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**English Teachers' Personally-Initiated Learning (PIL):
Their Professional Development Preferences**

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Abstract: This article aims at reporting a result of a small research in Bali about English teachers' personally-initiated learning (PIL) preferences. The study was done through a small survey involving 156 English teachers and continued with a focus group discussion (FGD). The survey was mainly about English teacher's PIL preferences, and the aspects which influence their participation. The survey revealed some PIL preferences, namely: web-browsing, reading books, colleagues sharing, reflection from experience and doing research. Following the survey analysis, 2 times of 90 minutes FGD were conducted by involving 15 English teachers. The focus group discussion was conducted to see English teachers' PIL experiences and opinion regarding the PIL preferences found in the survey. The study found that English teachers' preferences were influenced by their time, family responsibility, ability, age, effect-relevance and school-culture. Besides that, personal motivation was found to be essential in their professional development participation. Suggestions for school administrators are discussed as it reflects the implication of the findings of the study.

Key words: personally-initiated learning, professional development, English teachers

Abstrak: Artikel ini bertujuan untuk melaporkan hasil penelitian kecil di Bali tentang preferensi guru bahasa Inggris dalam 'Belajar dengan inisiasi personal' (PIL). Penelitian ini dilakukan melalui survei kecil yang melibatkan 156 guru bahasa Inggris dan dilanjutkan dengan diskusi kelompok terarah (FGD). Survei yang dimaksud berkenaan

dengan preferensi PIL oleh guru bahasa Inggris dan aspek yang mempengaruhi partisipasi mereka. Survei mengungkapkan beberapa preferensi PIL, yaitu: web-browsing, membaca buku, berbagi dengan rekan, bercermin dari pengalaman dan penelitian. Setelah analisis survei dilakukan, penelitian ini dilanjutkan dengan 2 kali 90 menit FGD yang dilakukan dengan melibatkan 15 guru bahasa Inggris. FGD dilakukan untuk melihat pengalaman dan pendapat guru mengenai preferensi PIL yang ditemukan dalam survei. Studi ini menemukan bahwa preferensi guru bahasa Inggris 'dipengaruhi oleh ketersediaan waktu, tanggung jawab keluarga, kemampuan, usia, efek-relevansi dan budaya sekolah. Selain itu motivasi pribadi ditemukan sebagai hal yang penting dalam partisipasi pengembangan profesional mereka. Saran-saran untuk pimpinan administrasi sekolah diberikan karena hal tersebut merupakan implikasi dari temuan penelitian ini.

Kata kunci: pembelajaran dengan inisiasi personal, pengembangan profesional, guru Bahasa Inggris

INTRODUCTION

To improve or maintain teachers' professionalism it is essential for teachers to engage in professional development efforts. Cahyono (2010) believes that continuous professional development engagement is ultimately necessary for teacher professionalism as teachers need to adjust or to keep up with any educational changes and teaching challenges. Being up to date with any educational changes, they may improve teachers' practice quality.

Many scholars (Lieberman, 1996; Kennedy, 2005; Davidson, Dunlop, Soriano., Kennedy, & Phillips., 2012) have discussed options of professional development models or activities. Their accounts can be generally classified into two board classifications, namely structured professional development and unstructured professional development. The first involves all learning activities which are organized by professional development providers. The later involves personally appropriated activities which are various in target, time and ways. This article discusses the later account done by English teachers in Indonesia. In this article, it refers to Personally-Initiated Learning (PIL), which is teachers' self-initiated learning efforts.

Research to date (Ashadi, 2010; Cahyono, 2010; Hastuti et al., 2009; Evans, Tate, Navarro, & Nicolls, 2009) report teachers' refusal in participating in structured professional development in Indonesia because of various factors

such as time, financial reward, family responsibilities, lack of sustainability, etc. Thus, as the findings showed some unfortunate condition for structured professional development, the study tries to answer two questions related to unstructured professional development: 1) What are English teachers' PIL preferences, and 2) What aspects influence their PIL preferences?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section specifically addresses personally-initiated learning (PIL). To give the contextual description, the next part is an account about ELT professional development in Indonesia.

A. PIL (Personally-initiated Learning) as English teachers' professional development effort

Professional development refers to any kinds of efforts done by the school administrator as well as a teacher. Mizell (2010, p.1) states professional development as "the strategy schools and school district use to ensure that educators continue to strengthen their practice throughout their career". By this definition, Mizell emphasizes the efforts initiated by schools and school districts to have teachers engage in professional development activities. However, Day (1999) emphasized that the ones who initiate the effort are not only schools and schools district but also teachers as individuals. He states:

Professional development consists of all-natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. (Day, 1999, p.4).

Teachers' perceptions of what activities constitute professional development are frequently limited to attendance at courses, conferences, which are often to meet PD (professional development) policy requirements. Teachers do not always see professional learning at school as a form of professional development (Hustler et al., 2003) and regularly see it as part of the routine. Meanwhile, some scholars (Haigh, 2005; Horn & Little, 2010; Weimer, 2011) believe that even sharing among teachers about their classroom challenges and difficulties is also professional development. Mizell (2010) mentions that self-initiated learning is a form of professional development. This may include several activities such as individual reading,

study/research, study groups among peers, peer coaching, mentoring and online course. Another expert prefers to classify these activities into several types. According to Lieberman (1996) there are three types of professional development: 1) direct teaching (courses, conferences, workshops, consultations); 2) learning in school (mentoring, peer coaching, action research, critical friendships and task-related planning teams); and 3) out of school learning (visits to other school, learning networks, school-university partnerships and so on).

When teachers seek learning opportunities with their initiatives, they are actually doing Personally-Initiated Learning (PIL). PIL is characterized with a highly-personalized structured and less systematic learning procedure. Brennan (2016) mentions that this highly-personalized learning is basically a *practice-based learning*. This term shared the same principle with *self-directed learning* where learners organize their learning (Brennan, 2016) in which one proactively seek out information when needed and take the necessary steps to master it (Zimmerman, 1990). Teachers in doing PIL may do this individually or may involve other teachers in their learning.

Regarding terminology, Lieberman (1996) mention about *learning in school*, which is mostly PIL such as mentoring, peer coaching, action research, critical friendships and task-related planning teams. However, unlike PIL, this term does not cover what teachers can do individually at their own time, such as web-browsing at home, personal reading, joining an online course, etc. Recently scholars (Nilsson, 2012; O'Brien & Jones, 2014) also come with a new term: *professional learning*, as a more flexible term for any unstructured learning efforts, either at school or at home. They distinguish the term *professional learning* from traditional professional development because it is unstructured and highly personalized in nature.

Specifically, Davidson et al. (2012) provide some ways for English teachers' professional development activities. Related to personally-initiated learning, they mention about networking with other English teachers through various way such as having a membership of the professional association and joining many ELT facebook and twitter groups. Through these groups they can share experience or opinion about teaching practices which is the most stimulating ways to develop. They may engage in sharing and learning from a more experienced teacher which is an invaluable way to gain insight into teaching English.

Some scholars have also studied English teachers' PIL options. Martin-Beltran & Percy's (2014) study examines the collaboration between English teachers and content-area elementary school teachers. Banegas, Pavese, Velázquez, & Vélez (2013) did an investigation on their teaching practice through collaborative action research. Furthermore, there are also options to develop one's professionalism by seeing one's own strength and weaknesses. For instance, doing a contextual-reflection and self-reflection (Chien, 2014), working with a mentor teacher (Wang, 2002), and using teaching portfolio (McLean, M., & Bullard., 2000) or digital portfolio (Trent, J., & Shroff, 2013)

Besides those options above, there are also professional development options which are more highly-personalized in structured in which teachers can structure the activity, the time, the scope and the resources by themselves. These options may include a model of exploring the internet (Orr, Duncum, & Wallin, 2013), active reading-research-findings as a base for their teaching (Luke, A & McArdle, 2009) professional dialogue (Cheng & Winnie, 2012) and doing a reflective practice (Bleach, 2014).

Personally-initiated learning can be a solution toward teacher's hesitance of doing professional development. For instance, teachers who claim that they do not have sufficient time may try activities which are more individual learning. Teachers who say they cannot afford to participate in seminar or conference may have peer collaboration or coach with their colleagues at school. Furthermore, with the proliferation of online learning platforms, there is also online professional development.

B. ELT professional development in Indonesia

In Indonesia, National System of Education no. 20/2003, chapter XI article 40 enacts teacher's responsibilities. It states that teacher is responsible to have professional commitment to improving the quality of education. Cahyono (2010) mentions that there are four options for Indonesian ELT teachers' professional development. The options include sending teachers to graduate program in ELT, assigning teachers to join in-service teachers' certification, sending teachers to a professional training program and building teachers' awareness of the importance of Continuous Improvement Learning (CIL)

To be a competent teacher is crucial. Cahyono (2014) reported a result of a survey on factors that cause low achievement in National Examination (NE). In general, the survey reveal that the dominant factor causing students low achievement in NE were the teaching learning process in the classroom.

The finding on the survey mentioned previously is in line with Alwasilah's (2012) opinion. His article presented a statistical number of teachers according to their professional components. The survey revealed that Secondary teachers mastered the following as part of their professionalism: 1) learning materials (51.3 percent), 2) methods of teaching (16.7 percent), 3) curriculum implementation (11.9 percent), 4) instructional technology (10 percent), and 5) learning evaluation (9.7 percent). This survey result suggests that for them, mastering English seems to be more comfortable than mastering methods of teaching, implementing the curriculum, using instructional technology and conducting learning evaluation.

Alwasiah (2012) also belief that EFL professionalism is teachers' mastery of English and its pedagogy. Similarly, the result of the survey above also found that most EFL teachers still have difficulties in teaching some basic competencies. ELT training and EFL professional development programs should emphasizes these two aspects. Besides teacher mastery of English and pedagogy, the competency in technology literacy also needs to be considered to support EFL professionalism. Instructional technology is the weakest area of EFL teaching, followed by curriculum implementation and methods of teaching (Alwasiah, 2012). Unfortunately, many EFL curriculum developers at LPTKs have taken this issue lightly (Alwasiah, 2012; Evan,et.al, 2009).

Lie (2007) describes the chance of English teachers' professional development in Indonesia is described by She states that many EFL teachers in Indonesia are not able to join in a professional development program; not because they do not want to but because they are not able to. At school, they struggle with teaching 40-50 students in one class, not to mention live with low salary, which makes the majority of teachers have to do some moonlighting work after school. Consequently, many of them are not able to put enough time and energy into making class preparation, improving their quality and enhancing their professional development.

Scholars who study CPD in Indonesia have revealed that teachers face various issue about CPD. Evans, et al, (2009) found that there is a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the Indonesian professional development activities. For instance, there is lack of sustainability of the well-intentioned efforts to improve Indonesian teacher's quality; when donor money runs out, the efforts will stop. Their research revealed that improvement must be made in terms of ongoing evaluation to keep the sustainability of Indonesian professional development activities.

A study by **Error! Reference source not found.** in Indonesia, found there was a tendency that Indonesian English teachers cannot involve very much in professional development because their professionalism is not yet adequately rewarded, i.e. they had a low salary. Thus, more than half of the teachers admitted that they had a second job that hinders them from attending any professional development activities. On the contrary to their practice, they believe that sick pay should not be a reason for a teacher to act unprofessionally; thus, they believe that teachers should enhance their professionalism regardless of the financial rewards. The study indicated that the initial motives to choose being a teacher as a profession influence the way teacher performs professionally. These motives include a genuine passion for teaching, religious duties, financial hardship, the love for English language, perceived roles of women, or failure to enter other professions. Such motives bring implications to teachers' professionalism and their further growth.

This finding is later confirmed by Utami, Prestridge, Saukah, & Hamied (2019) who find that CPD participation alone cannot guarantee the alignment of their perceptions and practices of effective teaching in the classroom. They identify motivation as one of the indicators of professional enthusiasm, which is a "key ingredient of CPD that will help them shape their perceptions of effective teaching into their practice" (p.115)

Furthermore, Utami & Prestridge's (2018) study indicates that Indonesian English teachers have different professional development disposition for online professional learning: *compliant disposition* and *indifferent disposition*. They identify that PD policy shapes these dispositions. Teachers with compliant disposition participate in CPD because they are required to or to fulfil policy demand. Thus, since online professional learning is not a component to be measured in teacher professional development evaluation, teachers with compliant disposition are inclined to be less active in doing online professional learning. Meanwhile, teachers who have indifferent disposition, participate in any learning efforts because they want to get involved in the developmental process of being professional teacher. In other words, their learning action directly tied to professional attainment instead of merely fulfilling policy demand.

The above research done related to professional development for ELT in Indonesia may portray English teachers' perception and disposition regarding CPD participation. Some teachers think that it is useful and vital. However, some teachers choose not to participate in CPD because of some reasons such as time, energy or money to afford the program. Some others believe

unstructured professional development (called by different terms: professional learning, self-regulated learning, personally-initiated learning) as a more flexible learning option.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Bali province, Indonesia, by involving some English teachers. It followed a qualitative research approach by utilizing survey and FGD (focus group discussion) as the techniques of collecting data. Precisely, it followed phenomenological approach, which concerns about understanding the point of view of the subjects or participants' perspective.

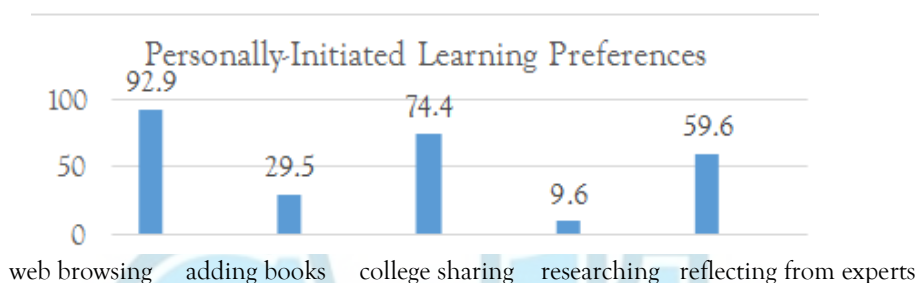
The survey was not done to have a result to be generalized, but instead as a way of looking at prominent PIL preferences of English teachers in Bali and aspects influencing PIL participation. For the survey, a questionnaire was developed by studying Indonesian CPD (continuous professional development) manual (Kemendiknas, 2010) and some research about teachers' perception on professional development activities and the problems they encountered to participate (Hustler et al., 2003; Hustler et al., 2003; Roux & Valladares, 2014). The researcher distributed 200 questionnaires to random English teachers in Bali, which were returned by 156 teachers. Based on the result of the survey, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were conducted twice in *Buleleng* regency, and each lasted for 90 minutes. There were 15 English teachers agreed to be involved in the FGD but some teachers refused because of some conflict with their working schedule and geographical distance. The data was analyzed by looking at the percentage of frequency of respondents choosing the items in the questionnaire, and doing content analysis on the discussion note gained during FGD.

FINDINGS

From the survey, it was found that 145 people selected web-browsing, 116 people selected colleagues sharing, 93 people selected reflecting from experience, 46 people selected reading books/e-book, and only 15 people selected doing research. These findings showed that English teachers most likely to prefer web-browsing as their way of personal learning; and less likely to prefer doing research.

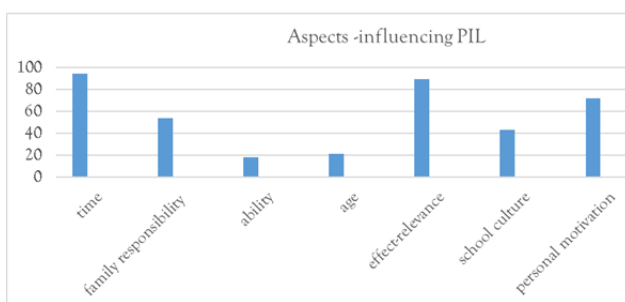
Besides the frequency of PIL preferences, the survey also found that English teachers considered some aspects influencing their participation. These aspects namely: time, family responsibility, age, ability, effect-relevance, school culture and personal motivation. The respondents were allowed to choose more than one aspect from the list. There are 149 people who chose the time, 84 people who chose family responsibility, 28 people who chose ability, 33 people who chose age, 139 who chose effect-relevance, 67 people who chose school culture, and 112 chose who personal motivation.

Figure 1:
PIL preferences



Among these aspects, time was considered to be very influential. These findings implied that English teachers with more time might have the possibility to do more personally-initiated learning. They described their striving in doing away too much responsibilities. Based on the regulation, no. 14, year 2015 from Kemendikbud professional teachers should teach 24 hours minimum. Most teachers believed that this policy was successfully making them busy teaching and preparing the administrative report, which left them no time to do professional development.

Figure 2:
Aspects influencing PIL



Lie (2007) and Utami (2018) identify time as one influential aspect influencing professional development involvement. In the Indonesian context,

Lie(2007)[Error! Reference source not found.](#) states that many EFL teachers in Indonesia are not able to join in professional development program; not because they do not want to but because they are not able to. At school, they struggle with teaching 40-50 students in one class, not to mention live with low salary, which makes the majority of teachers have to do some extra job after school. Similarly, Utami, (2018) found that some teachers cannot do web browsing for making up class preparation because they are not able to put enough time and energy into it. They regretted the 24 hours teaching required by PD policy since this policy caused them to be unable to manage their time more effectively in order to learn and improve the quality of their teaching

The discussion during FGD meetings resulted that English teachers were aware of some efforts that could be done personally for their professional development. The discussion revealed that English teachers dealt with many job-related challenges, such as new curriculum, innovative teaching techniques, online teacher competency exam, etc. Their most preferred way was by doing web-browsing. Surprisingly, the similar response also came from senior teachers who were likely digital immigrant.

Though speculation says that digital immigrant tends to find technology as complicated matter, yet the discussion in FGD implied that some digital immigrants were very adaptable and willing to learn advanced technology. They implied that they were quite familiar with some web-browsing activities such as reading current government education policy, downloading curriculum, teaching material or lesson plan documents, becoming a member of online English teacher association, and learning about innovative teaching techniques. How some digital immigrants learn better than others to adapt to the environment has been discussed by Prensky (2001) who also believed that to some degree always leave some “accent” of their past.

Prensky’s claim about digital immigrant characteristics make it clear how English teachers in the study had a partial ability in using technology. The English teachers involved in FGD admitted that they were quite good at using their smartphones and a personal computer with an internet connection to help them do their task. The smartphone was mostly essential for their quick-answer needs, for instance, looking up vocabulary meaning in short time. English teachers also used their own PC to download what they need from the internet such as teaching material, visual and audio teaching media, government regulation, a model of the lesson plan, curriculum issue, etc. Although they seemed to be quite good at technology such as using smartphones and learning through the web, very few of them have sufficient

ability in using technology to produce something to be shared online. This lacking in sharing was known from their lack of knowledge on creating a blog or web. Most of them were consumers, i.e. reading and downloading documents, video, etc but not yet a producer, i.e. producing teaching material, teaching tutorial, video or article.

The discussion during FGD was also about their experience in doing colleagues-sharing. They perceived that relation with other teachers was very important, not only with English teachers but also with teachers teaching other subjects. They found that they frequently learned from their colleagues. Their discussion was various ranging from sharing knowledge earned from a workshop that they did attend, discussing students' behavior and characteristics, sharing about teaching strategies to sharing about innovative teaching media. This finding reflected Cheng & Winnie's (2012) study which also found that professional conversation could be a context of teachers' professional learning.

The FGD also discussed English teachers' preference in reflecting from their experience. It showed that English teachers were likely to reflect on the way they taught their previous classes which, as found by (Bleach, 2014) can be very useful for their professional development. They modified their lesson plans every time before they taught. They admitted that they were required to make and submit a whole-year lesson plans, which were perceived not the ones they applied in the classroom. The real lesson plans were those they made for their teaching, which mostly based on the reflection of their previous sessions. They consider the class' characteristics in designing their lesson, e.g. they thought about encouraging students' involvement activities in an unmotivated class.

When the English teachers talked about their reading experience, their responses were quite similar. They did not have enough time for reading beyond reading the textbook to prepare for their lesson. Most of them admitted handling family responsibilities, age and insufficient time, causing them to have a lack of reading. They did reading when they need to. For instance, when they had to prepare for the teacher competency exam, they would read more than usual. The discussion implied that reading was not yet as a habit, but was conducted to attain a target, e.g. earning a good score in an exam. Previous research also revealed how to effect relevance influences their professional development participation, i.e. getting certificate of participation, the incentive of training (Hastuti et al., 2009; Muzaffar & Malik, 2012). This

discussion showed that the effect-relevance aspect influenced their professional development participation.

The effect-relevance and school-culture aspect are indicated when they talked about what motivates them to do a research. From the discussion it was known that teachers perceived researching as a very difficult matter, and only teachers with high personal motivation and willingness may want to do that. Most teachers said that doing classroom action research (CAR) was done to fulfil the requirement of upgrading to higher career level. If it had not been required for their career level upgrading, they believed, fewer teachers would have done that. They mostly had very little time to do research. They argued that doing the research required much time, both in the process and the report making.

Besides, the changing expectation of the reviewers who review the research report made researching the last thing they want to do. Some teachers said different reviewers might have a different expectation of how to do CAR. Thus, many teachers were unmotivated when reviewer returned their research reports for several times with inconsistent feedback. The discussion also showed that teachers were aware that there was a different degree of stringent bureaucracy in the different regency, which caused the different rate of teachers upgrading their career level. The stringent bureaucracy affected teachers to do CAR.

In addition, school culture may also influence teachers to do research. The discussion revealed that schools which had an excellent evaluation and recognition of on teachers' achievement were more likely to have more teachers doing research or another achievement. On the contrary, schools which less reinforced teachers for their efforts were likely to have demotivated teachers.

This finding supports what expectancy theory states. Gemeda & Tynjälä (2015) explained that expectancy theory has three perceptions: 1) expectancy (the belief that effort will lead to the desired performance), 2) instrumentality (the belief that if one meets performance expectations, one will receive a greater reward) and 3) valence (the value one personally places on the rewards). Thus, the way schools recognizes one achievement, such as doing research, may influence teachers to make more or fewer efforts to perform achievement. Ashadi (2010), Dayoub & Bashiruddin (2012), Hökkä & Eteläpelto (2014) and Utami (2018) discussed the influence of school culture and how English teachers demand of school support toward their

development. They found that unsupported school culture may decrease teachers' professional development participation such as the limited, or even nonexistent, collaboration among colleagues.

The FGD also found that teacher personal motivation influences their personally-initiated learning activities. One teacher mentioned her experienced in accomplishing two courses through online courses named *Coursera*. It took her 10 and 16 weeks. Besides, her learning activeness, she also had done CAR research which was motivated by the problem she found in her classes. She was teaching at a school in a village and the school was not described to have a culture which may motivate teachers to do more than teaching. She believed that teachers should be knowledgeable and should not stop learning. Her genuine effort reflects her high personal motivation. With relation to motivation, a study by Yuwono & Harbon (2010) in Indonesia, involved 46 English teachers in Salatiga shows that their initial motives influence English secondary teacher's belief in choosing the teaching profession. The current study strengthened the claim that teachers with high personal motivation to be a good teacher, do more efforts to improve their professionalism.

CONCLUSION

To answer the research question of no. 1: *What are English teachers' PIL preferences?* the study finds that English teachers PIL preferences include web-browsing, reading books, colleagues sharing, reflection from experience and doing research. Some potential Indonesian English teachers strive for making their ways to improve themselves. They have much responsibilities and insufficient time. Thus, they consider PIL as a more feasible professional development effort than attending a structured professional development.

To answer the research question of no. 2: *What aspects influence their PIL preferences?* the study reveals that time, family responsibility, ability, age, effect-relevance, school-culture and personal motivation as the influencing aspects. School and colleagues play essential role in establishing the external motivation for teachers to make professional development efforts. Thus, school administrator should enhance teachers by facilitating them with professional development atmosphere such as providing a good internet connection, peer-observation opportunities, colleagues-sharing/ team teaching opportunities, self-evaluation checklist, etc.

The study may not provide sophisticated statistical data but it provides, to some degree, information about how English teachers practices personality-initiated and what aspects may enhance their efforts. Thus, to gain a better description of Indonesian English teachers' PIL experiences a study with a larger survey sample is urgently needed.

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