

Innovative Strategies for Self-Directed Learning: A Case Study from a Teacher Educator's Conference Experience

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Abstract

Self-directed learning makes it possible for teacher educators to establish personal goals, find resources, and select strategies for professional growth. My purpose for this study is to examine the value of self-directed learning by taking part in the ASEAN Online Teaching Conference 2024, which serves as a platform for my professional advancement. I record and reflect on my learning experiences for a month using self-study teaching practices. I participated in as many sessions as I could at the conference, obtaining handouts and documenting the key takeaways from each one. Through this process, I identified new knowledge and skills that are applicable to my teaching practice. A synthesis essay that summarizes the insights gained from the conference was the result of these efforts. This study proves that self-directed learning is an effective tool for professional development by sharing my learning journey. The strategies and experiences shared here aspire to inspire other teachers and teachers' educators to embrace self-directed learning to improve their own practices.

Keywords: self-directed learning, professional development, teacher-educator

Introduction

Educators must continue their professional development to adapt to new teaching methods and classroom challenges (Adipat et al., 2023; G. Padillo et al., 2021; Jin et al., 2021). Plenty of studies highlight that continuous, self-directed learning is a successful paradigm for professional development (Abdolhosseinzadeh Amini & Kruger, 2022; Chukwuere, 2023; Louws et al., 2017; Pimdee et al., 2023; Weinberg et al., 2021). This type of learning can effectively help educators acquire skills relevant to their pedagogical needs (Louws et al., 2017). Self-directed learning is particularly important for educators to address diverse student learning needs and evolving educational contexts (Karatas & Zeybek, 2020). Much of the existing research focuses on institutionalized or offered programs, which frequently miss flexibility and individuality. The purpose of this research is to look at self-directed learning in the context of the 2024 ASEAN Teaching English Online Conference. In my role as an educator, I use self-study methodology to identify and describe my learning experiences, which I can then incorporate into my teaching practices.

Educators, especially teacher-educators like me, have the opportunity to reflect on and improve their teaching methods by conducting their own teaching practice research, a fundamental approach to self-directed learning (Karatas & Zeybek, 2020; Louws et al., 2017). Reflective practice is essential for enhancing teaching strategies, matching them with student needs, and improving instructional quality (Bussey & Lay, 2023; Mulyati, 2019). Self-study enables me to enhance my understanding of pedagogical approaches and decision-making strategies, which are essential for accommodating the evolving requirements of students (Causarano Dr., 2022). For other teacher educators, self-study can

enhance their pedagogical efficacy as well (Collins et al., 2023; Garbett & Ovens, 2016). Furthermore, it offers a paradigm for lifelong learning that inspires fellow educators to adopt analogous methodologies, fostering ongoing, autonomous enhancement within the profession (Ulvik et al., 2022).

The ASEAN Teaching English Online Conference enhances the competencies of teachers, educators, and teacher-educators in facilitating English language learning. Educators can access online conferences specifically designed to meet their instructional requirements. The month-long event featured talks on prominent pedagogical methods, digital tools, inclusive educational practices, and diverse learning resources. The conference model permitted participants to select and engage in sessions of interest. The recorded sessions are accessible on the Teaching English Asia Facebook page for those unable to attend the live event. This seminar highlights the potential for personalized, self-directed learning that educators can tailor to their instructional environments and professional development. This study seeks to unveil self-directed learning by participating actively and reflecting on learning experiences during the conference. This conference facilitated my learning through virtual meetings and addressed the lack of trip money. Involving myself in the conference as a participant online allows me to obtain support and valuable, practical, and applications in teaching practices, which are comparable in quality to on-site professional development.

This study investigates the role of self-directed learning in enhancing professional growth via participation in the ASEAN Teaching English Online Conference. This research can uncover new skills and information applicable to classroom practices by documenting the learning process during the conference. The self-study technique enables an examination of the obstacles and benefits of self-directed learning, offering a pragmatic framework for educators and teacher trainers aiming to cultivate professional competencies autonomously. The results hold significant implications for tailoring professional development programs to teachers' specific needs and teaching environments.

This self-study method aims to demonstrate how reflective activities and self-directed learning enhance personal and professional development, thereby elevating the quality of education. By diligently thinking on innovative ideas and implementing insights from the ASEAN Teaching English Online Conference, I can enhance and fine-tune my pedagogical approaches to effectively address students' varied requirements. This technique highlights how ongoing, autonomous enhancement can elevate instructional methodologies, benefiting both educators and students.

Methods

I am conducting self-study on my teaching practice, taking on the roles of both researcher and subject. Self-directed learning functions as both the methodology and subject matter of inquiry, facilitating a comprehensive and reflective narrative of my professional growth during the ASEAN Teaching English Online Conference. As a teacher-educator, my attendance at the conference was a self-directed endeavor to obtain new skills, knowledge, and pedagogical practices. The self-study method corresponds with this goal, offering a framework for recording my educational progress, thoughts, and future implementation in teaching practices.

Multiple instruments facilitated data collection to obtain a thorough understanding of the learning process. I gathered handouts and notes from each session I attended, documenting essential insights and instant observations on their applicability to my instructional techniques. These documents provide definitive proof of the conference's substance and significance to my professional development. I maintained a personal learning notebook at the conference, including reflections on each session and notes on how the new knowledge corresponded with or contested my existing teaching techniques. At the end of the conference, I produced a synthesis article that synthesized the collective insights acquired and delineated the predominant themes or methods that arose from the sessions.

I divided each session's handouts and important takeaways by theme to facilitate thematic analysis of the various areas addressed in the conference, including assessment approaches, digital tools, and inclusive practices. I categorized journal reflections based on recurring themes, individual discoveries, and identified problems. This theme grouping allowed me to identify patterns in my learning process, identify new approaches I wanted to incorporate into my lessons, and identify specific areas that required further investigation. The synthesis essay functioned as a conclusive reflection, wherein I examined how the aggregate knowledge acquired at the conference could enhance my pedagogical methods and professional growth.

This method offers a systematic and adaptable framework for recording and examining self-directed learning within a professional development setting through the self-study of teaching methods. This approach fosters personal development and enhances comprehension of how online conferences can promote significant, focused, and enduring learning experiences for educators.

Result and Discussion

The ASEAN Teaching English Online Conference 2024 was a multi-day virtual event conducted from 10 to 30 October 2024 on Zoom. The British Council hosted the conference, which was free to attend. Participants were English educators and educational professionals from the ASEAN area and China. The conference included a range of workshops on subjects like self-directed learning, utilizing technologies in educational settings, including instructing English online. Upon concluding each workshop, participants were awarded an e-certificate.

The ASEAN Teaching English Online Conference 2024 provided a significant chance for English educators and education professionals to acquire new skills from qualified speakers. The presenter's discussion of their approach for teaching English exemplifies self-directed learning and serves as an excellent model of best practices for me and other language educators to implement in our classrooms. It is essential competency for educators, who frequently need to acquire knowledge autonomously. This seminar enabled attendees to recognize strategies they may implement and adapt in their daily roles as language instructors, educators, and practitioners aiding English language acquisition.

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Table 1. The Conference General Information

Event	Dates and Venue	Organizer	Certification
The ASEAN Teaching English Online Conference is a multi-day event for English teachers and education professionals across the ASEAN region.	It is held online via Zoom from 10 to 30 October 2024.	The event is organized by the British Council and is free to attend.	Participants receive an e-certificate at the end of each workshop.

This year's program focused on innovative pedagogical approaches, evaluation and feedback mechanisms, digital tools and resources, inclusive education, and professional development. These subjects are pertinent to the requirements of English educators and educational professionals. The conference offered attendees the chance to explore innovative and effective methods for engaging students in online and hybrid learning settings, evaluating student progress and delivering constructive feedback, leveraging technology to improve language education, ensuring full participation for all students, including those with special needs, and fostering skill development and career advancement.

Zoom hosted the conference online, allowing educators from the ASEAN region and China to participate without any travel restrictions. This design enhanced accessibility and promoted a diverse and substantial exchange of ideas among instructors from various backgrounds. The live sessions were strategically arranged to maximize participation by accommodating the attendees' diverse time zones. This meticulous planning facilitated educators' full engagement in discussions and activities without considerable disruption.

The British Council conducts this annual conference to facilitate teachers' ongoing professional development. The conference is crucial in improving educational quality in the region by facilitating networking, sharing best practices, and engaging in professional development. Annually, the British Council seeks to tackle contemporary trends and difficulties in education, ensuring the conference remains pertinent and beneficial for all attendees.

Table 2. Aim and Topics of the Conference

Aim	Main Topics and Brief Description				
	Innovative Teaching	Assessment & Feedback	Digital Tools & Resources	Inclusive Education	Professional Development
These workshops are designed to provide practical insights and tools that educators can apply in their own teaching contexts.	Exploring new and effective ways to engage students in online and hybrid learning environments.	Techniques for assessing student progress and providing constructive feedback in a virtual setting.	Utilizing technology to enhance language learning and teaching	Strategies for ensuring all students, including those with special needs, can participate fully in online learning.	Opportunities for teachers to develop their skills and advance their careers.

The ASEAN Teaching English Online Conference 2024 convened a notably broad and highly experienced panel of presenters, each offering distinct expertise to this lively professional development event. The conference provided a comprehensive learning experience for delegates, with educators, researchers, and consultants from the ASEAN area and beyond, addressing diverse interests and professional requirements. The diversity of experiences and viewpoints cultivated a climate conducive to collaborative knowledge-sharing, enabling participants to investigate diverse methodologies in English language teaching (ELT) and educational practices (Ahmad et al., 2023; Etzion et al., 2022; Falk & Hagsten, 2021; Mustika et al., 2022).

The presenter lineup's primary strength was its wide knowledge and specialization across diverse educational sectors. The presenters were experienced educators with extensive classroom backgrounds and prominent scholars in applied linguistics and second language acquisition, showcasing a range of expertise to facilitate various professional development objectives. Attendees seeking practical classroom tactics could gain valuable insights from lecturers such as Dadan, founder of Kelas Kreatif Indonesia, and Daniel Kurniawan, a proponent of learner-centered methodologies. Researchers like Dr. George M. Jacobs or Dr. Yuliani Kusuma Putri conduct research that educators seeking to understand the theoretical foundations of English language teaching can explore.

A prominent aspect of this conference was the presenters' unwavering dedication to inclusive education and social justice, with speakers highlighting the importance of establishing equal learning environments. Damkerng Munghanya, a visually impaired English educator, and Rose Aylett, a training consultant with expertise in critical pedagogy, provided significant perspectives on cultivating inclusive classrooms and confronting power dynamics within educational environments. This commitment to diversity was evident in the extensive international participation of presenters, fostering a global and interconnected community of language educators that transcended specific national contexts.

The presenters' backgrounds underscored the professional variety at the meeting. The composition consisted of consultants (10%), lecturers (23.3%), teachers (30%), managers (16.7%), educators (16.7%), and one content producer (3.3%). This assortment of roles illustrated the diversity of viewpoints and competencies, encompassing classroom instruction, strategic management, and content development. This allowed participants to acquire ideas from both practical and administrative or developmental viewpoints. Educators and instructors, constituting more than fifty percent of the panel, were well equipped to offer pragmatic guidance directly relevant to classroom environments. Simultaneously, consultants, managers, and content developers provided extensive insights into educational trends, resources, and innovations within the domain.

The conference sessions consistently emphasized innovation and professional development, with presenters facilitating debates on emerging technology, instructional tools, and modern ELT methodologies. Numerous speakers engaged in teacher training, curriculum development, and mentoring, highlighting their commitment to strengthening fellow educators. This emphasis on professional development also encompassed educational technology, with numerous presenters

imparting knowledge in fields such as EdTech, AI integration, and interactive teaching tools. These workshops primarily inspired attendees, emphasizing the most recent advancements in pedagogical tools and practices that educators may implement to enhance student engagement and learning results. The conference offered pragmatic strategies and motivational concepts, urging participants to embrace innovation and remain in the vanguard of English language teaching and educational advancements.

Table 3. Presenters' Career

Career	Number	Percentage
Consultant	3	10.0
Lecturer	7	23.3
Teacher	9	30.0
Educator	5	16.7
Manager	5	16.7
Content Producer	1	3.3

The ASEAN Teaching English Online Conference 2024 convened a proficient and diverse panel of presenters who provided experience in multiple domains. The event facilitated a collaborative environment for educators of many positions to share knowledge, reflect on their pedagogical practices, and get insights into innovative approaches and tools for their professional development. The broad and skilled cohort of educators rendered the conference an indispensable experience for participants, providing them with resources and motivation to improve their teaching and foster an inclusive, progressive educational environment.

The ASEAN Online Teaching Conference 2024 offered educators a significant professional development opportunity, granting them access to a variety of effective seminars. This month-long event provided numerous seminars to improve instructional approaches and tackle contemporary difficulties in English language teaching (ELT).

As a second-language educator with experience instructing Indonesian, English, and Mandarin across varied cultural settings—including China, the United States, and Indonesia—professional development is essential for me to consistently enhance my pedagogical techniques, remain informed about educational advancements, and address the distinct requirements of my students. The ASEAN Teaching English Online Conference offered a significant opportunity to participate in expert-led sessions that profoundly aligned with my teaching experience. Subjects include project-based learning (PBL), methodologies for mitigating students' speaking fear, and the incorporation of social-emotional learning (SEL), which were pertinent and revolutionary. These seminars provided me with innovative strategies to cultivate a supportive, student-centered classroom atmosphere that emphasizes emotional well-being and active participation, skills that extend beyond traditional teaching approaches and closely correspond with the intricate, multicultural requirements of second-language learners.

My experience teaching in several international environments has provided me with direct insight into the impact of varying cultural contexts on language acquisition and student motivation. The conference sessions introduced me to modern theories and optimal approaches in ELT. They highlighted frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to foster global citizenship and socially responsible education. Through participation in these sessions, I expanded my knowledge base. I adopted a self-directed learning strategy, enabling me to explore pedagogical methods that closely correspond with my professional objectives and the varied cultural experiences I provide to the classroom. This autonomous approach facilitated critical reflection on my teaching techniques, a vital skill that improves my capacity to address my students' diverse needs across languages and cultures.

Participation in this conference motivated me to implement and modify effective language teaching approaches through insights gained from practical applications and case studies shared by experienced educators. The workshop on project-based learning emphasized the significance of cultivating 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and cooperation, which are essential for second-language learners as they traverse unfamiliar linguistic and cultural environments. I am incorporating project-based learning as a formative assessment instrument that provides pragmatic techniques to evaluate and enhance student progress, adjusting as necessary according to my students' distinct linguistic backgrounds and educational objectives.



Figure 1. E-Certificate for Participants

Furthermore, the conference underscored the importance of investigating various evaluation approaches, which is crucial for a multilingual educator such as myself. The lesson on evaluating spoken English offered ideas for developing a more thorough assessment of students' linguistic competencies, a methodology I may implement across the various languages I instruct. These evaluation tools enhance the efficacy of my teaching practices and promote a comprehensive perspective on student development, enabling me to discern and address specific student needs with greater precision. The workshop on critical language pedagogy significantly influenced my efforts to enhance inclusivity in my classroom, endorsing a context-centered teaching methodology that interrogates power dynamics and fosters social justice. This methodology corresponds with my experience instructing in multicultural classrooms and allows me to foster an inclusive educational atmosphere that honors each student's linguistic and cultural heritage.

The professional development sessions provided techniques to directly improve student learning and personal growth. Acquiring strategies to mitigate speaking anxiety allows me to establish a secure and encouraging environment for students who may be reluctant to participate due to linguistic apprehension. I can assist students in actively engaging in their learning by addressing emotional hurdles, enhancing their language acquisition, and bolstering their confidence in utilizing a second language. The workshops on cultivating a growth mindset and engaging K-12 students emphasized the importance of promoting resilience and tenacity in education. These concepts strongly align with my experience as a language educator in many circumstances. By fostering a climate that regards mistakes as valuable learning opportunities, I may enhance my students' long-term success and nurture a positive disposition toward language acquisition.

The conference emphasized differentiated education and AI-driven personalization, highlighting the necessity of adapting teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning requirements. Differentiated instruction enables me to accommodate my students' varied language proficiencies and preferences, ensuring that each receives tailored instruction associated with their own goals and capabilities. Similarly, AI-driven personalization offers customized educational experiences that

improve student engagement and enrich comprehension. These tools provide effective means to enhance my pedagogical approaches, guaranteeing that students acquire knowledge while developing social awareness and critical thinking skills necessary for addressing intricate global challenges.



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Language, power and education: five principles for critical pedagogy training

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Students' Speaking Anxiety and Motivation in EFL Learning Process

Webinar handout

by Yoffie Kharisma Dewi

Learning English as a foreign language (EFL) can be a challenging task for many students, particularly in a vocational high school setting. The fear of speaking in English and a lack of motivation are two factors that often hinder the progress of EFL learners. One of the biggest factors affecting learning English as foreign language (EFL) is anxiety. Anxiety causes learners to discourage to learn and improve their English skills, especially speaking. This anxiety issue correlates with their motivational level in learning EFL. These conditions affect their willingness to improve their speaking skill and motivate them to be more confident to communicate in English (Horwitz, 2001).

According to Lei (2019), speaking anxiety and motivation are two of the most important factors that can affect the success of students in learning English as a foreign language. There are several reasons why students may experience speaking anxiety. Firstly, they may be afraid of making mistakes and being judged by others. Secondly, they may lack confidence in their speaking abilities. Finally, they may feel intimidated by the language and the culture of the native speakers. Speaking anxiety can have a negative impact on a student's language learning progress. When a student is anxious, they may have difficulty expressing themselves, and their language production may become limited. They may also avoid speaking altogether, which can lead to a lack of practice and hinder the development of their language skills.

Motivation is another crucial factor that can influence a student's success in learning a foreign language. Motivation can be defined as the drive to learn and achieve goals in language learning (Wiang, 2019). Motivation can come from internal factors, such as personal interest in the language, or external factors, such as the desire to obtain a good job or to communicate with native speakers. Motivated students are more likely to engage in language learning activities, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. They may also be more willing to take risks and make mistakes, which can lead to increased language proficiency over time.

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/3/en/programmes/teach/asean2024>

Figure 1. Handout by Presenters

The insights acquired during the ASEAN conference have enhanced my ability to develop a responsive, student-centered learning environment that incorporates contemporary educational technologies and inclusive practices. This experience underscores the efficacy of self-directed professional development in enhancing my teaching practice and enabling my pupils to thrive in their language-learning endeavors.

Conclusion

The ASEAN Teaching English Online Conference 2024 offered a vibrant and thorough professional development experience, enabling me to implement novel teaching methodologies and meet the intricate needs of contemporary students. Throughout the many workshops, I acquired pragmatic tactics that I could promptly apply in my classroom, ranging from enhancing student well-being to cultivating an inclusive and socially conscious learning environment. Implementing these approaches not only improved my professional competencies but also augmented my students' educational experiences, enabling me to cultivate a classroom that is more supportive, inclusive, and favorable to development. Initiatives such as this motivate me to persist in self-directed learning, enhancing the experience for my students and the wider educational community.

The virtual format of the ASEAN Conference provided a distinctive method for professional growth, particularly aligned with my requirements as a busy educator. This event provided an accessible and flexible approach, enabling me to engage in targeted learning at my own pace and in my environment, in contrast to traditional on-site training or institutional courses. This adaptability was essential, allowing me to reconcile my professional growth with my everyday obligations as a language instructor. The online model diminished logistical obstacles, enabling complete participation without

travel or lodging expenses. The month-long framework of the conference enabled me to engage in learning without interrupting my teaching schedule, allowing me to remain connected with my students while enhancing my professional competencies.

The format of the ASEAN Conference specifically tackled issues in ELT and second-language education, closely aligning with my responsibilities as an Indonesian, English, and Mandarin teacher. This conference, in contrast to conventional professional development events that typically address general subjects, had talks on PBL, SEL, critical language pedagogy, and AI integration—essential themes for language educators. The conference provided me with resources applicable to my language classrooms, focusing on expanding my comprehension of student-centered practices and contemporary teaching methodologies. By navigating these sessions, I was able to choose ones that specifically addressed my teaching requirements, fostering a more pertinent and individualized learning experience.

This conference stood in stark contrast to other institutionally structured courses I have attended, which often adhere to a strict curriculum that could be challenging to manage alongside teaching obligations. In contrast, the ASEAN Conference emphasized pragmatic tactics and practical examples that I could apply immediately. The seminar on PBL acquainted me with assessment methodologies and practical applications that I could immediately incorporate into my classes, enhancing both my instruction and my students' learning experiences. The focus on immediate, applicable knowledge enabled me to implement insights in real time, rendering the professional development experience pragmatic and pertinent.

Conventional in-person or hybrid conferences typically compress sessions into one or two days, which hinders the comprehensive absorption and application of new information. The month-long format of the ASEAN Conference promoted ongoing learning, contemplation, and implementation. I could participate in a session, implement new strategies in my classroom, and subsequently return to later sessions with observations and inquiries, facilitating the integration of theory and practice. The ability to review live and recorded sessions enabled me to engage with the topic more comprehensively, ensuring I could confidently incorporate these new concepts into my teaching.

The flexible structure of the ASEAN Conference encouraged a level of participation that traditional professional development formats ought to incorporate. On-site events may include workshops; however, they generally lack continuous engagement and opportunities to review content. The ASEAN Conference facilitated my active participation in both synchronous and asynchronous sessions, allowing me to explore each topic at my own pace. This adaptability enabled me to fully leverage the information and investigate the applicability of new concepts to my teaching environment.

The ASEAN Online Teaching Conference enabled me to explore and modify innovative methodologies throughout the sessions, a possibility that is not always available in other professional development formats. I could promptly implement techniques from workshops on social-emotional learning, inclusive language instruction, and student motivation, then evaluate the outcomes and modify my approach based on insights from later sessions. This iterative learning method facilitated the implementation of significant improvements in my processes, establishing a framework for ongoing enhancement. Conversely, traditional conferences frequently provide me with concepts that require a definitive strategy for practical implementation.

The ASEAN Online Teaching Conference 2024 provided a very flexible method for professional development that distinguished itself from in-person training, institutionally arranged courses, and conventional conferences. This event addressed my increasing needs as a language teacher with its focused material, adaptable style, and facilitation of immediate application and ongoing involvement. The ASEAN Conference exemplifies accessible, practical, and meaningful professional development for educators seeking to innovate and enhance their methods. This experience has facilitated my development as an educator and enabled me to cultivate a responsive and effective learning environment for my students across diverse languages and cultures.

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