

## Continuing professional development (CPD) in ELT: Lessons from Argentina

Mercedes Pérez Berbain  
ISP Joaquín V. González, Buenos Aires, Argentina  
[mercedesperezberbain@gmail.com](mailto:mercedesperezberbain@gmail.com)

Vanesa Polastri  
ISFD N°41  
ISFDyT N° 53  
Buenos Aires, Argentina  
[vanepolastri@gmail.com](mailto:vanepolastri@gmail.com)

Analía Leirós  
ISP Juan XXIII, Bahía Blanca, Argentina  
[analia.leiros@gmail.com](mailto:analia.leiros@gmail.com)

*(first received: February 17, 2023; accepted: April 4, 2023)*

### Abstract

This research article reports on a study of the lived experiences of 14 English language teachers who engaged in an inclusive, online CPD activity: 11 participating teachers, the tutor, and the organisers from an Argentinian ELT teachers' association. Based on a qualitative research design, this study explores the participants' growth and understanding of CPD, where the latter is considered the metadimension of the former. Data were gathered through in-depth, oral, individual interviews. Drawing on thematic analysis, the researchers found that participants enhanced their teaching approach, developed teaching competencies, and challenged their previous views on teacher CPD. Specifically, participants were able to conceptualise an effective CPD activity as active, context-driven, inclusive, interactive, collaborative, reflective, self-directed, appealing, goal-oriented, well-structured, emotionally-satisfying, as well as one that fosters socially-constructed knowledge and is constantly updated with the participants' ideas. The study argues that effective CPD regards teachers' renewed ideas as enactment of decentred ELT pedagogies.

*Key words:* CPD, ELT, inclusion, decentred

### Resumen

Este artículo de investigación presenta un estudio de las experiencias de 14 profesoras de inglés en una actividad de desarrollo profesional continuo (DPC) inclusiva y virtual: 11 participantes, una tutora y dos organizadoras de una API de Argentina. Este estudio cualitativo explora el crecimiento de las participantes y su comprensión del DPC, donde lo último es considerado la metadimensión de lo primero. Un análisis temático de los datos recolectados mediante entrevistas individuales orales, mostró que las participantes ampliaron su enfoque didáctico, desarrollaron sus competencias de enseñanza, y desafiaron sus visiones del DPC. Específicamente, las participantes conceptualizaron el DPC como activo, situado, inclusivo, interactivo, colaborativo, reflexivo, auto-dirigido, atractivo, orientado a objetivos, organizado y gratificante, con conocimiento socialmente construido y actualizado con las ideas de las participantes. El estudio muestra que un DPC efectivo considera las ideas renovadas de las profesoras como señal de pedagogías descentralizadas en la enseñanza del inglés.

*Palabras claves:* Desarrollo profesional continuo, enseñanza del inglés, inclusión, descentrado

## Introduction

English language teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) has been the focus of many educational schemes and research projects over the past few years. There seems to be a consensus that teachers' CPD is crucial to offer language learners quality education (Wilden & Porsch, 2017). Effective CPD has been characterised as an active, learning-oriented, situated process through which teachers update their professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to develop agency, which results in improvements in their learners' outcomes (Banegas & Glatigny, 2021; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Farrell, 2018; Sprott, 2019). Moreover, in recent years there has been an interest in bottom-up teacher development i.e., when teachers have an active role in their professional learning, for example through an ongoing collaborative project (Borg, 2015; Cirocki et al., 2023; Mann, 2005; Tasdemir & Karaman, 2022; Wyatt & Ončevska Ager, 2017). However, there is a lack of empirical evidence on how effective CPD is achieved, particularly in Argentina. Therefore, we carried out a study to explore English language teachers' growth and understanding of CPD, under the assumption that the latter can be considered a metadimension of the former i.e., teachers' views on CPD are influenced by their reflections on their personal and collective growth.

The participants in the study were English language teachers who, of their own accord, enrolled in an online CPD activity offered by the Bahía Blanca English teachers' association (APIBB), as well as the tutor and organisers of such CPD activity. We acknowledge the fact that "TAs [teachers' associations] can contribute in a bottom-up manner to policy formulation" (Banegas et al., 2022, p. 75) and that teachers can be knowledge-creators of English language teaching (ELT) pedagogies (Pérez Berbain et al., 2023). This article reports on the aforementioned study and aims to shed further light on what constitutes effective CPD and the role teachers' understanding of CPD plays in their own professional growth and agency. We first conceptualise CPD, then describe the context of the study, the participants, and the research methodology. Finally, we present and discuss the findings and suggest implications for teacher education.

## Conceptual framework

CPD rests on the correlation between the quality of teaching and the quality of learners' outcomes (Hattie, 2009). English language teachers' CPD implies teachers have already gone through initial teacher training, either formally or informally, and are willing or compelled to undergo further education to accommodate to their ever-changing teaching context. Constant development in the teaching scenario requires a continuing need for teachers to reflect on their practice. Although research has found this continuing process of growth and adaptation motivating and stimulating (Mercer et al., 2022), there are a number of obstacles which stand in the way of teachers' professional development, such as teachers' lack of time, teachers' lack of interest, and CPD activities which are not context-specific, among others.

Teacher CPD entails that teachers are professionals who not only need to enhance their expertise and update their strategies but also better understand what they do (Freeman, 1989). CPD could refer to any of the following scenarios: school-based learning, an academic undertaking, a professional pursuit outside school, self-directed learning, or a government scheme (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019). For the purpose of this study, CPD has been conceptualised as a learning process which helps teachers develop insights into their teaching to improve the quality of learners' learning (Higgins et al., 2015). We focus on self-directed professional development i.e., an activity a teacher "purposefully and intentionally seeks out with the conscious aim of critically examining, extending, or improving their professional practice as a language teacher" (Mercer et al., 2022, p.7). This conception of CPD encompasses a view of teachers as agents of change and responsible not only for their own CPD but also for the generation of new ideas for the educational system and society at large (Cirocki et al., 2023; Dhanavel, 2022; Keedwell, 2018; Pérez Berbain et al., 2023; Tomlinson, 2017)

There are two opposing views of CPD described in the literature. Top-down approaches are characterised as “externally-driven [promoting] “teacher as ‘consumer’ modes of teacher learning” (Borg, 2015, p. 5), whereas bottom-up ones rely on the participants’ enterprise. Many teachers view CPD as a top-down affair, rather than as a bottom-up, collective endeavour (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019), which regards teachers as active agents who can build knowledge. Top-down approaches to CPD have been related to formal CPD options, whereas bottom-up stances to CPD – scarce in the literature – have been associated with informal CPD activities (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019; Farrell, 2004; Mann 2005; Wilden & Porsch, 2017; Wyatt & Ončevska Ager, 2017). Teachers may have come to undervalue their own knowledge and experience, believing that what they receive externally (e.g., from so-called “expert” trainers in a webinar) is more valid than what they can think for themselves as a result of inquiring into their language teaching experience (Xerri, 2022). CPD which is externally driven has been found to limit the contributions teachers can make to both the content and process of the CPD activity. That said, neither top-down nor bottom-up initiatives have provided the sustainability which effective CPD entails (Cirocki et al., 2023).

CPD has been found to be impactful when it addresses the diverse needs of teachers and their learners, is prolonged, offers support and feedback towards the co-construction of contextual knowledge, deepens the teachers' capacity to reflect and make informed decisions (Schön, 1991), and develops an awareness of the effect of their teaching on student learning (Higgins et al., 2015; Richardson & Díaz Maggioli, 2018). Moreover, teacher engagement in reflective practice has been found to foster changes in pedagogical beliefs, enhanced teacher expertise and transformative growth (Banegas, 2022; Mann & Walsh, 2013; Mercer & Xerri, 2018; Richardson & Díaz Maggioli, 2018). Echoing this viewpoint, Xerri (2022, p. 3) adds that teachers can “generate knowledge for themselves and become learners of what they are doing, as well as its protagonists”. Similarly, Banegas et al. (2022) see this view of CPD as an act of decentring ELT since building on their capacities and “through collaboration [teachers] can improve the learning experience of their students” and free themselves from the centre: “a multifaceted and shifting notion that reflects the prevailing politics of power, be this global or local.” (p. 75).

There is no one-size-fits-all CPD activity since contexts and teachers are diverse. Teacher learning could be institutional, governmental, external (outside the school), academic, professional, and/or self-directed (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019). The kind of professional development activity teachers choose will depend on their motivation, interests, time, institutional support, opportunities, and teaching context (Mercer et al., 2022; Wright & Beaumont, 2015). CPD includes activities as varied as the following: team-teaching, mentoring, having a conversation with a colleague about a teaching idea, doing a joint project with a colleague or at a partner institution, doing teacher research, reading literature, engaging in reflective practice, attending formal professional development events, watching videos about teaching or listening to podcasts, presenting at a conference, and working on additional qualifications (e.g., MA, PhD).

Inclusive CPD advocates the same principles of inclusive education i.e., helping learners to “overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of learners” (UNESCO, 2017, p.13). This intent is in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030, especially Goal 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UN, 2016, p. 18). In the context of teacher education, there is the same need of removing barriers which prevent teachers from participating in CPD. This implies recognising and valuing diversity among teachers in terms of beliefs, cultural background, age, gender, personality to interact among colleagues, ethnicity, and other inherent characteristics (Banegas et al., 2021; Liu & Nelson, 2017; Roberson, 2006), as well as catering for varied engagement strategies and time availability. Inclusive CPD fosters active knowledge building, teacher agency, collaboration, and the development of positive attitudes towards diversity among colleagues.

Aware of the lacuna in the literature of what constitutes effective CPD (Cirocki et al., 2023), we put forward the following questions to explore English language teachers' growth and understanding of CPD:

RQ1: What instances of growth do English language teachers show after completing the CPD activity?

RQ2: What view of CPD do the teachers have?

## Method

This small-scale exploratory study was framed within a qualitative research paradigm (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The focus of the study was to explore English language teachers' growth and understanding of CPD, considering that the latter can be a metadimension of the former. The research team carried out the study after engaging in a 6-week CPD activity in Argentina, organised by Asociación de Profesores de Inglés de Bahía Blanca (APIBB TA) in 2022. Data were gathered through in-depth, oral, individual interviews (Mann, 2011) with three sets of participants: (a) English language teachers who participated in the CPD activity; (b) the tutor who designed and taught the course; and (c) the TA organisers of the initiative, who not only hired the trainer and ran the course but also participated in the course. Through such a qualitative lens, we sought to understand the teachers' perspectives of CPD and their professional growth, by analysing their expectations, views, lived experiences, and situated trajectories.

### Context

The study was conducted for a period of six months (June–December) in 2022. Initially, the research team was made up of one English language teacher from APIBB TA, who organised an on-line CPD course targeted to English language teachers from any province in Argentina or abroad, and the tutor who designed and taught the course. One teacher who participated in the CPD activity joined the research team three weeks into the study. The study took place in Argentina, where, to our knowledge, no TA had offered an inclusive, on-line CPD course like the one described below.

Drawing on a recent review of CPD (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019), the on-line CPD activity offered can be described as active, learning-oriented, situated, and inclusive. It sought inclusion by involving participating teachers of various backgrounds, trajectories, degrees of experience, time availabilities, learning preferences, and dispositions. Grounded in a sociocultural view of teacher education, i.e., acknowledging that knowledge emerges as a mediated and contextualised activity from interaction (Lantolf et al., 2018), the aims of the CPD activity were for participants to (a) understand and implement inclusive, interactive, context-driven teaching with a sociocultural approach, and (b) develop teacher agency and become aware of the key role teachers may play in educational policy.

The CPD activity, called “From stories to action – An inclusive approach to teaching English to primary and pre-primary learners from stories”, included opportunities for interaction throughout the course in shared documents on Google Drive, Zoom sessions, and a WhatsApp group. There were four asynchronous, self-paced modules on Google Sites, which participants could undertake in any order. Each module could be dealt with in approximately 4 hours. The five tasks in each of the modules helped participants to activate their prior knowledge, analyse key concepts in a text against some classroom activity shown on a video or lesson plan, apply selected key ideas to their own contexts, and finally reflect on their learning and set future CPD goals. Tasks gave room for participating teachers to share their views and build knowledge with other course participants.

The four modules included the following topics: Active learning and the learning cycle (Croker & Kamegai, 2018; Kolb & Kolb, 2018; Pérez Berbain, 2023; Spratt & Florian, 2015); interactive storytelling (Beacon, 2022; Bruner, 2002; Miglino, 2018; Pérez Berbain, 2022; van Lier, 2013); diversity, equity, and inclusion (Accardo & Mangini, 2021; Banegas et al., 2021; Cossu & Brun, 2021); and collaboration (Tajino, et al., 2017; The Cambridge life competencies framework, 2020). There were four interspersed synchronous Zoom meetings which offered

participants an active role and built on their diverse engagement modalities with the asynchronous modules. There was a final task at the end of the CPD activity which required participants to present their renewed ideas to their colleagues either on Zoom, or asynchronously. Although the participating teachers were encouraged to collaborate in a joint final presentation, all of them chose to present individually, due to time constraints. In the final task, the participating teachers were asked to build knowledge from their own lived experiences, rather than repeat the ideas presented during the CPD activity.

Thirteen English language teachers with varying degrees of experience (Table 1) enrolled in the CPD activity, and 11 completed the course, one of whom joined the research team, and contributed to the writing of this paper.

### Participants

There were 14 participants in this study: 11 participating teachers (PT), two course organisers (O), and one tutor (T). All participants are teachers of English as an additional language (Table 1) and some are teacher educators who work in the city of Buenos Aires and in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Chubut, and Rio Negro. Participants teach an average of 28 hours a week in various schools to students who learn English as an additional language for approximately three hours a week. Most of them hold a teaching degree obtained from a school of higher education or a university in Argentina, except for four participants who are trainees. The tutor and organisers are experienced English language teachers and teacher educators with over 15 years of experience with master's and postgraduate degrees.

Table 1. Participants' Academic Background

Participants' pseudonyms	Role in the CPD activity (Participating teacher, Organiser, Tutor)	Years of experience in education	Graduate (G) / Non-Graduate (NG)	Number of working hours	Institutional context	Role/s
1 Alma	PT	28	G	40	- School of English - Private secondary school	Teacher Headteacher
2 Agnes	PT	19	G	18	- Private and state-run secondary schools	Teacher
3 Alicia	PT	6	NG	24	- School of English - State-run primary school - - State-run secondary school	Teacher
4 Emma	PT	10	G	16	- School of English - State-run secondary school	Teacher Headteacher
5 Flor	PT	4	NG	24	- School of English - Private school	Teacher
6 Lorena	PT	3	NG	18	- School of English - Private tuition	Teacher
7 Marisa	PT	1	NG	9	- School of English	Teacher
8 Melania	PT	36	G	36	- School of English - State-run primary and secondary schools	Teacher

9	Roberta	PT	26	G	30	- Private primary school - State-run secondary school - State-run teacher training college - School of English	Teacher Lecturer Coordinator
10	Silvia	PT	36	G	40	- Private primary school - State-run secondary school - School of English	Teacher Coordinator Headteacher
11	Vivian	PT	15	G	16	- State-run tertiary level institutions	Teacher Lecturer
12	Alma	O	28	G	40	- School of English - Private secondary school	Teacher Headteacher
13	Silvia	O		G	40	- Private primary school - State-run secondary school - School of English	Teacher Coordinator Headteacher
14	María	T	35	G	40	- Private teacher training school - Private primary school	Tutor Consultant Researcher

Written consent was obtained from all participants. Ethical considerations such as confidentiality, anonymity, and participants' right to withdraw their consent for any reason and at any time without any consequences were observed (British Educational Research Association, 2018).

### Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from in-depth, oral, individual interviews to find out participants' growth as teachers and their understanding of CPD. The interviews were conducted and recorded on Zoom, and later transcribed on a shared document. Interviews consisted of four questions in English (Table 2), and the research team could ask probing questions if needed. Participants could choose whether to answer in English, the language of instruction, or Spanish, their first language. Eight participants out of 14 chose the latter, in which case the data were translated into English by the research team. Six participants answered in English. Data were triangulated by gathering information from three different sources – participating teachers, organisers, and tutor.

Table 2. *Questions for individual oral interviews*

	Participating teachers	Tutor	Organisers
1	Now that you have completed this CPD activity, have you changed your views on CPD? If so, how?	Now that the CPD activity you designed is finished, have you changed your views on CPD? If so, how?	Now that the CPD activity you organised is finished, have you changed your views on CPD? If so, how?
2	Has this CPD activity helped you to change/revisit/reflect on your practices? Give an example.	Has teaching this CPD activity helped you to change/revisit/reflect on your practices as a CPD tutor? Give an example.	Has organising this CPD activity helped you to change/revisit/reflect on your practices as a CPD organiser? Give an example.
3	Has this CPD activity helped you to confirm/challenge your beliefs on “good” teaching?	Has this CPD activity helped you to confirm/challenge your beliefs on “good” teaching?	Has this CPD activity helped you to confirm/challenge beliefs on “good” teaching”?

We carried out iterative and inductive thematic analysis (Cohen et al., 2018). Acknowledging that assigning codes and showing their interconnectedness is a highly subjective task (Bell & Waters, 2014), data were analysed by the whole research team who met on Zoom to mitigate the bias of an interpretive-natured study. With the focus questions in mind, the research team read the data aloud to identify axial codes and emerging themes directly connected to the research questions (Mertens, 2015). Data segments were selected and copied into a shared Excel spreadsheet. Then, for the sake of the study scope, data addressing only two main themes were identified and colour-coded: the participants' growth and their view of CPD. Data from the different participant sources were first analysed separately i.e., participating teachers, organisers, and tutor, and then contrasted with one another. We identified the same categories across the data sets; therefore, the data were blended. Table 3 shows the axial codes in direct line with the two research questions guiding this study and key extracts from the data from at least two of the different participant sets, which exemplify the emerging themes. All participants engaged in member-checking, and none requested any changes.

Table 3. Thematic Analysis

Axial codes	Emerging themes	Data segment examples
<b>Research question</b> What instances of growth do English language teachers show after completing the CPD activity?		
Enhancement of the teaching approach Challenge of the approach Alignment of aims and beliefs Reflective practice Improvement of practice Focus on interaction Socially-built knowledge Self-determination Focus on the learning experience Focus on diversity Teacher as mediator Teacher intervention Conceptualisation of practices Better understanding of practice	Enhancement or challenge of the teaching approach	"I experienced and learnt how to teach in an active, inclusive, interactive and collaborative way." (Vivian, PT) "What I liked about this CDP activity is that it is the other way around. It's from practice to theory, otherwise we feel that we are never really there." (Silvia, O)
Improving the teaching practice Refining the use of dynamics Broadening the aims of learning Promoting cognitive development Fostering diversity Transferring knowledge Encouraging interaction: on-line, oral and written Building confidence Reflecting on our practice Structuring teaching tasks	Development of teaching competencies	"I have implemented a lot of what we did in this course: interaction, respecting learners' different paces, structuring projects, living the stories." (Melania, PT) "I keep readjusting the practice...let[ting] go of expectations and tak[ing] things as they come and people as they are. People ...choose what is right for them." (Maria, T)

Research question: What view of CPD do English language teachers who completed the CPD activity have?		
Active synchronous and asynchronous participation Action-oriented view Doing with others Empowerment Teacher as an agent of change Bottom-up approach	Active	“This CPD helped us move, helped us get into action not only our bodies but our minds.” (Alicia, PT) “We want to do for ourselves what we want for our students. Interactive, inclusive, collaborative. Bottom-up. Active.” (Alma, O)
Contextualisation Value of own experiences, practices and contributions.	Context-driven	“Most theories we follow come from other contexts which have nothing to do with our own contexts. So, we need to change that.” (Marisa, PT) “As an organiser, I wanted to offer the community something different, forming a learning community, bringing in their realities.” (Silvia, O)
Fostering diversity Welcoming different contexts, trajectories and talents. Respecting varied times and ways of availability	Inclusive	“Meeting people of diverse contexts and views, with more or less experience with different trajectories and talents.” (Melania, PT) “There was an option of joining the discussion and learning together and at the same time working on our own.” (Alma, O)
Enrichment by interaction Interaction as a need Use of Zoom breakout rooms to exchange views and experiences Sharing thoughts orally or in writing Listening to/Reading someone else’s ideas	Interactive	“I loved it when we put our thoughts onto those links [to shared documents] and then everybody read our ideas.” (Lorena, PT) “I loved the interaction, I loved to see young people expressing their views and sharing what they’ve done and I learnt so much from them.” (Silvia, O)
Writing whole texts together Community of learning	Collaborative	“We cooperated, by adding bits each, and collaborated writing a whole text together.” (Vivian, PT) “My most impactful CPD activities have been doing things with colleagues.” (Maria, O)
Fostering socially constructed knowledge built on participants’ ideas Teachers as producers of knowledge (instead of reproducers of models) Validity of teachers’ prior experiences, voices and criteria to co-create knowledge.	Constructivist	“It’s as if all knowledge has been created already and our ideas as teachers are not valid. Now I want to build knowledge with other colleagues on the basis of my own experience.” (Marisa, PT) “Learning is creating a project with others.” (Alma, O)
Space and time for reflection within the meetings and between meetings Reflective reading Thinking and re-thinking practices Tracing reasons and purposes of actions	Reflective	“We had time for reflection (...) between one meeting and the other and to have the chance to talk with other peers about what we were doing and our views of what we read.” (Agnes, PT) “What we are putting into words now [in this interview] is not something we have discussed in our TA. So, reflecting on our experience is being very useful.” (Alma, O)



Planned activity Accessible information High quality and up-to-date materials Highly attractive multimodal experience	Goal oriented, updated, well- structured and appealing	“We had all the information beforehand ... [it] was updated during the course. After the meetings we could write our ideas. We had a plan from the beginning.” (Agnes, PT) “There was a community of learning with a clear aim, with a project.” (Alma, O)
Satisfaction in doing with others Memorability Enjoyment	Emotionally satisfying	“Every time I think about this CPD experience I smile, proof that the experience was satisfying. Doing together was very satisfying.” (Silvia, PT) “Wanting to do what you do, wanting to find out, wanting to know, owning your actions rather than doing things just because.” (Maria, T)
Placing participants at the centre Conversation facilitator Experience generator Embodying approach Foregrounding participant’s involvement Inviting to reflect and verbalise thought Helper Active Inspirational Organised Challenging Promoting interaction Room for participants’ ideas	Role of the tutor	“The tutor was like the glue, or better still the concrete that united our bricks, facilitating the conversation among us.” (Vivian, PT) “The tutor has created an impact on the teachers. Teachers felt empowered to do, to write, oh can I write, does she think I can write? Yes. And this is the point... the tutor said what counts are ideas.” (Alma, O)
Participants as key players Idea generators Empowered Own-context Decentred Own voice Collaboration Share Contribution Validation Creation	Role of the participating teacher	“(…) colleagues getting together with a common purpose, building knowledge from their contexts in a bottom-up approach, something creative in the real sense of the word” (Maria, T) “I can participate with my own ideas”. (Agnes, PT)

## Findings

Below we describe the research findings grouped into two main themes corresponding to the research questions that drove the study.

### Participants’ growth after completing the CPD activity

The thematic analysis of data from 14 participants –11 participating teachers (PT), two organisers (O), and one tutor (T) – revealed that all participants grew professionally after completing the CPD activity. There was a direct correlation of emerging themes from the three different data sources: PT, O, and T. Therefore, the findings reported here correspond to all 14 participants’ data.

The following categories emerged to describe the participants’ growth as educators. The numbers in brackets indicate the frequency of response. (a) Enhancement or challenge of the participants’ teaching approach (14) and (b) Development of teaching competencies (14). The two emerging themes are described below.

The data revealed evidence of participants' growth. Namely, their teaching approaches were enhanced and/or challenged as the following extracts indicate:

I changed my mind a little bit about how I see teaching, [from] receiving information and just taking down notes [to] helping learners to feel comfortable and make memorable moments in class. (Alicia, PT, Extract 1)

As an organiser, this CPD activity has defied the tenets that were considered fixed. It has challenged my view of good teaching. Now I see the value of experiencing first and then reflecting and conceptualising. (Silvia, O, Extract 2)

The data analysis also yielded teachers' enhancement and/or challenge of their teaching approaches when they acknowledged the transcendence of learning English as an additional language, as Roberta (PT) stated: "I could empower learners to do so much in the world through interacting in English." (Extract 3). There was evidence of teacher agency in Emma's words (PT): "I embodied this active, story-driven approach and asked myself 'What is *my* story with stories?'" (Extract 4). Other instances of approach enhancement were: Alma's (PT) noting human diversity as core in her approach: "The teacher offers a learning experience and is open to see how learners react differently. All contributions are welcome. Stories make us human." (Extract 5) and Vivian's advocacy for teacher intervention to go beyond "the luck of the pot" (Extract 6).

The data analysis also revealed teacher growth in the participants' development of teaching competencies, which they were able to implement in their classes as a result of this CPD activity. Such development involves inclusive class dynamics, as Vivian (PT) reported: "I asked them [learners] to pair up with somebody else." (Extract 7) and Agnes (PT) stated: "I thought about each of them [learners], how they were going to work in each group." (Extract 8). The development of teaching competence was also evidenced by the teachers focusing on learner interaction and diversity, as Melania (PT) pointed out: "I have implemented a lot of what we did in this course: interaction, respecting learners' different paces, structuring projects, living the stories." (Extract 9). Data analysis also showed that participants asked learners to think and collaborate, as Emma (PT) expressed: "I worked with stories, images and thinking routines." (Extract 10) and Lorena stated "I asked learners to interact and to write their ideas on shared documents." (Extract 11).

Another instance of the development of teaching competence displayed by the data analysis was asking learners to come up with their own ideas, as four participants affirmed:

I stopped being afraid of stories and focused on learners making sense, coming up with their own ideas. (Marisa, PT, Extract 12),

I learnt how to structure teaching and encourage each learner to contribute with their own view. (Silvia, PT, Extract 13),

Learners benefited because they struggle to interact orally after the pandemic. (Flor, PT, Extract 14), and

I think I've learnt quite a bit from our colleagues in this course. We first learn with others and then we make it individual. (María, T, Extract 15)

### Participants' view of CPD

The thematic analysis of the 14 interviews (11 PT, 2 O, and 1 T) revealed that, after completing the CPD activity, all participants changed or enhanced their views on teacher CPD. The following categories emerged to describe the participants' renewed view of CPD. The

numbers in brackets indicate the frequency of response. All categories refer to the CPD activity itself except for the last two, which refer to the role of the tutor and the role of the participating teacher. (a) Active (14), (b) Context-driven (14), (c) Inclusive (14), (d) Interactive (14), (e) Collaborative (14), (f) Fostering socially-constructed knowledge (14), (g) Fostering reflection (14), (h) Well-structured, goal-oriented, updated, and appealing (12), (i) Self-directed (12), (j) Emotionally satisfying (11), (k) The role of the tutor (10), and (l) the role of the participating teacher (12). Below we describe the emerging categories with examples from the data.

Data showed a need for CPD activities which are action-oriented and regard the teacher as an agent of change:

We need more of these experiences to guide the change from traditionalist to action-teacher. (Alicia, PT, Extract 16)

Unlike other CPD activities, this one invited us to try out ideas, implement our insights. (Roberta, PT, Extract 17)

This course empowered us, gave us voice and we participated actively, both asynchronously and synchronously. (Vivian, PT, Extract 18)

This may well change the way we see CPD from now on, becoming aware of the richness that each person can bring into the discussion. (Silvia, PT, Extract 19)

Another characteristic of the fresh view on CPD which data yielded was the need for a CPD activity situated in the participants' contexts:

We need to validate a bottom-up approach to CPD, looking at what is happening in my context and building with others. (Alma, PT, Extract 20)

We made concepts ours through our experiences, when we analysed our own teaching. (Vivian, PT, Extract 21)

Most theories we follow come from other contexts which have nothing to do with our own contexts, so we need to change that. (Marisa, PT, Extract 22)

The analysis of the data also showed the need for CPD activities to be inclusive and interactive as the following participants' voices testify:

I could participate and learn even if I could not attend Zoom meetings (Roberta, PT, Extract 23)

[I value] meeting people of diverse contexts and views, with more or less experience with different trajectories and talents. (Melania, PT, Extract 24)

I need interaction, engagement and clear goals and results. (Melania, PT, Extract 25)

The data revealed an emphasis on the participants' willingness to collaborate and come up with new ideas together:

We, as teachers, work in communities and build communities for our learners. Now when it comes to us, we tend to think we learn individually... We need to do for ourselves what we want for our students: Interactive, inclusive, collaborative, bottom-up, active. That's how we want to learn. (Alma, O, Extract 26)

We need to theorise our practice, build knowledge with our colleagues, interact and co-create. (Emma, PT, Extract 27)

Interacting and acting on our practice. This experience enabled me to embody the ideas I shared and came up with further ideas. (Flor, PT, Extract 28)

In CPD now I want to create new ideas and material myself. (Lorena, PT, Extract 29)  
The data analysis revealed reflection as an element which participants valued:

Reflect to know why we did what we did. (Silvia, PT, Extract 30)

I was able to reflect on everything I was doing and wonder what else I can do. For this we need others. I value opportunities for reflection like this CPD activity. (Marisa, PT, Extract 31)

I see the importance of teachers acting on their thoughts collectively in breakout rooms, regardless of how much they have engaged with the proposed tasks and then sharing those ideas with other colleagues. (María, T, Extract 32)

The data also revealed the need for CPD activities to be well-structured, goal-oriented, and appealing to be able to foster teacher agency. Also, for CPD activities to promote self-direction and self-determination:

This CPD activity was highly appealing. The quality of the material was not a detail, a frill, it spoke volumes. (Alma, PT, Extract 33)

We need to choose our own CPD activities to share with others and to value what we do every day in class. (Marisa, PT, Extract 34)

These are resources and texts you want to go back to to come up with further ideas. (Roberta, PT, Extract 35)

The analysis of the data unveiled a need for CPD activities to be emotionally satisfying:

We need professional growth and to enjoy our job inside and outside the classroom (Marisa, PT, Extract 36)

Last, the data analysis foregrounded the role the tutor played in the participants' challenging their view of CPD, and the role participating teachers had in the CPD activity, shown by the extracts below:

With respect to CPD, I think that thanks to the tutor's job we were able to put thoughts into words because I don't think I would have seen it so clearly on my own. (Alma, PT, Extract 37)

If we attend these kinds [traditional] of webinars we expect only to receive information and just take down notes or maybe share our experiences but not in the role of the expert ... in this course I think the tutor did quite the opposite of what we are used to, so that was really challenging for us. (Alicia, PT, Extract 38)

I loved the videos, how organised the modules were, and the documents which were co-constructed by all of us on Drive. (Emma, PT, Extract 39)

While this course made us aware of our own voice, it also made us realise that we have a responsibility. We don't have to be fed with knowledge but can build knowledge together with our colleagues. We don't need an expert or an authority. It was a horizontal kind of relationship. (Vivian, PT, Extract 40)

As shown by the analysis of the data, participants' growth, evidenced by their enhanced teaching approach and more developed teaching competencies, brought about a renewed view of CPD. Hence, teachers' view of CPD, influenced by their reflections on their personal and collective growth, can be considered a metadimension of their growth.

## Discussion

In order to better understand effective CPD, we sought to examine the English language teachers' growth and their view of CPD after completing the inclusive online CPD activity described above. In line with the literature reviewed (Banegas & Glatigny, 2021; Borg, 2015; Cirocki et al., 2023; Cirocki & Farrell, 2019; Dhanavel, 2022; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Farrell, 2018; Mann, 2005; Spratt, 2019; Wyatt & Ončevska Ager, 2017; Xerri, 2022), the findings in this study showed that a CPD activity is impactful when participants – teachers, the tutor and the organisers – grow and improve the quality of learners' learning (Higgins, et al., 2015). Such growth becomes apparent when participants enhance or challenge their approach to teaching, and when they develop their teaching competencies. For example, in this study participants recognised their learners' diversity and encouraged interaction and collaboration (Extract 8, 9, 10 and 11), suggesting an enhanced approach. Specifically, the findings revealed teachers grew as decision-makers, who chose, tried out, and often invented strategies and resources to suit their contexts. For example, teachers intervened to include all learners, not “trusting the luck of the pot” (Vivian, Extract 6), and found a personally meaningful story to teach certain contents (Extract 1 and 4).

In addition to an enhanced approach and developed competencies in participants' teaching, and in accordance with the literature (Freeman, 1989; Mercer, et al., 2022), CPD implied that teachers better understand what they do (Extract 2). Such deeper understanding positively impacted the teacher's teaching, e.g., fostering creativity, interaction, and collaboration with their learners. Likewise, teachers manifested their own learning and agency, e.g., appreciating diversity in their colleagues in terms of trajectories, experience, talents, and teaching contexts, as well as showing a willingness to build knowledge with others. Having said that, findings also showed that, although all teachers in this study valued diversity and fostered interaction both as teachers and as learners, some of them tended to see their own learning as individual and underestimated their need to learn with others (Extract 26).

Concerning the participants' view of CPD, an effective CPD activity was described as active, context-driven, inclusive, interactive, and collaborative, as well as one which fostered socially-constructed knowledge, and reflection (Extracts 16 to 32). What this study adds to the literature is the fact that an effective, self-directed CPD activity needs to be appealing (Extract 33), emotionally satisfying (Extract 36), well-structured, goal-oriented, and updated with the participants' ideas as it is carried out (Agnes, PT, Table 3). Such findings are consistent with broad conceptualisations of CPD, i.e., when CPD was referred to as active or situated (Cirocki, et al., 2023; Cirocki & Farrell, 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Wyatt & Ončevska Ager, 2017).

What is salient in this study's findings is that an active, empowered, self-determined teacher is willing to contribute with their ideas to the ELT arena when their voice is an intrinsic part of the CPD weave and when it can be expressed not only synchronously but also asynchronously, i.e., when access and participation to the CPD are enabled beyond showing up on a certain day and at a fixed time (Extract 23, 39). The study has also revealed that the participants' on-going ideas impacted their growth and their renewed view of CPD, i.e., that every participant could positively contribute to the educational sphere (Extract 28, 39). This calls for a tutor who mediates collaborative learning, models active listening, fosters diversity, includes participants in spite of

their not being able to participate synchronously, and encourages bottom-up, socially-constructed knowledge (Extract 37, 38, 39).

Echoing the literature (Cirocki, et al., 2023), our study confirms that when participants perceive themselves as the protagonists of the CPD activity, they develop agency, which, in turn, allows them not only to make informed and creative decisions in their teaching practices but also to build knowledge with their peers and participate in collaborative projects, like this study (Extracts 27, 29 and 29). This enhanced teacher attitude (Extract 40) manifests the metadimension of teachers' views on CPD, which are influenced by their reflections on their personal and collective growth. In turn, these views can be considered instances of decentring ELT, since teachers regard themselves as knowledge-creators of ELT pedagogies (Banegas, et al., 2022).

### Conclusion and implications

In this study we examined English language teachers' growth and their understanding of CPD, where the latter evidenced a metadimension of the former. Our study shows that an effective, decentred CPD activity is conceptualised as active, context-driven, inclusive, interactive, collaborative, reflective, self-directed, and designed to foster socially-constructed knowledge. This study reinforces what the literature hinted at and highlights the aspects which can be conducive for effective CPD. These include: teaching participants asynchronously, considering participants' ideas an intrinsic part of the CPD activity, ensuring that the CPD activity is appealing, emotionally satisfying, well-structured, goal-oriented, and updated with participants' ideas as it is carried out.

Despite the findings, our study encountered several limitations. First, the small number of participants involved, although this amount allowed the diversity and depth needed for this inquiry. Second, the scarce data gathered from the participating teachers who have not completed the CPD course and who could have added valuable evidence for this study. Last, the study did not examine the sustainability of the participants' views through researching their practices and perspectives after this study (Cirocki, et al., 2023).

The insights drawn from this study encourage teachers, teacher educators, and TAs to promote and engage in CPD activities which place teachers at the centre of their learning, and regard teachers' ideas as the weave of decentred ELT pedagogies.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the participants in this study, who generously shared their views, and Dr. Darío Banegas, who guided us throughout the research process. We are grateful to the editors and reviewers for their time and valuable comments on our manuscript.

### References

- Accardo, S., & Mangini, R. (2021). Initiatives in primary school for the inclusion of a gender perspective. *ELT Journal*, 75(2), 162–171.
- Banegas, D. L. (2022). “It’s like starting all over again”: Mentoring novice TESOL teachers in emergency online teaching. *The European Journal of Applied Linguistics and TEFL*, 11(1), 117-134.
- Banegas, D. L., Bullock, D., Kiely, R., Kuchah, K., Padwad, A., Smith, R., & Wedell, M. (2022). Decentring ELT: Teacher associations as agents of change. *ELT Journal*, 76(1), 69–76.
- Banegas, D. L., Beacon, G., & Pérez Berbain, M. (Eds.) (2021). *International perspectives on diversity in ELT*. Palgrave.
- Banegas, D. L., & Glatigny, R. (2021). The ateneo as an effective model of continuing professional development: Findings from Southern Argentina. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 16(4), 363–377.
- Beacon, G. (2022). Developing Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Primary English Teacher Instruction via Picturebooks. *Argentinian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(1), 3–13.

- Bell, J., & Waters, S. (2014). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers* (6th ed.). The Open University Press.
- Borg, S. (2015). Beyond the workshop: CPD for English language teachers. In S. Borg (Ed.) *Professional development for English language teachers: Perspectives from higher education in Turkey* (pp. 5–13). British Council.
- British Educational Research Association. (2018). *Ethical guidelines for educational research* (4th ed.). <https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018>
- Bruner, J. (2002). *Making stories*. Harvard University Press.
- Cirocki, A., & Farrell, T.S.C. (2019). Professional development of secondary school EFL teachers: Voices from Indonesia. *System*, 85, 1–14.
- Cirocki, A., Farrelly, R., & Buchanan, H. (2023). *Continuing professional development of TESOL practitioners: A global landscape*. Springer.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge
- Cossu, P., & Brun, G. (2021). Comprehensive sexuality education: an Argentinean experience. *ELT Journal*, 75(2), 172–180.
- Crocker, R., & Kamegai, M. (2018). Defining active learning: from the perspective of Japanese high school teachers of English. *General Education Bulletin of Asahi University*, 42, 65–79.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute.
- Dhanavel, S. P. (Ed.) (2022). *Continuing professional development of English language teachers: Perspectives and practices from India*. Springer.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2004). *Reflective practice in action*. Corwin Press.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2018). Operationalizing reflective practice in second language teacher education. *Journal of Second Language Teacher Education*, 1(1), 1–20.
- Freeman, D. (1989). Teacher training, development, and decision making: A model of teaching and related strategies for language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 23(1), 27–45.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of 800+ meta-analyses on achievement*. Routledge.
- Higgins, S., Cordingley, P., Greany, T., & Coe, R. (2015). *Developing great teaching: Lessons from the international reviews into effective professional development*. Teacher Development Trust.
- Keedwell, A. (Ed.) (2018). *Taking responsibility for professional development (2). Explorations: teaching and learning in India*. British Council.
- Kolb, A., & Kolb, D. A. (2018). Eight important things to know about experiential learning. *Australian Educational Leader*, 40(3), 8–14.
- Lantolf, J. P., Poehner, M. E., & Swain, M. (Eds.) (2018). *The Routledge handbook of sociocultural theory and second language development*. Routledge.
- Liu, D., & Nelson, R. (2017). Diversity in the classroom. In J. I. Lontas (Ed.), *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English language teaching* (pp.1–6). Wiley.
- Mann, S. (2005). The language teacher's development. *Language Teaching*, 38(3), 103–18.
- Mann, S. (2011). A critical review of qualitative interviews in Applied Linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, 32(1), 6–24.
- Mann, S., & Walsh, S. (2013). RP or “RIP”: a critical perspective on reflective practice. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 4(2), 291–315.
- Mercer, S., & Xerri, D. (2018). Doing research to find answers to your questions. In R. Bicknell & L. Nikkanen (Eds.) *Malta conference selections 2017* (pp. 7–11). IATEFL.
- Mercer, S., Farrell, C., & Freeman, D. (2022). *Self-directed professional development in ELT*. Oxford University Press.
- Mertens, D. M. (2015). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Migliano, V. (2018). Reading comprehension strategies: The neglected tools. An experience with EFL students in a South American country. *HLTJ*, 20(6).

- Pérez Berbain, M. (2022). Interactive storytelling in ELT – why and how? *HLTJ*, 24(5).
- Pérez Berbain, M. (2023). Humanising English language learning in the post-pandemic world. *Teacher Trainer Journal*, 36(2), 15–18.
- Pérez Berbain, M., Payaslian, L., Sauer Rosas, A., García, B., & La Porta, A. (2023). The impact of mentoring on English Language Teachers: A Case From Argentina. *Profile: Issues Teach. Prof. Dev.*, 25(1), 49–64.
- Richardson, S., & Díaz Maggioli, G. (2018). *Effective professional development: Principles and best practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. (Eds.) (2003). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (1st ed.). Sage.
- Roberson, Q. M. (2006). Disentangling the meanings of diversity and inclusion in organizations. *Group & Organization Management*, 31(2), 212–236.
- Schön, D. (1991). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- Spratt, J. & Florian, L. (2015). Inclusive pedagogy: From learning to action. Supporting each individual in the context of ‘everybody’. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 49, 89–96.
- Sprott, R. (2019). Factors that foster and deter advanced teachers’ professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 77(2), 321–331.
- Tajino, A., Stewart, T., & Dalsky, D. (Eds.) (2017). *Team teaching and team learning in the language classroom: Collaboration for innovation in ELT*. Routledge.
- Taşdemir, H., & Karaman, A. C. (2022). Professional development practices of English language teachers: A synthesis of studies published between 2006 and 2020. *Review of Education*, 10, e3350. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3350>
- The Cambridge life competencies framework (2020). *Collaboration: Introductory guide for teachers and managers*. <https://rb.gy/01t1x>
- Tomlinson, B. (Ed.) (2017). *Taking responsibility for professional development (1). Issue 5. Explorations: Teaching and learning in India*. British Council.
- UN. (2016). *Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning*. <https://rb.gy/d69ji>
- UNESCO. (2017). *A guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education*. UNESCO.
- van Lier, L. (2013). *Interaction in the language curriculum: Awareness, autonomy, and authenticity*. Routledge.
- Wilden, E., & Porsch, R. (Eds.) (2017). *The professional development of primary EFL teachers. National and international research*. Waxmann.
- Wright, T., & Beaumont, T. (2015). *Experiences of second language teacher education*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wyatt, M., & Ončevska Ager, E. (2017). Teachers’ cognitions regarding continuing professional development. *ELT Journal*, 71(2), 171–185.
- Xerri, D., & Pioquinto, C. (Eds.) (2018). *Becoming research literate: Supporting teacher research in English language teaching*. English Teachers Association Switzerland.
- Xerri, D. (2022). *How can teachers best be encouraged to engage with research – published and their own practitioner enquiry?* British Council.