English Tutor Perspectives on the Important Role of CPD Programs in Improving Digital Skills and Pedagogical Adaptation in the Era of Digital Learning

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Abstract

This study looks at the CPD activities English language tutors undertake or ignore due to the demands of the digitally adaptive teaching. This study involved three English language tutors from different educational organizations. Conducted between October and November 2025, this study responds to the increasing role of technology in teaching, which requires tutors to routinely update their professional and digital competencies. Data was collected through three semi-structured interviews with educators from different organizations and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results indicated that tutors of English assume that CPD, in general, is useful because without it, educators may become less effective or outdated in their teaching approaches, especially in learning environments dominated by digital natives' students. CPD proved to be useful when educators are able to receive direct and practical training, but tutors experienced systemic challenges including insufficient training, limited access to information, time constraints, and inadequate funding. Support for CPD from institutions and authorities seemed deficient which created lopsided, unsatisfactory results of CPDs. This study suggests that CPD programs need to be more flexible, accessible, and sustainable, with more focus on developing tutors' digital competence to support effective teaching in a digitally adaptive environment.

Keywords: Continuing Professional Development, English tutors, Digital Competence, Pedagogical Adaptation, Qualitative Study.

Introduction

In today's digital age, the teaching and learning aspect in the classroom has undergone a major shift due to the integration of technology. The role of a teacher in the classroom has changed from being knowledgeable in the field of teaching to being able to update their skills in technology to develop an engaging teaching process. This new change in role positions the teacher to adapt to new teaching processes in the classroom to meet the demands of the digital teaching environment (Castaño Muñoz et al., 2023). In this case, the need to develop the teacher's professionalism in CPD becomes paramount to meet the teaching needs in the 21st century classroom.

CPD is defined as both formal and non-formal learning that supports a teacher improving professional skills. In the Indonesian context, CPD is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture through policies such as Permendikbud No. 9 Tahun 2010 concerning the Teacher Professional Education Program (Pendidikan Profesi Guru). This regulation underlines that teacher professional development is a continuous process towards improving competence, professionalism, and teacher quality according to national education standards (Kementrian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2010). This regulation underscores that CPD is a commitment of a lifetime rather that a single training session.

CPD is widely understood as a lifelong learning process that focuses on practical and applicable improvements in teaching practice (Kennedy, 2014). Previous studies identify the importance of CPD to ensure the teacher is updated and change, especially against the background of the digital learning classroom (Abbas et al., 2021; Njenga, 2023). Effective CPD not only nurtures the art of teaching, it also encourages digital readiness, which is increasing in importance since we are teaching students who are tech-savvy to begin with.

However, when it comes to implementing CPD, there are some challenges associated with it. Findings show that there are some teacher-related challenges: a lack of time, full timetables, no proper internet access, and inadequate support financially (OECD, 2020; König et al., 2020). In Indonesian contexts, there are always disparities between institutions when it comes to resources, thus making it difficult even for eager lecturers to participate in teacher professional development (Nugraha et al., 2022). These factors indicate that a lack of involvement in teacher professional development might not be a matter of teacher ignorance.

Within this broader discussion of teacher professional development, English tutors represent a particularly important yet underexplored group. As compared to regular classroom teachers, a large number of English tutors are found to be working in private schools, language schools, or online learning platforms, where professional development possibilities are not as systematized as those provided by the government. Simultaneously, English tutors are expected to quickly adjust to online learning platforms, online classrooms, or blended learning approaches largely owing to their clients' increased exposure to global online content.

Even though there are studies carried out preceding this study focusing on the context of CPD in the overall teaching environment. There are many studies conducted prior to this study focusing on the result of the implementation of CPD, yet there are only a few studies investigating how the English tutors perceive the concept of CPD. As such, this current study seeks to examine the views of English tutors on the role of CPD as an instrument of facilitating personal and professional growth and adaptation to the new era of learning. Through the focus on English tutors in Indonesia, the study seeks to produce findings that are relevant and informative of development of CPD that is tailored towards language teachers working under different settings of learning.

Therefore, this study aims to explore English tutors' perspectives on the role of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in supporting their professional growth, digital competence, and pedagogical adaptation in the era of digital learning. By focusing on English tutors in Indonesia, this research seeks to provide context-specific insights that can inform the design of more relevant and practical CPD programs for language educators working in diverse and digitally mediated learning environments. Based on this purpose, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do English tutors understand Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in relation to their professional growth, digital competence, and pedagogical needs?
2. To what extent do CPD programs support English tutors in developing digital competence and adapting their pedagogical practices in digital learning contexts?
3. What structural, technical, and institutional factors influence English tutors' participation in and implementation of CPD practices?

These research questions are addressed using a qualitative approach that prioritizes English tutors' perspectives and lived experiences in engaging with CPD. By aligning the research questions with the semi-structured interview design, this study seeks to capture in-depth insights into how tutors understand CPD, how they experience its impact on digital and pedagogical practices, and what contextual factors shape their ability to participate in and apply CPD. This alignment ensures that the data collected directly supports the research focus and allows for a coherent interpretation of tutors' experiences within the Indonesian digital learning context.

Method

This study uses a qualitative research design, specifically a descriptive qualitative approach, to explore English tutors' perspectives on the importance of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs in enhancing digital

competence and pedagogical adaptation in the learning era. This approach is used to deeply understand and interpret the meaning individuals or groups give to social or humanitarian issues (Creswell, 2017), The focus is aligned with field results to explore tutors' perceptions and understanding of the meaning of CPD, its effectiveness, and the inhibiting and supporting factors in its implementation, according to English tutors, especially those who have never participated in a similar program before.

Participants in this study came from three different institutions (Fun Teacher, Madani Islamic, and Ruang Guru), with each institution represented by only one tutor. These three limited participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique with the following criteria: 1. English tutors active in private institutions or online learning platforms, 2. experience in digital or online teaching, 3. have never participated in a CPD program but have prior understanding or knowledge of the program from other sources or large professional discussions, and 4. are willing to provide in-depth and open information. This selection technique was carried out deliberately to obtain various perspectives from English tutors in different institutional contexts, not to obtain a general perspective.

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The main instrument used in qualitative research is the semi-structured interview because it provides flexibility for participants to explain their experiences in depth while ensuring consistency across the entire interview (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The interview guide in this study was adapted from (kohnke, 2018) as cited in (Jonathan et al., 2023), and then modified or adjusted by changing some question contexts to make them more relevant and appropriate for the research objectives, context, and topic, while still maintaining the conceptual foundation and main structure.

Semi-Structured Interview question by (kohnke, 2018)

1. What do English language tutors understand about Continuing Professional Development in relation to their professional and digital educational needs?
2. To what extent do CPD programs effectively enhance tutors' digital competencies and pedagogical skills?
3. What structural and technical barriers influence tutors' participation in CPD programs?

4. To what extent does institutional and government support influence tutor' engagement in participating and implementing CPD in digital learning contexts?

5. What factors contribute to the gap between tutors' understanding of CPD and their actual implementation of CPD practices?

The interview protocol used follows the interpretive framework for qualitative data collection as discussed by (Carter & Little, 2007), which focuses on maintaining open dialogue and mutual understanding between the researcher and the informant. The interview was conducted on October 26, 2025. Before starting the interview, the researcher asked for the participants' consent and provided an explanation of the research objectives, procedures, participants' rights, and to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the participants' identities were replaced with codes P1-P3. Each interview lasted 30 minutes and was conducted in Indonesian to ensure clarity and accuracy of meaning. The translation of the interview data was carried out carefully by the author, an English education student, to maintain and ensure the appropriateness of meaning. The data collection procedure was carried out by:

1. Preparing the Interview Instrument

    The researcher constructed a semi structured interview guide for the interviews based on Kohnke (2018) as cited in (Jonathan et al., 2023). Prior to the interview, questions were modified to reflect the researcher's interest in English tutors' perspectives on the value of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for improving digital literacy and increasing pedagogical flexibility. The tool was then tested for accuracy, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives.

2. Selecting the Participants

    The purpose of this study was to identify and select English tutors who met several criteria. These criteria included English tutors active in private institutions or online learning platforms, experience in digital or online teaching, have never participated in a CPD program but have prior understanding or knowledge of the program from other sources or large professional discussions, and are willing to provide in-depth and open information. This helped ensure that participants met the criteria and could provide rich data.

3. conducting The Interview

    Based on the participants' location and availability the interviews, which lasted around 30 minuts, were conducted either online or in person. The interview outlined the study's purpose and requested recording consent prior to the interview. This approach fostered a calm and trustworthy environment which benefitted the entire interview.

4. Recording and note taking

    all interviews were recorded in order to preserve and ensure accuracy in

data. For example, during data collection and analysis, interviewers actively note important nonverbal cues such as silence, tone of voice or emphasis. These internal cues play a crucial role in guiding the analysis phase to produce a more complete and robust interpretation.

5. Member Checking

Each interview must be reviewed by the interviewer to ensure that participant responses are recorded accurately and that nothing is missed. This includes asking clarifying questions and revisiting key concepts, which is crucial for maintaining the credibility and reliability of the research.

6. Transcribing Data

The audio data were transcribed verbatim to establish textual data for analysis. Next, after transcribing the data, the data was arranged in a coherent or systematic manner to help facilitate the determination on future concepts, patterns, and themes regarding the knowledge and experience of English tutors regarding continuing professional development (CPD), as well as their role in the development of digital competence and pedagogical adaption.

The researchers are students of the English Language Education study program, have an academic background in English language teaching, and are highly interested in teacher professional development and the use of technology-based tools in teaching and learning. This role can influence how researchers view and interpret data, especially regarding how tutors view continuing professional development programs. In the process of collecting and analyzing data, researchers consciously focused on the experiences and perspectives of participants. To prevent bias, researchers asked open-ended and in-depth questions, recorded and transcribed directly, and re-verified data to ensure accuracy and consistency. This was to increase the credibility and transparency of the results.

Data were collected and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to establish important themes and sub themes that emerged in the data. (Braun and Clarke, 2006) explain that thematic analysis is a systematic process of identifying, structuring, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) in qualitative data. Analysis was conducted in this research through a series of steps, that is:

1. Familiarizing with the Data

The researchers walked through the interview transcripts repeatedly to gain a good understanding of the content, context, and meaning of the responses provided by the participants. This helped the researcher get to know the data intimately and notice early ideas.

2. Generating Initial Codes

Here, the researcher labelled and coded major sections of the data for the research question. Each major point of information was assigned a code to organize and summarize the data systematically.

3. Searching For Theme

Generated were codes which were then categorized into potential themes. These themes were defined as the pattern/topics within the data pertaining to the digital competency of the tutors and the experience relative to the CPD outcomes during integration into teaching.

4. Reviewing Themes

All the review themes were to ascertain that they were indicative of the data coded, and affirm the meaning of the entire dataset. There were changes in the themes in which they were merged, split, or simply were kept based on their relevance and ease of comprehension.

5. Defining and Naming Themes

Here, each of the themes were further clarified and a definition of each theme was given in terms of meaning, boundaries, and interconnections with other themes. Also, each theme was given a short summarizing title that describe the theme.

6. Product the Report

Finally, the findings of the research were written in a narrative form. To illustrate each theme, the researcher provided selective excerpts of the data in the form of direct quotations and clarified diverse interpretations with the support of those quotations

Results

This chapter details the perceptions of English language teachers from various institutions and the importance of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs focusing on digital pedagogical training and education in the digital era. Each of the teachers in the study provided information through semi-structured interviews as part of thematic analysis as described by (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Participant characteristics

The participants in this study consisted of three English tutors from different teaching contexts, including a private English course, an online learning platform, and a private tutoring institution. All participants had between two and three years of teaching experience and were within the age range of 21 to 23 years. Despite their relatively early career stage, the participants had experience teaching in digitally mediated learning environments, which informed their views on CPD.
The identified themes are:

1. CPD as lifelong and practice-oriented Learning
2. CPD as a response to digital demands
3. Structural and accessibility barriers to CPD participation
4. CPD enhances digital competence when training is practical
5. Limited and inconsistent support affects CPD sustainability.

CPD as lifelong and practice-oriented Learning

The English tutors who took part in the study considered the process of describing CPD an ongoing learning opportunity rather than a singular training event. CPD was seen as an opportunity to refine one's teaching competencies, professional skills, and digital readiness. Meaningful CPD, the participants suggested, had more impact when the focus was improving practice than when it was based on theory alone.One participant articulated that CPD is an opportunity for teachers "to learn and grow, not only in teaching, but also in improving professional skills" (Participant A).

Another participant pointed out that CPD assists teachers who run the risk of "getting stuck with outdated knowledge" because it fosters the use of more current pedagogical and technological skills" (Participant B). The responses suggest that, from the participants' perspective, CPD was also viewed as a form of lifelong learning that fosters professional growth amidst the evolving demands of teaching and the digital tools available.

CPD as a response to digital demands

For the participants in this study, CPD was considered important mainly because of the increasing use of technology in teaching. They did not talk about CPD as an obligation, but rather as a response to the realities of digital learning and students' familiarity with technology. One participant stated that CPD is important because "everything is now digital," and teachers need to adapt so their teaching does not become outdated (Participant A). Another participant described CPD as urgent, explaining that digital teaching requires teachers to understand and use various tools and platforms effectively (Participant C).

These views suggest that, within this study, CPD was seen as necessary due to external digital changes, not simply because it is part of professional development policies.

Structural and accessibility barriers to CPD participation

Although the participants in this study showed strong interest in CPD, they also described several challenges that made participation difficult. These challenges were mostly related to structural and accessibility issues rather than motivation. One participant explained that CPD schedules often clash with teaching hours, and that unstable internet connections sometimes reduce the quality of online training (Participant A). Another participant mentioned that CPD programs are not always easy to access because of time limitations, location, and lack of clear information (Participant B).

These findings indicate that, for the participants in this study, limited participation in CPD was influenced more by external constraints than by

unwillingness to engage in professional learning.

CPD enhances digital competence when training is practical

The participants in this study felt that CPD could improve their digital competence and teaching adaptation, especially when the training was practical. They valued CPD programs that allowed them to directly try out digital tools and teaching strategies rather than only listening to theory. One participant shared that CPD helped them learn to use applications, digital media, and more creative teaching methods that could be applied directly in class (Participant A). Another participant explained that training focused on classroom technology made a real difference in improving digital skills (Participant B).

However, participants also implied that CPD programs that focused too much on theory were less helpful, suggesting that the design of CPD plays a key role in its effectiveness.

Limited and inconsistent support affects CPD sustainability.

The participants in this study emphasized that institutional and government support strongly affects their ability to engage in CPD. While some support was available, it was often described as limited and inconsistent, making CPD difficult to sustain over time. One participant suggested that institutions and authorities should provide more relevant training, facilities, and incentives to encourage teachers to participate in CPD (Participant A). Another participant highlighted the importance of regular training opportunities and free online programs to make CPD more accessible (Participant B).

These responses show that, for the participants in this study, the sustainability of CPD depends not only on individual motivation, but also on consistent institutional and policy support.

Discussion

The study explored English tutors' perspectives on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in relation to digital competence and digital learning era. The discussion is organized around the three research questions to provide deeper interpretation of the findings, situate them within the Indonesian context, and connect them to relevant international literature.

English Tutors' Understanding of CPD and Professional Needs

The findings indicate that English tutors perceive CPD as a form of lifelong learning that emphasizes practical improvement rather than theoretical knowledge alone. Although the participants had never formally participated in CPD programs, they demonstrated a clear understanding of CPD purposes, benefits, and ideal characteristics. This apparent contradiction can be explained by tutors' exposure to informal professional learning, such as webinars, peer discussions,

self-directed online learning, and institutional expectations related to digital teaching. In the Indonesian context, professional discourse about CPD is widely circulated through educational policy, social media, and teacher communities, allowing tutors to develop conceptual awareness even without formal participation.

This finding aligns with Knowles' (1984) theory of adult learning, which suggests that adult learners develop professional understanding through experience and self-directed learning. International studies have also reported similar patterns, where teachers possess strong conceptual knowledge of CPD despite limited formal access to structured programs (Kennedy, 2014; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). However, in Indonesia, this gap between understanding and access appears more pronounced due to uneven institutional support and limited CPD opportunities for tutors working outside formal school systems.

CPD, Digital Competence, and Pedagogical Adaptation

This study shows that tutors believe that continuous professional development (CPD) is imperative with regard to adjusting to digitally mediated environments. This is because, according to the participants, the need to engage in CPD is not driven by policies, but by the rising level of digital literacy among students. This point is valid given that, in reality, tutors teach English language students who are conversant with digitally accessed platforms via social media and learning applications.

The international studies likewise reveal CPD as a vital platform in the promotion of digital literacy and flexibility in education (Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Redecker, 2017). However, when contrasted with teachers in more advanced nations, it is evident that Indonesian tutors face more hindrances in accessing formal CPD programs. Even though CPD within the global community is commonly incorporated within administrative structures, it is noted that Indonesian tutors rely on personal effort, leading to inconsistent growth within the learning environment, thereby highlighting the need for CPD strategies tailored to accommodate the tutors' teaching environments.

Structural, Institutional, and Contextual Barriers to Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The findings show that there exist structural rather than motivational factors that prevent individuals from taking part in CPD. These factors were identified by participants, who were tutors, as lack of time, lack of funds, lack of information, and lack of internet access. These factors are closely linked to issues that exist within the Indonesian educational system, including large teaching burdens, internet infrastructure, and tutors' marginalization in educational policies.

From a critical perspective, it is revealed that the role of individual professionals is placed predominantly on the agenda when it comes to the development of their professional capabilities, and far less attention is given to

institutional and governmental factors.The concerns discussed here permeate international academic debates, which disclose that CPD is less effective when individual accountability is not aligned with institutional priorities, reducing the role of professional development from a collective task to the responsibility of individual professionals (Avalos, 2011; Masoumi, Noroozi, 2023). In the Indonesian setting, it is seen that tutors who work outside public schools lack access to government-sponsored CPD programs.

Theoretical Implication

This study expands theoretical understanding of CPD by refining the theoretical framework of TPACK and andragogy in the context of English language teaching in the digital technology era. In Knowles' andragogy theory, direct relevance to professional needs motivates adult learners to learn. Focusing tutors on applied and practical learning aligns with this theory. This means that CPD models that appear overly theoretical are ineffective for tutors, especially in the ever-evolving digital learning environment.

Mastery of technology alone is insufficient without pedagogical and institutional support. This study reveals that the successful integration of technology, pedagogy, and content is highly dependent on structural conditions, such as the availability of infrastructure and institutional support. Therefore, effective CPD is understood not only as an individual process but also as a practice influenced by educational policies and systems.

Practical Implication

Practically, CPD programs must design training that focuses on practical, contextual, and flexible aspects. Participating tutors stated that theoretical training is less effective than training that involves hands-on practice using digital tools, discussing with peers, and sharing teaching experiences. Therefore, education and policymakers need to tailor CPD programs to the actual needs of tutors, support ongoing development, and provide schedules, facilities, and incentives for participation.

Study Limitations

This research has some limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, due to a relatively small sample, this study faces issues of generalization of findings. The views discussed in this article are specific institutional views that should not be taken as a comprehensive representation of English tutors in Indonesia. Secondly, this study involves self-report data that could be influenced by views and experiences of participants. However, this study involves a qualitative research approach that provides an opportunity to investigate tutors' views on continuing professional development in a research-informed manner even within contexts that have limited research.

Future Research Directions

Future studies could consider using larger and more representative samples, with tutors from different regions and institutional backgrounds. Comparative studies that compare teachers in schools with English tutors in private institutions would provide a richer understanding of access and equity issues in CPD. Other studies in the future could examine the effectiveness of different CPD programs or interventions developed particularly for tutors, with a focus on using technology in the classroom.

Conclusion

The research findings indicate that participating English tutors in this study perceive CPD as a crucial form of ongoing learning to help them develop into more competent teachers in an increasingly digital education world, not just a timely training requirement. This program helps them continually update their skills, develop teaching methods, and adapt to rapid technological advances. CPD is crucial if it provides practical, relevant, and applicable learning opportunities, not just theoretical material. Therefore, effective CPD must be closely linked to classroom situations, providing educators with the right tools and strategies to respond to the demands of digitally literate students.

As students are now considered more technologically savvy, tutors must keep up with technological developments to avoid being left behind. Tutors will learn to confidently implement digital platforms, digital assessments, and various engaging, technology-based learning methods in the CPD program. This is one way for tutors to develop their existing digital and pedagogical skills. However, many obstacles are encountered, such as busy teaching schedules, lack of program updates, potential costs, and inflexible program schedules.

Despite the high motivation of participants, these are some of the biggest challenges. Furthermore, the lack of support from these institutions or the government adds to the difficulty in achieving the goals of the professional development program for tutors. From this study proposes that educational institutions create well-structured CPD programs that focus on digital skills related to the characteristics of students who are very familiar with technology. The programs must be carefully thought out so as not to interfere with the teaching duties of participants, provide flexibility, support the development of digital tools, and form a mutually supportive educational community to achieve goals.

Support such as financial assistance, affordable training programs, and adequate digital infrastructure readiness, as well as practical and sustainable programs, are also necessary for education managers to ensure that tutors can practice and adapt new skills from the program in accordance with demands of current student characteristics. In short, CPD programs have great potential to improve digital technology skills and pedagogical application, as long as they are continuously supported, easily accessible, and relevant to current challenges.

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