

**HOW DO PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS EXPERIENCES
TEACHING IN A PRIVATE TUTORING INSTITUTION?
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

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Abstract: This study explores the experiences of pre-service English teachers who teach at a private tutoring institution while completing their university studies. It also analyzes how they balance their roles as students and tutors. This study uses a qualitative design with an interpretive phenomenological approach. Five final-year students from three universities in East Java participated in this study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The findings of the study show that, at first, teaching in a private tutoring institution makes them feel nervous and unsure of their abilities, but repeated teaching practice improves their confidence. Teaching consistently also improved their English skills, especially in speaking, grammar, and vocabulary. Additionally, they developed classroom management skills and a deeper understanding of teacher professionalism. To balance their dual roles, participants manage their time by setting priorities, creating schedules, and adjusting teaching hours if needed. Overall, private tutoring provides a meaningful learning experience, although it requires strong time management and a high level of responsibility.

Keywords: pre-service English teachers, private tutoring, teaching experiences, dual roles, phenomenological study

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, private tutoring often called shadow education has become a familiar part of Education in many countries, including Indonesia (Azizah et al., 2024; Bray, 2021). Private tutoring (PT), as a new form of education privatization,

has grown rapidly over the past few decades worldwide and has become a multi-billion dollar business in the global market (Khaydarov, 2020). Private tutoring is a program of other educational activities focused to help students improve their academic performance. Private tutoring sometimes referred to as shadow education, refers to paid academic tutoring that takes place outside of regular school hours (Xiong et al., 2022). As this practice continues to grow, it reflects broader changes in how learning, competition, and success are understood in modern society. The growing dependency on tutoring also brings up questions about how teaching and learning processes are developing outside of formal schooling, who benefits from this trend, and how such experiences might shape the next generation of educators.

Previous studies have explored various aspects of informal education. For instance, Khaydarov (2020) explored teachers' perceptions of tutoring in Uzbekistan and found that private tutoring complements formal education but raises issues of social inequality. In similar case, Xiong et al. (2020) studied private English tutors in China and reported that they construct hybrid professional identities that differ from mainstream teachers. Meanwhile, Kim (2022) focused on the emotional work of tutors in South Korea, highlighting that tutoring provides autonomy but also uncertainty. Similarly, Hajar (2021) found that English tutors in the UK experience conflict between their ideal teaching identity and market-driven expectations. In addition, Zhang (2023) explored post-COVID-19 online tutoring trends, revealing new challenges in digital pedagogy and teacher identity. Other studies, Ahmad (2021); Rahman & Nur (2022); Choi (2024); Liu (2023); and Yoon, (2024) has further emphasized the evolving nature of tutoring practices in various cultural and technological contexts.

However, studies focusing specifically on pre-service English teachers working as private tutors remain limited. Most studies focus on students who attend in tutoring classes. Furthermore, few adopt a phenomenological approach that explores how prospective English teachers view their identity and professional development through private tutoring. This gap highlights the need for more in-depth

qualitative investigation into how informal teaching experiences shape the professional paths of pre-service teachers.

This study aims to explore the experiences of pre-service English teachers involved in private tutoring. This study is significant in terms of understanding the experiences of pre-service teachers who are faced with institutional expectations and the realities of informal teaching. Addressing this gap through a phenomenological lens provides deeper insights into the formation of teacher identity and the balance between work and study in the context of contemporary language education. By focusing on the intersection between teacher education and informal tutoring. This study not only contributes locally but also has relevance for global educational practices more generally.

Based on the explanation provided in the research background, this study addresses two research questions. The first question is what experiences do pre-service English teachers (PETS) gain from teaching in private tutoring? The second question is from their experiences, how do the Pre-service English teachers (PETS) balance their university learning and teaching activities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Private Tutoring Institution

Private tutoring, commonly referred to as shadow education, has become a global educational phenomenon closely connected to formal schooling. Stevenson and Baker (1992) introduced the concept of shadow education to describe supplementary learning activities that mirror formal education. Bray (2010) further explained that the term was first used by Marimuthu et al. (1991) in their study on private tutoring in Malaysia. Since then, shadow education has expanded rapidly, particularly in countries with high academic competition such as Japan and South Korea, before spreading to developing countries including Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam (Baker & LeTendre, 2005; Bray & Zhang, 2018).

Private tutoring is generally conducted outside formal school settings and offers more flexible and personalized learning opportunities for students (Dang &

Rogers, 2016). In Indonesia, private tutoring has evolved from traditional tutoring institutions into technology-based and online learning platforms. This development allows students to access additional learning support more effectively and flexibly (Prastyo et al., 2022). The increasing demand for tutoring is influenced by parental expectations, academic competition, and perceptions that formal education alone is insufficient to support students' academic achievement. Even after the abolition of the National Examination (UN), tutoring remains widely used because parents and students continue to consider it an important educational support system (Suryatnu et al., 2023).

Pre-service English Teachers' Experiences

Teaching experiences gained through tutoring can be understood through Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), which emphasizes learning through experience and reflection. In tutoring contexts, pre-service English teachers develop teaching skills by engaging directly in classroom interaction, lesson explanation, and problem-solving activities. These experiences allow them to connect theoretical knowledge from university courses with practical teaching situations.

Several studies have shown that tutoring contributes positively to pre-service teachers' pedagogical development. Tutoring helps improve communication skills, classroom management, teaching confidence, and adaptability to students' learning needs (Pham & Nguyen, 2025). However, limited teaching experience may also create challenges, including anxiety, difficulties in managing students, and pressure to meet parents' expectations.

Balancing Dual Roles

Balancing responsibilities as university students and private tutors often creates both opportunities and challenges for pre-service English teachers. Marks (1996) argued that multiple roles may complement each other when managed effectively, although overlapping responsibilities can also create role conflict. Pre-service teachers frequently experience time pressure due to academic assignments, university activities, and tutoring responsibilities simultaneously (Azuka et al., 2025).

Previous studies emphasize that effective time management, prioritization, and flexibility are important strategies for maintaining balance between academic and tutoring responsibilities (Maharani et al., 2024). Flexible tutoring schedules also enable pre-service teachers to adjust workloads according to academic demands (Santos & Gonçalves, 2021).

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach based on Moustakas (1994) to explore the lived experiences of pre-service English teachers engaged in private tutoring. This approach was chosen to understand how participants interpret and make meaning of their teaching experiences while balancing their dual roles as students and tutors.

The participants of this study were five final-year students enrolled in English Language Education programs at three universities in East Java, Indonesia. All participants had at least six months of teaching experience in private tutoring institutions under formal management systems. They were selected using a snowball sampling technique to ensure that each participant met the research criteria.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted between January and February 2026. Each participant was interviewed twice, with each session lasting approximately 40–60 minutes. The interviews were conducted primarily in English, with occasional use of Indonesian to ensure clarity. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006) six-step framework. This process involved familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and producing the final report. This method allowed the researcher to identify patterns and meanings within participants' experiences.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, member checking (Guba & Lincoln, 1985) was conducted by allowing participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the interview transcripts. Ethical considerations were also maintained by

ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity through the use of participant codes (P1–P5).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents research findings based on thematic analysis of interview data from five pre-service English teachers who were actively involved in private tutoring while completing their undergraduate studies. The analysis produced several themes that answered two research questions.

RQ1: What experiences do pre-service English teachers (PSETs) gain from teaching in private tutoring?

This research question explores the professional and pedagogical experiences gained by pre-service English teachers through their involvement in private tutoring. Specifically, this study focuses on how teaching in non-formal educational settings contributes to their development as future English teachers. This analysis highlights how private tutoring serves as a practical learning space where pre-service English teachers develop confidence in teaching, improve their English proficiency, and build their developing professional identity as teachers through engagement and responsibility in real classrooms.

Navigating Initial Insecurity as a New Teacher

At the beginning of their teaching experience, all participants reported feeling initial emotional responses when they first entered the private tutoring context. Participants described feelings of nervousness, self-doubt, and anxiety related to their limited teaching experience, lack of confidence, and concerns about their English language skills as non-native speakers. These feelings reflect the insecurity often experienced during the transition from student to teacher. P1 experienced strong feelings of insecurity and anxiety related to their position as a teacher, especially when teaching older students with higher educational backgrounds.

Excerpt 1:

“The first time I taught in that course, some were high school graduates. Some were college graduates. So I felt very nervous and anxious. I was worried about whether they would listen to me. At that time, I hadn't gone to college yet. It was 2021. I hadn't gone to college yet. Meanwhile, I was teaching high school. Teaching kids who were already in college. So I felt nervous.” (Interview, January 2026, P1).

These findings indicate that early teaching experiences are emotionally challenging and often marked by insecurity. This aligns with recent studies showing that novice teachers frequently experience identity instability during the transition from student to teacher, especially when there is a gap between self-perception and professional expectations (Chen, 2023; Kim & Roth, 2022). Furthermore, concerns about language proficiency reflect the influence of native-speaker norms, which continue to shape professional confidence among non-native English teachers (Le & Tran, 2021).

Developing Pedagogical Confidence through Repeated Teaching Practice

The participants shared how the experience of continuous teaching gradually transformed their initial uncertainty into confidence. Through repeated involvement in the classroom, participants became more comfortable managing lessons, interacting with students, and preparing teaching materials. Over time, the routine of teaching reduced anxiety and fostered emotional readiness and pedagogical confidence. P2 highlighted that long-term tutoring experience helped reduce anxiety and build confidence in both classroom and academic settings.

Excerpt 2:

“At the second meeting, I began to enjoy teaching. From my experience, I realized that my students trusted me as their teacher. When I succeeded in building trust in the classroom, it helped me feel more confident. I

accepted my role as their tutor, and that trust motivated me to believe more in my own abilities.” (Interview, January 2026, P2).

These experiences demonstrate that pedagogical confidence develops gradually through repeated practice rather than emerging directly from theoretical instruction. This finding supports previous research indicating that teachers’ self-confidence is strongly influenced by mastery experiences in real classroom contexts (Lazarides & Warner, 2020; Zee & Koomen, 2021). In addition, practical teaching experience has been shown to have a greater impact on confidence development than formal coursework, particularly for pre-service English teachers (Flores, 2023).

Enhancing English Proficiency through Daily Teaching Exposure

Daily teaching activities provide participants with ongoing opportunities to use English in meaningful contexts. As a result, they experience improvements in fluency, grammatical awareness, and confidence in using English as their primary language of instruction. P5 explained that frequent teaching created daily exposure to English, making the classroom the main space for active language use. This constant practice supported the improvement of speaking fluency and grammatical accuracy.

Excerpt 3:

“From my experience teaching as a tutor, my understanding of grammar gradually improved. Although I did not study grammar intensively, my understanding improved naturally because I was used to teaching. By teaching regularly, I began to understand the material more deeply. Before becoming a tutor, I found it difficult to understand grammar, but after teaching, I realized that I understood it better. My knowledge of grammar and vocabulary also improved without me realizing it.” (Interview, January 2026, P5).

These findings suggest that teaching functions as a form of sustained language practice. This is consistent with research indicating that regular professional use of English can compensate for limited exposure in everyday environments, particularly in EFL contexts (Rose & McKinley, 2022). Continuous instructional use also reinforces linguistic awareness and supports long-term language development.

Developing Classroom Management and Teaching Skills

Repeated practice in class helps participants develop teaching skills, such as managing lesson flow, allocating time effectively, and adjusting activities to maintain student engagement. P4 highlights that previous teaching experience helps the ability to interact in class, manage time, and engage students contributes to a smoother lesson flow and increases confidence during both online and offline teaching.

Excerpt 4:

“Through my experience teaching tutoring, my ability to manage lesson flow and time has improved significantly. I have learned how to allocate time for explanations, exercises, and discussions more efficiently. I have also become more adept at managing interactions by encouraging students to ask questions and express their opinions, which helps create a more active and comfortable learning environment.” (Interview, January 2026, P4).

These findings indicate that private tutoring serves as practical preparation for formal teaching contexts. This supports research showing that teaching competence is significantly developed through hands-on experience rather than theoretical learning alone (König et al., 2022). Furthermore, exposure to diverse teaching situations enhances adaptability and pedagogical awareness (Barlaman & Umamah, 2025; Huda et al., 2025). Thus, private tutoring functions as an informal training ground where pre-service teachers refine their teaching strategies and classroom interaction skills.

Understanding the Role of a Professional Teacher

Participants develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be a professional teacher through their involvement in private tutoring. In addition to mastering the subject matter, participants begin to realize that professionalism encompasses responsibility, emotional regulation, commitment, and continuous self-improvement. P3 explains that being a professional teacher involves responsibility, commitment, and continuous self-development, not just mastery of subject matter.

Excerpt 5:

“From my experience as a private tutor, I learned what it means to be a professional teacher. Being professional is not only about mastering the subject matter, but also about showing responsibility and commitment to the students' learning process. I believe that a professional teacher must be willing to continue learning and developing. After each lesson, I reflect on my teaching methods and think of ways to improve them next time. Professionalism is also demonstrated through responsibility, such as teaching according to schedule and completing the full lesson time, even when it feels exhausting. These experiences have helped me understand the true responsibility of being a teacher.” (Interview, January 2026, P3)

These findings align with studies suggesting that teacher professionalism is shaped through real teaching experiences, reflection, and adaptation to challenges (Kamilah & Elfiyanto, 2023). In addition, emotional regulation and ethical responsibility play a significant role in teachers' professional development (Chen, 2023; Ubaidillah et al., 2023). Reflective practice further contributes to the development of professional awareness and teaching identity (Yunus & Ubaidillah, 2021). Therefore, private tutoring helps participants build a more realistic and holistic understanding of the teaching profession.

RQ2. From their experiences, how do pre-service English teachers (PSETs) balance their university learning and teaching activities?

This research examines how pre-service English teachers manage the dual roles as university students and private tutors. It focuses on balancing academic responsibilities with teaching commitments, as well as the strategies they use to cope with time constraints, workload, and physical fatigue. Through their experiences, this study explores how participants negotiate priorities, make decisions when conflicts arise, and develop practical time management strategies to maintain both roles.

Managing Time and Setting Priorities

These findings highlight the strategies used by participants to manage their time and set priorities while balancing their dual roles as university students and private tutors. These strategies show how participants organize their schedules, prioritize tasks, and make practical decisions to balance their academic responsibilities with their teaching commitments to manage conflicting demands. P1 highlighted that time management requires clear priorities. Teaching duties take priority over university tasks.

Excerpt 6:

“To manage my time, I usually prioritize teaching tasks first. When many students submit assignments, I check them as quickly as possible.

Sometimes I go to bed early and wake up around 1 a.m. to finish checking student assignments. After that, I quickly finish my university assignments. Once my academic tasks are complete, I continue with my teaching work.” (Interview, January 2026, P1).

These findings highlight the importance of prioritization in managing overlapping roles. This is consistent with research indicating that pre-service teachers often experience role conflict and must develop strong self-regulation and time management skills (Griffiths et al., 2022). Additionally, individuals tend to prioritize roles that involve responsibility toward others, particularly in educational contexts (Busher & James, 2023).

Intentional Scheduling to Balance Dual Roles

Participants use planned scheduling to balance academic and teaching commitments. By clearly separating lecture hours from tutoring sessions and adjusting schedules when academic demands increase, participants can manage their dual roles more effectively. P2 explains a strategic scheduling method to separate academic and teaching responsibilities. Participants allocate mornings for university classes and evenings for tutoring to avoid schedule conflicts and maintain productivity.

Excerpt 7:

“In the morning, I usually focus on my university classes and choose class times when I feel most productive. I start teaching in the afternoon, usually from 5 p.m. to 9 or 10 p.m., so my teaching schedule does not disrupt my academic class schedule. My class schedule and teaching schedule are separate. When I have assignments or academic events, I adjust my teaching hours, sometimes teaching from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on different days. To manage this, I create a schedule outside of my regular

hours so that I can maintain my academic performance while continuing to teach.” (Interview, January 2026, P2)

These strategies demonstrate the effectiveness of planned scheduling in managing dual roles. Previous research highlights that structured time allocation supports academic success and reduces role conflict (Meer et al., 2022). In teacher education contexts, effective scheduling is also associated with improved emotional balance and academic performance (Riegel & Dodd, 2023).

Flexible Scheduling and Role Adjustment Strategies

Participants used flexible scheduling and role adjustments to manage their dual responsibilities. When conflicts arose between their academic and teaching responsibilities, they adjusted their schedules and changed their teaching settings to maintain balance. P5 explained that he follows a fixed teaching schedule and prepares lessons in advance, while completing university assignments during his free time in the evenings. When teaching schedules conflict with university activities, academic responsibilities are prioritized by rescheduling classes, shortening sessions, or asking another tutor to take over.

Excerpt 18:

“I usually follow a fixed schedule for teaching and prepare my lessons one or two hours before class. For my own study, I work on it during my free time, usually at night. Sometimes my teaching schedule clashes with university activities, but in those situations, I prioritize my university work. I shorten the teaching session, reschedule it, or ask another tutor to replace me.” (Interview, January 2026, P5).

These findings reflect adaptive coping strategies that enable individuals to manage multiple responsibilities effectively. Research suggests that flexibility and role adjustment are essential for maintaining performance and reducing stress in dual-

role situations (Skinner & Saxton, 2023; Markel & Frone, 2022). Therefore, flexibility is not only a practical strategy but also an important indicator of participants' ability to negotiate responsibilities and maintain balance.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study explored the experiences of pre-service English teachers who taught at a private tutoring institution while completing their university studies. Based on the findings, private tutoring provided many important experiences that supported their professional growth. At the beginning of their teaching journey, participants felt nervous, anxious, and doubtful about their abilities. They doubted themselves, especially when teaching older or more experienced students. However, through repeated teaching practice, their confidence gradually increased. Teaching regularly helped them feel more comfortable in front of students and more confident in managing the class. Private tutoring also helped improve their English skills. Because they used English consistently during lessons, speaking, grammar comprehension, and vocabulary skills improved naturally. The learning process became a space for daily language practice that strengthened their fluency and accuracy.

In addition, tutoring experience helped develop classroom management skills. Participants learned how to manage time, explain material clearly, keep students engaged, and handle various situations in the classroom. This experience also made them feel more prepared during the teaching practicum (PPL). Participants gained a deeper understanding of what it meant to be a professional teacher. They learned about responsibility, emotional control, commitment, and continuous self-improvement. They realized that being a teacher was not only about mastering the subject matter, but also about caring for students and facing challenges calmly. To balance their dual roles, they managed their time carefully, set clear priorities, create structured schedules, and adjusted teaching hours as needed. Some prioritized teaching responsibilities, while others prioritize tasks based on deadlines. Flexible

schedules and good planning helped them balance their academic performance and teaching responsibilities.

Based on the findings, several implications can be proposed. For pre-service English teachers, it is important to develop effective time management strategies and set clear priorities when balancing academic and teaching responsibilities. Engaging in private tutoring can be beneficial for improving both teaching skills and English proficiency if managed appropriately. For teacher education programs, it is recommended to recognize private tutoring as a valuable form of early teaching experience. Providing guidance, mentorship, or training related to time management and professional development may help students better manage their dual roles. For private tutoring institutions, offering flexible scheduling and support systems can help pre-service teachers maintain a balance between their academic and professional responsibilities. Finally, future research is encouraged to explore similar topics in different contexts or with a larger number of participants. Further studies may also investigate the long-term impact of private tutoring experiences on teachers' professional careers after graduation.

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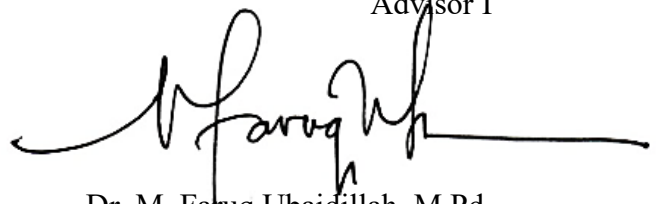
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Malang, May 05, 2026
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Faruq Ubaidillah', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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