

An autoethnography of becoming a better English user: “I Learn while I Teach”

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore my experience as an English teacher and an English learner who is struggling to improve English proficiency in spoken and written communication. This study uses an autoethnographic approach to reconstruct barriers in learning English as well as how the English language helped the researcher to grow better as a teacher candidate. I present my teaching journey experience as pieces of information for this investigation. My teaching journey at various levels of education and in different conditions has formed a new self-identity in viewing and learning, which contributes to my English language skills. The study highlights three key findings: (1) self-awareness of English proficiency development, which examines my evolving understanding of my linguistic strengths and weaknesses; (2) experiential learning through teaching practices, which demonstrates how the act of teaching fosters deeper language acquisition; and (3) critical turning points in English language acquisition, which identifies pivotal moments that significantly influenced the progress of acquiring the language. The implication of this study emphasizes the importance of experiential learning and reflective teaching practices for English language educators. Limitations and suggestions are also addressed in this study.

Keywords: autoethnography; English learner; teaching English

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INTRODUCTION

It is common to think of language acquisition as a straight line in which students progressively advance from non-speakers to fluent speakers through practice and organized instruction. According to Muranoi (2007), several studies have demonstrated that consistent output practice enhances speaking and writing performance, indicating that regular practice facilitates learners in achieving fluency and accuracy in their second language. This viewpoint, however, ignores the transformative power of teaching as a parallel learning pathway. Is it possible to learn a language and teach it to others at the same time? Critics argue that a teacher's inability to speak fluently may impair their ability to teach effectively and jeopardize the academic performance of their students. On the other hand, advocates of experiential learning argue that through active use and reflection, language instruction strengthens linguistic knowledge and speeds up proficiency. Many benefits are offered by the experience of

teaching, which is also part of learning. Based on the research conducted by [Kim et al. \(2024\)](#), teaching can affect the self-assessment of comprehension and retention of information.

Many English education graduates in Indonesia still find it difficult to develop their careers as teachers because of a lack of confidence in their English language skills. Speaking English can be challenging for many English language learners. They typically struggle to effectively communicate their ideas in English. They eventually stop talking because they run into psychological problems or run out of suitable words and expressions ([Syahfutra, 2021](#)). This is not only due to a lack of proficiency in English but also occur due to the lack of teaching experience they gain during lectures. These two things combine to give rise to a lack of self-confidence and even fear of starting a career as a professional teacher.

However, teachers ought to be one source of information but not the only one. Accordingly, teachers should inspire their students to learn and develop a curiosity for knowledge ([Ibrahim & Rashid, 2022](#)). Teachers must also be present to support their students as they go through the process of learning ([Duran & Topping, 2017](#)). Additionally, teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that students really learn the material and are motivated to learn actively, in addition to serving as facilitators for their students ([Garrett, 2008](#)). With the teaching practice in the classroom, the students will be able to systematically promote their participation and facilitate discussion with a group of other students on a topic that the teacher offers or a topic of their own choosing. Examining the roles of teachers and students, it is believed that there is a flat hierarchy between them as partners in the classroom ([Grzega & Schöner, 2008](#)).

I was born and raised in a village in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, where the majority of languages spoken are traditional languages (Buginese). Rural areas that are far from urban areas mean that English is considered unfamiliar. English is still rarely taught, let alone listened to in the local environment. Moreover, my parents and I used Indonesian to communicate every day. In middle school, I first watched an English movie on a laptop and TV. Besides, I started to get to know YouTube, I spent a lot of time watching vlogs, film reviews, cooking, and travel videos, all of which were in English. I became interested in going abroad and studying the English Language. Moving on to college, I finally focused on English education. As an education student in college, I was provided with many pedagogy and curriculum courses. During the pre-service teacher education program, students learn knowledge and skills that will equip them as professional teachers in the future ([Raihani & Sumintono, 2010](#)). However, little was taught about how to practice speaking English confidently to other people. Unfortunately, I only realized this when I participated in an exchange program in Malaysia, where I lived with people from various countries for six weeks. During the activity, we are not allowed to use any language except English. At that time, I was struggling with my speaking ability and found it to be a challenge. I never realized my shortcomings in direct speaking practice as up to now, as I have only been taught to speak during presentations in class. When all the other participants were busy discussing, I remained silent rather than speak with my limited language skills. Since then, I have felt less confident about speaking English to others.

After graduating from college, I finally decided to start teaching English to elementary school children privately. I can still practice my English even though the target is children. Watching the students I teach improve and even win English speech competitions gradually boosts my self-confidence. By any chance, I finally continued to practice speaking and registered as an English tutor at one of the well-known courses in Makassar, South Sulawesi. During my two years as an English tutor, I learned many things that I had not learned in the classroom when I was a student. According to [Muhammadiyah et al. \(2022\)](#), professional teachers (professional learning) learn how to plan lessons, create teaching media, explain lessons, and manage classes, but also as an important place for transformation (a place of transit) from a student to a new teacher in the classroom.

While extensive research on second language acquisition (SLA) explored the roles of input, interaction, and individual differences, fewer studies have examined the reciprocal relationship between teaching and language learning from an autoethnographic perspective. Much of the existing literature focuses on learners' experiences in formal educational settings or experimental studies, but

there is a lack of research on how teaching itself can serve as a language learning strategy for non-native English teachers. Reviewing previous studies, the question is finally addressed: What are the things that motivated me to learn English further, and to what extent do the teaching experiences improve my English proficiency? By providing an autoethnographic account of my experiences as an English learner and teacher, this paper underscores the reciprocal relationship between teaching and learning, illustrating how engaging in pedagogical practices enhances both language proficiency and self-awareness. This study contributes to the discourse on teacher-learner identity and provides insights for educators and language learners seeking to improve their English skills through reflective practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English language proficiency

The term "language proficiency" describes the capacity to utilize language for a range of interpersonal and professional contexts. Proficient users are those who possess a good command of the language, meaning they can communicate with other speakers intelligibly, comprehend a wide range of concepts both orally and in writing, and interact with them without difficulty. Language competency is typically measured using five performance indicators: accuracy, fluency, complexity, appropriateness, and capacity (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Despite their strong relationships, the four components of communication skills are conceptually and empirically separate, according to a wealth of research. It makes sense that the four abilities are complementary to one another. Reading and listening are two examples of receptive skills or understanding techniques. Writing and speaking are useful abilities. According to Almosa (2024), speaking, listening, reading, and writing are the four skills that are used to gauge language proficiency. Effective communication, language comprehension, and written content production are all evaluated by these skills, which offer a thorough assessment of a learner's overall language proficiency.

Second language acquisition

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex process influenced by various cognitive, social, and affective factors. Ehrman et al. (2003) emphasize that SLA involves three key components: input, interaction, and individual differences, all of which shape the learner's ability to acquire and develop proficiency in a second language. Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis also suggests that learners acquire language effectively when exposed to comprehensible input that is slightly beyond their current level. In the context of this research, my experiences as both a learner and a teacher highlight the significant role of self-awareness, experiential learning, and critical turning points in English proficiency development. The process by which knowledge about the fundamental structure of a complex stimulus environment is acquired naturally, simply, and without conscious effort is known as implicit learning (Brown & Ellis, 1996). Thus, knowledge can be acquired implicitly through the automatic and unconscious abstraction of the material's structural nature derived from experience.

Teacher's skill demand

Diverse degrees of proficiency are also displayed by fresh graduates from Indonesian teacher education institutions. According to what is known, some teacher education programs demand that student teachers show proof of their proficiency before they may graduate, while other programs just allow their students to leave the curriculum even if they might not have fulfilled the requirements to teach English in a classroom. More recently, Young and Walsh (2010) noted that a large number of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) may have a limited command of the English language and must use their native tongue when instructing learners who also have a limited command of the language. As a result, it is typical for instructors and students to spend the majority of English classes using their L1. Many immigrant students take tests before they have sufficiently improved their academic English to show what they know and can do in written and oral exams. Teachers ought to

think about how early testing and tracking systems affect children's academic performance, future social and economic mobility, and their ability to enroll in higher education.

As teachers, we have to make sure that students use different strategies as well as materials and boost the motivation within all the students, getting their attention and realizing. Knowledge of searching and managing, research methodology, presentation and discussion skills, digital skills (using internet tools), independence, creativity, self-confidence, self-efficacy, teamwork, communication, complex thinking, empathy, and patience are just a few of the many competencies that students can acquire through teaching (Grzega & Schöner, 2008). It is highly recommended that teachers acquire these competencies early in their careers when they are still in the pre-service phase.

METHOD

The method of this research uses an autoethnography approach to explore my journey as both an English learner and teacher. An autoethnography is one of the qualitative research techniques that combines cultural analysis with my personal narrative to enable me as the researcher to examine my experiences in larger social contexts. As the approach promotes reflexivity, researchers are prompted to consider their positionality and biases critically (Gearity, 2024). Moreover, the researcher connects personal narratives to existing literature and demonstrates awareness of the broader academic context. To conduct and write autoethnography, a researcher applies the principles of ethnography and autobiography. This means that auto-ethnographers write selectively and retrospectively about insights that originate from a portion of a culture as well as analyze their experiences in order to report on them. In order to do this, ethnographers (the researcher) participate in participant observation inside the culture, which entails documenting both their own and other people's participation in and observations of cultural events.

In this research, I use photographs, documentation, and a daily journal that reflect my personal memories to describe the information in narrative form. Research methods autoethnography is research that emphasizes the researcher's self-reflection in analyzing a process that occurs in the researcher's culture in a way to understand and analyze self-reflection by collecting documentation data from daily journals, as well as photographs (Ngunjiri et al., 2010). Through self-narratives, I examine how my experiences in teaching and learning English contribute to my language proficiency development. To analyze these experiences, I employ narrative analysis (Van Hulst et al., 2024), which focuses on how personal stories are structured, interpreted, and given meaning. This approach enables me to identify key turning points, challenges, and insights in my English learning journey. Therefore, my experiences are organized into three themes: self-awareness of English proficiency development, experiential learning through teaching practices, and critical turning points in English language acquisition. These themes emerged naturally from reflecting on significant events that shaped my English learning process. Each narrative is examined to uncover how my identity as a learner and teacher evolved over time, highlighting moments of self-awareness, learning through teaching, and pivotal turning points in my proficiency development. The interpretation of these experiences is further supported by relevant theories in second language acquisition and teacher learning, providing a deeper understanding of how teaching and learning intersect in my personal and professional growth.

FINDINGS

This section illustrates the reciprocal relationship between teaching and learning, highlighting how my evolving awareness, classroom interactions, and transformative moments contributed to my English proficiency. By reflecting on personal stories, teaching experiences, and engagement with language learning tools, three major findings emerged: self-awareness of English proficiency development, experiential learning through teaching practices, and critical turning points in English language acquisition. These findings illustrate the reciprocal relationship between teaching and learning, highlighting how my evolving awareness, classroom interactions, and transformative moments contributed to my English proficiency.

Self-awareness of English proficiency development

I was born in an area where English is not considered very important. People's awareness of the urgency of learning English is currently still minimal. Because they consider the local language (Buginese language) to be much more valuable to maintain. I also thought the same way at that time, until I finally started to look at my mother whenever she taught her students. She is an English teacher. Back then before, I wondered why people wanted to learn English enthusiastically, but later I realized that the impact of mastering English to such an extent could even lead us to travel abroad. I was increasingly interested in learning English, starting from the small things I do, it was by switching the language settings on my cell phone from Bahasa Indonesia to English, I was also increasingly interested in listening to English songs, as well as watching films and YouTube videos in English.

I gradually developed confidence in speaking English, even in simple conversational contexts. Within my family, I often assisted friends and relatives with assignments related to English, which earned me considerable praise. Over time, I was known as someone who was "good at English," a label that persisted into high school as I regarded the language as a source of enjoyment. However, this perception of proficiency concealed underlying weaknesses in my language skills when I moved to another town and expanded my experience. I realized the frequent occurrence of pronunciation errors and grammatical errors in my English.

In January 2020, I took part as a student volunteer exchange in a rural area in Malaysia. This activity was attended by students in several countries, such as Taiwan, Italy, Algeria, South Korea, China and Germany. As I was the only participant from Indonesia, I went through various situations that forced me to adapt to the new environment. Being a minority among new people that I had just met was a culture shock, especially in language. During my six weeks of being in the same place with foreigners, I had to maximize my English communication skills. In the first week, I was still able to communicate using the basic vocabulary that I had. However, entering the second week, I started to feel less confident when I had difficulty understanding some of the new vocabularies that I had acquired, and this was also related to my listening skills. It felt quite challenging when my friends started to talk faster. Moreover, each of us also had our own accents from several different countries, so it sometimes felt harder for me to absorb the literal meaning of what they were trying to communicate. Being in a situation that requires me to use English as the main language is not an easy journey for me who come from a family that never uses English at home. My level of confidence speaking English seems to disappear when I speak with a group of foreigners who can communicate fluently.

Figure 1

Welcoming party with participants from various countries



I slowly realized my shortcomings when we were asked to teach English to Chinese elementary school students where the students did not really understand Malay or even the Indonesian language, so we were asked to explain the material completely using English. Even though I already had previous teaching experience, that was the first time I taught English without using Malay or my first language

at all. That was a big challenge at that time because teaching English as a second language to students without using their native language as the language of instruction was not as easy as I imagined.

Figure 2

Teaching Malaysian students



At the end of this project, we conducted a farewell party with the teacher and students. What surprised me was some of them came up to me to say thank you because they felt very happy to have been taught by me. They even wrote several creative letters telling about their feelings. When I taught in class, some of them asked me to continue to teach them, and some of them even gave me small gifts as a keepsake. Not only students but some teachers and staff at the school also gave me some souvenirs as memories of Malaysia. I felt calm and touched when I read a bunch of letters from students, which were drawn in such a way, accompanied by the heart-touching words "*semoga berjaya*" which means good luck, "thank you, teacher Nabila for teaching me", even though I may not have succeeded in teaching them English, but they somehow restoring my motivation to studying and improve my English skills after I returned to Indonesia. It was grateful that I could build an emotional connection with them.

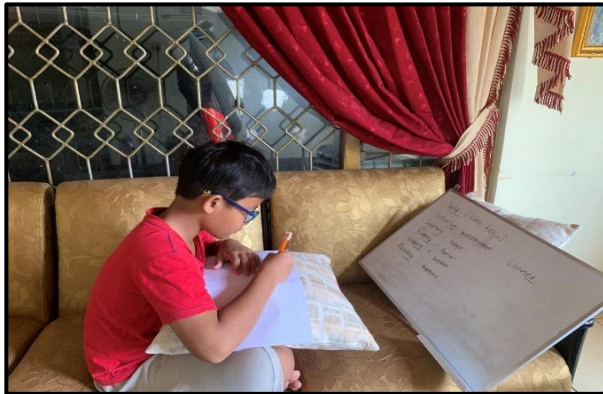
Figure 3

Some letters from my students



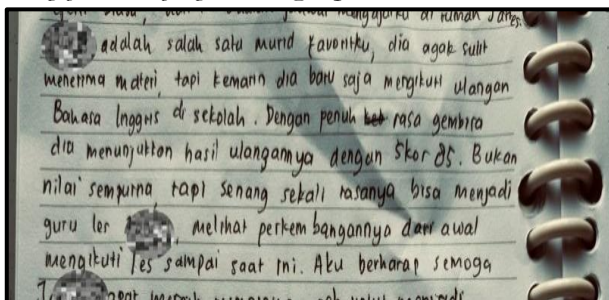
Experiential learning through teaching practices

I didn't feel confident enough to teach directly in a class. At the beginning of 2021, I started my teaching experience by giving a private English class to an elementary school student at his home. Even though the students are still in the third grade of elementary school, I can at least practice basic conversation and learn to communicate better, one of which is by enriching my vocabulary. From the one student I had taught, I ended up teaching another student, and the demand for private tutoring increased. For about seven months, I taught four students from elementary school, middle school, and high school privately at their homes.

Figure 4*Private tutoring for primary school students*

There are many differences when teaching privately and teaching in the classroom. Each has its own challenges when it comes to the learning process. The most lasting difficulty was when I taught elementary school children who were active and playful characters even during the class, I had to shout several times and try various ways to get the children's attention. As I taught a child, I would prepare myself to teach very simply and with an interesting approach to maintain the student's motivation. During my experience tutoring 4 students in a week, I got many insights about new English materials either from their books or outside their learning material from school, such as common expressions from a short movie, an idiom, an English quiz, a short story, and so on. I did private tutoring for about seven months before moving to an official course institution.

The figure below is the daily journal that I wrote when I taught English privately to a 5th-grade student. The student's name in the picture is blurred for student privacy reasons. The journal was written in Bahasa Indonesia, which indicates my satisfaction when I taught English and then knowing that the English scores of the students I taught privately had increased from the previous exam.

Figure 5*Daily journal of my teaching experience*

As time passed by, my level of self-confidence began to increase unconsciously, both on campus during lectures and whenever I teach. I felt my self-esteem building up, and finally, I decided to move to teach at a larger official institution. In July 2021, I was trying to submit an application to a course institution that focuses on improving English and teaching English in preparation for college entrance exams. After being accepted, I faced new challenges, one of which was that the target students being taught were third-year high school students, and the classes were also much larger, consisting of 12 people in one class for 4 different classes. The students' backgrounds are also very varied, where some of them come from superior schools in the city of Makassar. This requires me to study harder in English, as well as prepare appropriate teaching materials before entering class.

The class that I taught was for students who were preparing for the official college entrance exam, and it is not only focused on reading but also on English structure lessons. Even though the institution where I teach has provided modules, I still have to provide other teaching materials besides

that. What I did before teaching was summarize some materials and collect English questions on previous years' college entrance exams, then ask students to answer them in the class.

Figure 6

Teaching English in a course institution



I started the class by brainstorming, such as asking several questions in English about daily activities, this morning's breakfast menu, or asking about difficulties in answering questions. Each class has been facilitated with complete learning media, one of which is a smart TV that can connect my device to the TV. I used this facility to display videos of English conversations, as well as English texts. This learning media was really helpful, especially when teaching conditional sentences. It is easier for me to mark words that are considered important with various colors so that students can see more clearly and enthusiastically. I have gained lots of experience while working at learning institutions. I was not only assigned to teach but also provided consultations to students regarding their chosen majors in higher education. I conducted consultation sessions for 46 students for approximately two weeks. Before teaching and consulting, I received tutoring training from the English subject division coordinator.

Figure 7

Consultation session with pre-university students



The moment when I taught English privately, the interactions I made with the students every day helped me to recall my English knowledge, such as some basic grammar rules and vocabulary that I rarely used. I have formed a new habit before teaching: I set aside about 20 minutes to learn the material I will be teaching at that time. Apart from being patient, I was also required to understand their difficulties and offer them some solutions. Nevertheless, I finally understand how important it is to make students interested in the lesson before teaching about a certain topic. The proudest moment during my teaching experience was when students could understand the material, I had taught them. A teacher's perception of their abilities is closely linked to their personal teaching proficiency. In addition to having a favorable self-perception, personal competence enables the teacher to attribute their vocational teaching excellence to their own understanding.

During the first to second year at university, I felt confident in my speaking skills, as we had also passed several courses that should have been at an advanced level. However, my perception changed completely when I participated in the exchange program. I never thought that having so much speaking theory, grammar, and so on would not guarantee fluency in English. Theory without real practice will not have a visible impact. I had a hard day at the beginning of my arrival because all the participants spoke English very fluently, followed by the accents of their respective countries. Meanwhile, I can only understand a few words that I often hear, apart from that, I need to translate them. This made me less confident in starting a conversation or simply taking part in a conversation. I felt that my volunteer journey was less optimal because of the language barrier. However, I felt so proud because I had completed the teaching experience for Malaysian elementary school students. The letters that I got from the students indirectly encouraged me to study harder and deepen my English skills. I felt proud to see the speaking outcomes of the students I have taught, which gave me great motivation to share my knowledge with more people. Since then, I promised myself to become a more responsible and professional English teacher once I returned to Indonesia.

Critical turning points in English language acquisition

After returning from Malaysia, I tried to improve my English skills to be better, whether in speaking, reading, listening, or writing. I finally discovered a very valuable thing, such as my shortcomings in speaking, even in writing, listening, reading, and speaking. I became aware of common mistakes that I had never noticed before. Based on the training and experience I gained from teaching as a private teacher and finally becoming an English tutor in a classroom for approximately two years, I personally felt a significant improvement in my English skills, not only in Linguistics but also in non-linguistic aspects. The series of new knowledge and experiences that I gained gave me a strong motivation to deepen my understanding of English. Therefore, in 2023, I decided to enroll in a master's program in the English Education Department at a University in Malang, East Java. Armed with the English skills that I had acquired, I managed to get satisfactory TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language) and IELTS scores. The score on the English exam then led me to become one of the awardees of the *Beasiswa Indonesia Bangkit* held by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia.

All the valuable experiences in my journey, such as handling the class, practicing public speaking, preparing materials, and giving feedback to students, turned out to have a big impact on my English language skills. Over time, things steadily got better. While my students were studying, I also learned many things in the classroom. Since then, I fell in love and was motivated to improve my communication skills to become a professional English teacher. Being a language learner myself such as giving lessons to the students gave me various kinds of practical lessons which contributed to my development, not only in language learning or micro-teaching experience but also in improving my self-confidence to speak in front of many people. Besides, after I finished tutoring class to high school students for 3 months, some of them confessed that English was no longer a difficult test compared to any other subtest. Eight out of ten students said that they were satisfied with the consultation session, therefore, they could choose a suitable major that aligns with their passion and interest. It is proof that I can create good interaction with the students during the class.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal three key aspects of my language learning journey: self-awareness of English proficiency development, experiential learning through teaching practices, and critical turning points in English language acquisition. The findings of this study reveal three key aspects of my language learning journey: self-awareness of English proficiency development, experiential learning through teaching practices, and critical turning points in English language acquisition.

Self-awareness of English proficiency development and individual differences in language learning

My reflections indicate that becoming aware of my own strengths and weaknesses in English was a critical step in my language-learning journey. Brown and Ellis (1996) highlight that individual's differences, such as motivation, metacognitive awareness, and learning strategies, play a crucial role in second language acquisition. Recognizing areas of improvement, such as pronunciation and fluency, allowed me to take deliberate actions to enhance my skills. This self-awareness is closely linked to learner autonomy, as identified by Brown and Ellis (1996), where individuals actively monitor and regulate their own learning process. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that teaching itself fosters metacognitive awareness, reinforcing the idea that reflecting on one's own learning strategies enhances proficiency.

Experiential learning through teaching practices and the role of interaction

Interaction is a key mechanism for language development, as it provides learners with opportunities for meaningful communication, negotiation of meaning, and feedback. The findings suggest that my role as a teacher provided rich opportunities for interactive learning, allowing me to refine my English skills through classroom discussions, student interactions, and explanations of language concepts. Connections between teachers and students foster a cooperative learning atmosphere where students are encouraged to share ideas and offer support to one another (Mastul, 2024). Teaching reinforced my learning because I had to simplify, clarify, and articulate complex ideas, which deepened my own understanding. This aligns with Ponnusasamy and Pandurangen's (2014) theory that learning occurs in social contexts, where input is processed and restructured through active engagement. According to them, this approach improves the acquisition of 21st-century abilities by fostering the development of self-efficacy, self-confidence, and communication skills via student participation in the teaching-learning process. My experiences also support Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of learning through social interaction.

Critical turning points in English language acquisition and the role of input

Comprehensible input is essential for language acquisition, particularly when learners are exposed to authentic and meaningful language use. The findings reveal that certain critical moments, such as how to engage in spontaneous conversations or overcome public speaking anxiety, served as turning points in my English learning journey. Additionally, these turning points align with Krashen's input hypothesis, which states that learners acquire language best when they are exposed to input that is slightly beyond their current proficiency level (Krashen, 1982).

The reflection of those experiences unconsciously led to a huge improvement in my English skills, including speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills, which was also proven by the increase in my IELTS (International English Language Testing System) score. Here is how the teaching process impacted my English language skills: (1) Speaking skills: I learn by delivering the materials in the module and handbook, and as a result, I should explain them comprehensively to the students. The process of transferring the materials to the student helped me think critically. Moreover, it trained me to get used to producing words in English. (2) Reading skills: In order to teach the students about the UTBK (computer-based written exam), I should familiarize myself with a reading text because most of the questions are in reading test form. For me, who is not really engaged in English reading, it was really helpful. I can read any of the English literature around me as a pleasure instead of refusing it. (3) Writing skills: Before experiencing teaching, I always felt that grammar was very difficult to understand, but it was not that hard when I taught it to other people. I find it easier to understand and apply grammar rules in written and spoken communication, (4) Listening skill (I learned listening during the consultation session. In addition, the student's handbook also provides the audio that was being played on the smart TV. Being able to hear the English conversations improved my listening skills not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom.

The English teaching experience not only trained me to become a better teacher but also rebuilt my motivation to learn English so that I can achieve many things through my improvement in English skills. Starting from failure and lack of self-confidence turned out to shape me to be more. Unexpectedly, this experience not only led me to increase my self-confidence in teaching English but also gave me the opportunity to return to being a learner to deepen my knowledge of English education at the master's level. Teaching to learn, and re-learning to become a better teacher. In addition, it also supports the theory by Richards et al. (2012) regarding the urgency of maintaining subject-matter expertise for teachers who have low levels of target language proficiency in order to maximize the students' language-learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

This autoethnography revealed the experience of my teaching practices and how the learning journey led me to develop my identity as an aspiring English Teacher. The journey began when I entered university and took the English Education Department. I never realized my weaknesses in English until I experienced an exchange volunteer program where I had to live and communicate with foreigners. All the challenges that I passed during the exchange program changed the way I see English and be willing to become a professional teacher. Moreover, teaching English has shaped me positively, such as; awareness of my English proficiency, improving my English skills through teaching practices, and turning point of my English acquisition.

The insights of this research offer practical implications for language educators by demonstrating how reflective teaching can enhance personal language development. From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the discussion on teacher identity, second language acquisition, and experiential learning, suggesting that engaging in teaching can serve as an effective strategy for language improvement. It is recommended that future educators should seize opportunities that push them beyond their comfort zones, for instance, taking part in exchange programs or interacting with diverse communities. Language ability, cultural sensitivity, and professional confidence can all be greatly improved by such experiences. Deciding to start teaching on various kinds of opportunities can help pre-service teachers identify their strengths and areas for improvement while fostering a passion for lifelong learning. It is also suggested for the next researcher to explore similar autoethnographic studies to understand how reflective teaching and experiential learning shape teacher identity across different cultural and professional contexts.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT:

The authors of the manuscript affirm that they have no conflicting interests.

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