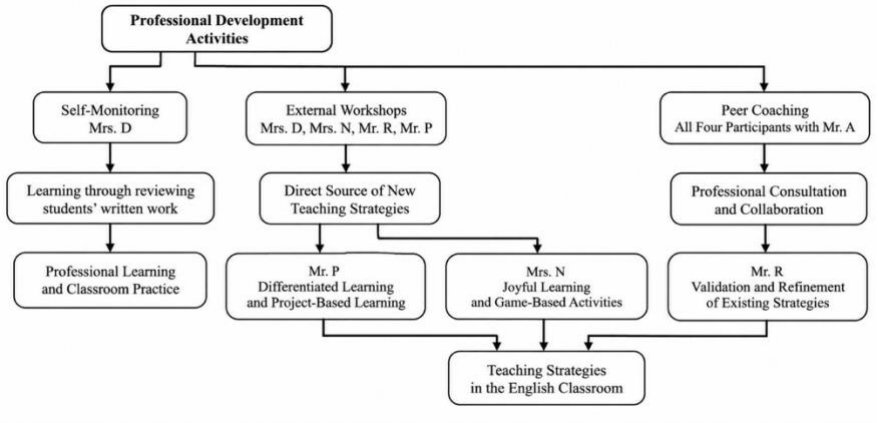


Figure 1. Professional Development Activities and Their Relationship with Teaching Strategies among Non-Specialist English Teachers at SIKK

4. Discussion

The findings reveal that non-specialist English teachers (NSETs) at SIKK pursued professional development through three main activities: self-monitoring, external workshops, and peer coaching. These activities correspond to the professional learning procedures identified by Richards and Farrell (2005), who highlighted self-monitoring, workshops, and collaborative learning as important approaches to language teacher development. However, the findings of this study extend this understanding by demonstrating how these activities function in a context where institutionally organized professional development specifically designed for non-specialist English teachers is limited.

The role of self-monitoring, particularly in Mrs. D's experience, illustrates how teachers can construct opportunities for professional learning through their everyday classroom activities. Her practice of reviewing students' written work to relearn English vocabulary and language structures demonstrates that professional learning does not necessarily depend on formal training. Instead, teachers can use evidence from their own instructional practices to identify areas requiring improvement and develop their knowledge independently. This finding can be understood as a form of reflective practice, in which teachers examine their teaching-related experiences and use the information obtained to improve their professional competence. In this case, self-monitoring served not only as an evaluation of classroom activities but also as an alternative means of developing English-related knowledge. This is particularly relevant for NSETs who may have limited access to subject-specific professional development opportunities.

The findings concerning peer coaching further demonstrate the importance of collaborative professional learning. Richards and Farrell (2005) describe peer coaching as a collaborative process through which teachers support one another in improving their instructional practices. The present study extends this perspective by showing that the effectiveness of peer coaching depends on the continuity and organization of professional

interaction. Mr. R's weekly consultations with the English specialist teacher provided opportunities to review lesson plans, obtain feedback, and improve instructional materials. Similarly, Mr. P's collaboration developed into a more integrated teaching arrangement involving the coordination of English instruction and vocational role-play activities. In contrast, Mrs. N's limited interaction with the specialist teacher resulted in less structured exchanges because of differences in teaching schedules and responsibilities. These variations indicate that the availability of a specialist colleague alone does not guarantee meaningful professional learning. Rather, regular interaction, accessible guidance, and opportunities for collaborative reflection are necessary to make peer coaching a sustained professional development activity.

This finding also relates to Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2015) concept of Communities of Practice (CoP), which underlines learning through sustained interaction among individuals who share a professional interest or domain of practice. In the context of this study, interactions between NSETs and the English specialist teacher illustrate an emerging form of collaborative professional learning. Through consultation, discussion, feedback, and shared teaching activities, teachers exchanged knowledge and developed instructional practices based on their classroom experiences.

However, the findings suggest that this collaborative process had not yet developed into a fully structured Community of Practice. Differences in teaching schedules and the informal nature of some interactions limited opportunities for continuous knowledge exchange. Therefore, establishing more systematic collaboration among English teachers could strengthen the development of a professional learning community in which specialist and non-specialist teachers jointly address instructional challenges, share teaching resources, and improve their professional knowledge.

The reliance on external workshops also highlights the relationship between institutional policies and teachers' access to professional development. Although all four participants had experienced external training opportunities, their access, participation, and training experiences varied. Some teachers actively sought professional development independently, while others depended on opportunities provided or facilitated by the school. Mr. R's experience is particularly important because he expressed an interest in participating in English-related training but was instead directed toward training associated with his original academic specialization. This situation reflects a limitation in institutional arrangements when professional development opportunities are allocated primarily according to teachers' academic backgrounds rather than their current teaching responsibilities. The finding is consistent with Revina and Pramana's (2023) discussion of the challenges associated with professional development reforms in Indonesia, particularly the insufficient consideration of teachers' actual circumstances and professional needs.

The issue also relates to the challenges identified in previous research on non-specialist English teachers. Matsumura (2022) highlighted the importance of self-efficacy among non-specialist teachers in primary English education, while Zaid et al. (2021) emphasized the need for guidance from specialist teachers to strengthen non-specialist teachers' pedagogical content knowledge. Similarly, Widagsa et al. (2025) highlighted the limitations of non-specialist teachers' knowledge and practices when teaching English outside their field of specialization.

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The present findings complement these studies by providing a closer account of how professional development opportunities are accessed and translated into classroom practices. While previous studies emphasize the professional knowledge and support required by NSETs, this study demonstrates that teachers also construct their own professional learning pathways through self-monitoring, external training, and collaboration with specialist colleagues. The findings therefore suggest that professional development needs to address not only teachers' knowledge and confidence but also the institutional conditions that enable them to access relevant learning opportunities.

Regarding the influence of professional development on teaching strategies, the findings reveal two distinguishable mechanisms. The first involves the direct application of instructional approaches introduced through external workshops, while the second involves the validation and refinement of strategies that teachers have developed independently through peer coaching. These mechanisms extend Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2017) framework of effective professional development, particularly the importance of active learning and sustained professional engagement. Rather than demonstrating a single pathway through which professional development influences teaching, the findings show that the relationship between professional learning and classroom practice may occur through different processes depending on teachers' learning experiences and available support.

The first mechanism is evident in Mr. P's and Mrs. N's experiences. For Mr. P, training in differentiated learning and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) provided instructional approaches that he subsequently incorporated into his classroom activities. Differentiated learning was reflected in the organization of learning tasks according to students' proficiency levels and cognitive demands. Meanwhile, PjBL was implemented through structured writing projects that allowed students to develop products and revise their work. These practices demonstrate how professional development can provide teachers with instructional knowledge that can be directly translated into classroom activities. Similarly, Mrs. N applied ideas from SEAQIL training by incorporating joyful learning into her lesson planning. Her use of interactive learning, group work, and game-based activities illustrates how workshop content can be adapted to create more engaging learning experiences.

These findings support Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2017) emphasis on active learning as an important characteristic of effective professional development. Both teachers demonstrated the application of instructional approaches through lesson planning and classroom activities rather than merely acquiring theoretical knowledge from training. However, the findings also indicate that the transfer of professional learning into classroom practice involves contextual adaptation. Mr. P adjusted learning activities to students' different proficiency levels, while Mrs. N incorporated activities related to students' culinary learning context. This suggests that the effectiveness of professional development is not determined solely by the instructional approaches introduced during training but also by teachers' ability to adapt those approaches to their students' learning characteristics and educational needs.

The second mechanism is illustrated by Mr. R's experience, in which peer coaching functioned primarily as a means of validating and refining existing teaching strategies. Unlike Mr. P and Mrs. N, whose workshop experiences provided relatively direct instructional input, Mr. R had already developed teaching materials and classroom

activities before receiving feedback from the English specialist teacher. Through regular consultations, he obtained suggestions concerning lesson plans, instructional resources, and teaching materials. His use of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), role-play, and vocationally relevant learning activities was subsequently supported by the review and refinement of these materials.

This finding provides an important distinction in understanding the contribution of professional development to teachers' instructional development. Professional learning does not always introduce entirely new teaching strategies. It can also strengthen teachers' existing practices through professional feedback, discussion, and collaborative evaluation. This interpretation is consistent with Richards and Farrell's (2005) description of peer coaching as a collaborative approach to improving teaching practices and Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2017) emphasis on sustained professional development. In Mr. R's case, regular consultations provided opportunities for continuous instructional improvement, whereas his earlier workshop experience had been limited and incomplete. Therefore, ongoing peer coaching may offer a more continuous form of professional learning than isolated training activities, particularly for teachers who need subject-specific guidance.

An additional finding across the participants is the contextual adaptation of teaching strategies to the vocational characteristics of SIKK students. Mr. R incorporated automotive-related vocabulary and technical tasks into English instruction, Mr. P developed project-based assignments involving written products and practical activities, and Mrs. N connected classroom activities with culinary-related topics. These practices indicate that teachers did not simply reproduce instructional approaches obtained through professional development. Instead, they adjusted them to the learning requirements and vocational backgrounds of their students. This interpretation is consistent with Crawford et al.'s (2005) emphasis on teaching and learning strategies that support the application of knowledge in real situations and Amiri et al.'s (2025) discussion of the importance of adapting instructional approaches to learners' needs and institutional conditions.

Taken together, the findings suggest that professional development among NSETs at SIKK operates through an interconnected process involving individual learning, external professional input, and collaborative support. The two identified mechanisms provide a more detailed understanding of how professional development becomes connected to classroom teaching strategies. The first mechanism demonstrates how external workshops can introduce instructional approaches that teachers subsequently apply in their classrooms. The second shows how peer coaching can validate and refine teaching strategies developed through teachers' independent efforts. These findings contribute to the discussion of out-of-field teacher development by highlighting that professional learning is not necessarily a linear process from training participation to classroom implementation. Instead, it involves teachers' interpretation, adaptation, and continuous refinement of instructional practices within their particular institutional and vocational contexts.

From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the need for more structured professional development programs specifically designed for non-specialist English teachers. Schools should not rely exclusively on teachers' individual initiatives or the availability of external workshops. Instead, professional development should combine

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subject-specific English training, pedagogical workshops, and sustained peer coaching. School leaders could establish regular mentoring sessions involving English specialist teachers and NSETs, allocate dedicated collaboration time, and provide equitable access to English-related training opportunities regardless of teachers' original academic backgrounds.

These programs should address English language proficiency, pedagogical content knowledge, lesson planning, classroom assessment, differentiated instruction, and the development of teaching materials relevant to students' vocational fields. Furthermore, peer coaching could be organized through regular lesson-plan reviews, collaborative material development, classroom observation, and feedback sessions. Such arrangements would help transform informal professional interactions into more consistent and sustainable opportunities for teacher learning.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the research involved only four non-specialist English teachers at a single Indonesian overseas school, Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu. Consequently, the findings represent the professional development experiences and teaching practices of these participants within a particular institutional context and cannot be generalized to all non-specialist English teachers. Second, the study examined professional development experiences through interviews, classroom observations, and instructional artifacts within a relatively limited data collection period.

Although these sources provided insights into the relationship between professional learning and classroom practices, they did not capture long-term changes in teachers' instructional development. Third, the study primarily focused on teachers' professional development activities and their teaching strategies rather than directly examining changes in students' English proficiency or learning outcomes.

Future research could address these limitations by involving non-specialist English teachers from different Indonesian overseas schools and educational levels to examine whether similar professional development patterns emerge across different institutional contexts. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to investigate how sustained professional development, particularly structured peer coaching and collaborative professional learning, influences teachers' classroom practices over time. Such studies could examine changes in teachers' instructional strategies, pedagogical confidence, and professional competence across multiple stages of their professional development.

In addition, future research could incorporate student learning outcomes to explore whether improvements in teachers' professional knowledge and classroom practices contribute to students' English language development. These investigations would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term contribution of professional development to non-specialist English teachers and their students.

5. Conclusion

This study explored how professional development (PD) shapes the teaching strategies of non-specialist English teachers (NSETs) at Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu (SIKK). The findings indicate that NSETs engage in three forms of professional development: self-monitoring, external workshops, and peer coaching. These activities contribute to teachers' professional learning in different ways, depending on their

individual initiatives, access to training opportunities, and opportunities for collaboration with colleagues.

The study identifies two main pathways through which professional development influences teaching strategies. First, teachers directly applied knowledge and approaches acquired through external workshops, particularly in implementing differentiated learning, project-based learning, and joyful learning activities. Second, peer coaching supported teachers in validating, refining, and adapting their existing instructional strategies to meet students' learning needs and classroom contexts. These findings suggest that professional development influences teaching practice not only by introducing new pedagogical approaches but also by strengthening teachers' capacity to develop and improve strategies they already use.

An important implication of this study is that professional development for non-specialist English teachers needs to be more structured, accessible, and responsive to their specific needs. Schools should provide equitable access to English-related training, establish regular opportunities for peer coaching, and allocate dedicated time for collaborative lesson planning, classroom observation, and feedback. Such support is particularly important for teachers whose academic backgrounds are outside English language education. Professional development should also consider the vocational and contextual characteristics of students so that teachers can adapt instructional strategies to relevant learning situations.

This study is limited by its focus on four non-specialist English teachers at a single school, which restricts the transferability of the findings to other educational settings. Future research could involve a wider range of schools and participants and employ longitudinal designs to examine how sustained professional development influences changes in classroom practices over time. Further studies could also investigate the relationship between teachers' professional development and students' English learning outcomes. Such research would provide a broader understanding of how professional development can sustainably support non-specialist English teachers and improve English language teaching in diverse educational contexts.

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