



## Exploring temporality in motives for becoming language teacher educators through a life-course study of Indonesian ESOL teacher educators

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### Abstract

Although language teacher educators (LTEs) play an instrumental role in supporting pre-service teachers, existing studies provide limited insight into the psychological dimensions of their professional experience, particularly motives for becoming LTEs. This study investigates how the motives for becoming LTEs of Indonesian English of Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher educators are shaped by their sociocultural context over their life trajectories. To answer the research question, this study was designed as qualitative life-course research and employed the genetic method theory to guide its analysis of interview data involving 12 LTEs from six different teacher education providers in Indonesia. The construction of a combined life line based on the participants' biographical narratives narrowed down the analysis to four critical life phases, namely growing up at home and in the surrounding community, attending schools, obtaining a bachelor's degree in language education, and exploring career options post-graduation. By interpreting the participants' accounts of ontogenetic critical moments within their cultural-historical boundaries, the study's findings shed light on the temporal dimension of LTEs' motives and stress the role of context in shaping them. Implications for theory and teacher education practice and institutions are discussed.

**Keywords:** *Language teacher educators; motives for becoming language teacher educators; English language teaching; genetic method; life course research.*

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## **Introduction**

This study aims at analysing how the social and cultural contexts of Indonesian ESOL teacher educators shape their motives for becoming language teacher educators (LTEs) throughout their life histories. Although LTEs play a variety of significant roles in supporting pre-service language teachers (Barkhuizen, 2021), LTE research remains relatively underdeveloped (Borg, 2011), with significant advances emerging only in recent decades. Within this field, university-based LTEs (Barkhuizen, 2021) specifically represent an important population for further study, due to their significant contribution to language teacher education. In many countries, including Indonesia, LTEs work at a tertiary institution that offers initial teacher education (ITE) programmes, which commonly serve as the direct pathway to a teaching career (Loeneto et al., 2022). University-based LTEs occupy a central role in ITE through their involvement in various institutional responsibilities, including teaching content courses, engaging in academic research, supervising student-teachers' research, and liaising with schools regarding teaching practicum (Barkhuizen, 2021). Given the complexity and significance of their work, studying LTEs and their experiences is essential. However, LTEs remain underrepresented in TESOL and applied linguistics research (Sak & Yuan, 2025). Limited research on this professional group may constrain understanding of their work and the professional support they need.

In light of limited research on LTEs and their increasingly complex work, Sak and Yuan (2025) emphasise the need to examine the psychological dimensions of LTEs' work in support of their professional development. One important area of inquiry is motivation, which drives human behaviour (Bandhu et al., 2024). Hiver et al. (2018) pointed out that LTEs' motivation is closely linked to teacher development and dynamics in the classroom. While numerous studies have unpacked language teachers' motives to choose a teaching career (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021), research on LTEs' motivation is globally still in its infancy (Banegas & Pozo Beamud, 2022; Giurastante, 2024). This leads to a lack of theorisation in research on LTEs' motivation, in comparison to the different lenses applied to past investigations into language teacher motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Kubanyiova, 2019).

Thus far, the temporal aspect of LTEs' motivation is under-researched. This poses a stark difference with the extensive discussions on temporalities in other psychological dimensions of LTEs' work, such as identity (Tajeddin & Keshvari, 2025; Wang & Fang, 2025) and agency (Yuan, 2016). Without in-depth examinations of LTEs' whole story, researchers might risk concealing "the hitherto invisible layers of their professional and personal lives" (Sak & Yuan, 2025, p. 6). Therefore, this study aims to explore the development of motives for becoming LTEs among 12 Indonesian ESOL teacher educators within their sociocultural contexts over their life span through a life-course study. By using the genetic method (Cole & Engeström, 1993), this study perceives Indonesian LTEs' academic career decision not as a singular event but as a result of ongoing interactions between different contextual factors that shape their life stories and, hence, motives for becoming LTEs over time.

## Literature review

### *Motives for becoming LTEds*

In this study, the notion of motives for becoming LTEds is differentiated from the notion of motives for teaching, despite their conceptual overlap. This study proposes to use the term of motives for becoming LTEds, instead of motives for teaching, to acknowledge the distinctive professional roles that university-based LTEds occupy in language teacher education, as they are engaged in research and service, in addition to teaching (Banegas & Pozo Beamud, 2022; Giurastante, 2024). Nevertheless, it is important to understand both notions as the literature on motives for teaching provides a conceptual basis for understanding the motives of LTEds.

Following the conceptualisation by Lamb and Wyatt (2019), motives for teaching refer to motives for joining the teaching profession, as opposed to motivation while teaching. Motives for teaching have been widely studied as a common research strand in L2 teacher motivation (Hiver et al., 2018; Lamb & Sahakyan, 2025; Lamb & Wyatt, 2019). More than addressing the issue of teacher attrition, teacher motivation determines teachers' engagement with their work (Lamb & Sahakyan, 2025). For instance, teachers' passion and enthusiasm translates into effective instruction and potentially nurtures students' motivation, hence impacting classroom behaviour (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Drawing on this understanding of motives for teaching, this study conceptualises motives for becoming LTEds as the underlying reasons for entering language teacher education through their affiliation with a tertiary institution.

In the current body of literature on second and foreign language teachers, motives for teaching are often categorised into intrinsic and extrinsic motives (Hiver et al., 2018; Lamb & Sahakyan, 2025). The most commonly found sources of intrinsic motives include interest in the language being taught, passion for teaching, past language learning experiences during which language teachers achieved positive outcomes or observed their former teachers' enjoyment in teaching, and a sense of altruism that encourages commitment to helping others (Hiver et al., 2018). Differently, extrinsic motives relate to material benefits, job security, and social status of the teaching profession (Hiver et al., 2018). Other motives related to language teachers' sociocultural backgrounds were found, such as family experiences related to language use and their value for cross-cultural diversity (Lamb & Sahakyan, 2025). Beyond this categorisation, three theoretical lenses have been applied by language teacher motivation researchers, namely the multifaceted nature of teacher motivation, the interplay between contexts and teacher motivation, and language teachers' imaginings of themselves in various professional contexts (Kubanyiova, 2019), resulting in rich conversations on the construct.

While language teacher motivation has attracted growing interest (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021), attention to the motivation of LTEds has been limited (Banegas et al., 2025; Giurastante, 2024). Understanding who LTEds are and why they became LTEds can assist teacher educator development (Borg, 2011; Yuan et al., 2022), as they are teaching student-teachers and, thus, shaping the future generation of language teachers. Two empirical studies have investigated LTEds' motivations in two different contexts. Through a six-year longitudinal study in

Argentina, Banegas and Pozo Beamud (2022) explored the motivation of 13 tertiary-level English teacher educators, particularly factors that might motivate them to work as LTEds, demotivate them, and sustain their motivation. Regarding motives for becoming LTEds, the study's findings from individual and group interviews were categorised into four themes, namely advancement of teaching career, contribution to the community, pursuit of alternative career options other than school teaching, and establishment of a professional community of practice (Banegas & Pozo Beamud, 2022). Comparably, Giurastante (2024) examined the motivational factors of 11 foreign (English or French) LTEds at a Swiss university of teacher education. Based on in-depth interviews with individual participants, which included their professional biographies, the study found various motives and analysed them using the self-determination theory (Giurastante, 2024). Intrinsic factors, particularly interest in the subject matter and the sharing of experience with student-teachers, dominate their responses, while extrinsic motives include their drive to further develop themselves professionally and the possibility to balance family and work (Giurastante, 2024).

While those two studies establish an initial foundation for understanding motives for becoming LTEds, they present two conceptual issues. First, the use of the umbrella term of motivation in both studies may reduce conceptual clarity between teacher motivation, motives for teaching, and motives for becoming LTEds. Secondly, although Banegas and Pozo Beamud (2022) touched upon the temporal aspect of motives in regards to LTEds' transition from school teaching to teacher education and Giurastante (2024) gathered biographical data, their analysis is relatively limited to classifying motives, without examining the processes through which such motives are formed. Meanwhile, research on psychological dimensions of LTEds' work should be directed at the development of LTEds as whole people (Sak & Yuan, 2025), indicating the need to account for the complexity of not only being LTEds but also becoming LTEds. Moreover, while those studies have offered initial evidence for LTEds' motivations, they are situated in Global North settings, emphasising a gap in LTEds' motivation research in the Global South. Hence, this study aims to address these theoretical and spatial gaps by answering the question: How are the motives for becoming LTEds of Indonesian ESOL teacher educators shaped by their sociocultural context over their life trajectories?

### ***The genetic method as an analytical framework***

Limited motivation research on LTEds has explained their career choice, for example, by using the self-determination theory to unpack intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Banegas et al., 2025; Giurastante, 2024; Hiver et al., 2018) and employing the directed motivational currents theory to examine the directedness and enduringness of motivational experiences (Banegas et al., 2025). These perspectives have made important insights by identifying motivational factors (Giurastante, 2024) and explaining motivational states (Banegas et al., 2025). However, these approaches focus on conceptualising the general construct of motivation as an individual psychological phenomenon and explaining its characteristics.

This study employs the genetic method (GM) as it offers a different analytical framework for understanding the development of motives for becoming LTEds. The emphasis on genesis in

GM corresponds well with the concept of whole people development proposed for empowering LTEds (Sak & Yuan, 2025). GM builds on Vygotsky's genetic-explanatory approach to human development, which argues for the importance of historicity in understanding higher mental abilities (Dang & Cross, 2022). This is because human cognition is culturally mediated and distributed in time (Cole & Engeström, 1993). This means that any higher mental processes experienced by human beings are contingent on specific social and cultural boundaries and developed over time. Hence, in this study, GM functions to not only structure a temporal analysis but also identify the impact of different personal, professional, and broader contextual factors on LTEds' biographical decisions leading to their entry into language teacher education. By embedding individual life journeys into their social, cultural, and historical contexts (Cross, 2006), GM allows the analysis to explain how motives for becoming LTEds emerge and are developed through cultural-historical processes prior to being LTEds.

GM acknowledges five time scales, namely physical time (the history of the physical universe), phylogenetic time (the history of life on earth), cultural-historical time (the history of human beings on earth), ontogenetic time (the history of individual people), and microgenetic time (people's lived history on a moment-to-moment basis) (Cole & Engeström, 1993). When analysing an event, it is necessary to regard the event as happening across all the time scales, with one level being embedded in the level above it (Cole & Engeström, 1993). While the genetic method provides a multi-layered framework for understanding development, only ontogenetic and cultural-historical domains are used in this study, and the event under analysis is Indonesian ESOL teacher educators' motives for becoming LTEds. Because the study draws on retrospective biographical interviews rather than real-time observations, the empirical data are most suited to examining LTEds' developmental trajectories across the lifespan (ontogeny) and the sociocultural conditions shaping those trajectories (cultural-historical time). Further, while the concept of microgenesis remains theoretically relevant in highlighting moment-to-moment mediation in action (Dang & Cross, 2022), it is not employed as a separate empirical level of analysis. Instead, the participants' accounts of critical moments are treated as retrospectively reconstructed micro-level interactions, which are considered part of their ontogenetic trajectories.

## **Methodology**

### ***Qualitative life course research and ethical considerations***

This study was designed based on the life course paradigm, which includes cultural background (time and place), the integration of social and cultural expectations via human interaction, individual goal orientation, and strategic adaptation towards personal or collective goals (Giele & Elder, 1998). Rooted in developmental perspectives on human behaviour and development, life course research centres on the conceptualisation of life events that individuals experience and how the timing and sequence of those events over time uniquely shape their lives at present and in the future (Belli et al., 2009). Different from quantitative methods, qualitative

approaches to life course research highlight individuals' narratives and meaning-making processes, in which they draw subjective assumptions about how events, biographical decisions, and the outcomes are interrelated (Heinz, 2016; Lalanda Nico, 2016).

To enhance trustworthiness of this qualitative study, two strategies were employed, namely reflexivity (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017; Peddle, 2022) and triangulation (Stahl & King, 2020). We undertook ongoing reflexivity when collecting, analysing, and interpreting data. While Author 1's outsider position provided critical distance to the research phenomenon, Author 2 was an LTED in one of the research sites. Although Author 1 was an outsider to the investigated institutional contexts, she developed contextual understanding of the phenomenon by examining institutional websites, policies and related documentation. Meanwhile, Author 2 was aware of her position as an outsider-insider, as she shared cultural understandings with some participants in terms of professional experience. Although this enabled her to explore more complex issues of the phenomenon at the site, she employed perspective-taking strategies to minimise potential bias (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017), such as asking open ended questions and avoiding leading questions during the interviews. Asking open ended questions encourage participants to voice out their personal experiences of the investigated phenomenon. Further, we both provided a balanced description of the phenomenon investigated by indicating different voices in the data presentation.

We conducted investigator triangulation by comparing coding decisions and discussing emerging themes towards a shared interpretation. Since the two datasets were complementary, we conducted collaborative coding and ongoing reflexive discussions to examine key moments that shape their academic career trajectories as LTEDs. In addition, we conducted environmental triangulation (Stahl & King, 2020) by involving 12 participants with a variety of institutional affiliations and geographical locations.

### ***Data sources, settings and participants***

The interview data for this study were derived from two larger research projects on university-based LTEDs in Indonesia. The datasets that focused on motives for becoming LTEDs were combined to capture multiple perspectives on why they decided to be LTEDs. After receiving ethics approval, we invited participants to take part in the interview. Author 2 conducted interviews with nine participants from three private universities in 2022, and Author 1 interviewed three participants from three public universities in 2024. Prior to the interview, they were informed that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the research at any time.

Although the interviews were conducted across two separate research projects, the projects shared similar semi-structured interview protocols. In both projects, the researchers asked a substantive question inviting participants to explain how and why they became language teacher educators in Indonesian language. For example, Author 2 asked, "Why did you become a language teacher educator?", while Author 1 asked, "Could you tell me why you became a language teacher educator?" Although the wording differed slightly, both questions elicited

participants' motivations and professional trajectories. The data in this study were considered comparable and treated as a case bounded by a phenomenon focusing on motives for becoming LTEds in Indonesian teacher education settings. Besides sharing a common phenomenon of interest in the professional trajectories of LTEds, both projects involve participants occupying the same professional role as university-based LTEds.

However, follow-up questions were not structured, as Author 1 and Author 2 used prompts responsively to clarify or expand participants' answers. For example, when a participant briefly mentioned the enjoyment of teaching, Author 2 asked, "You mentioned that you enjoy teaching. Besides enjoying teaching, were there any other reasons you chose to become a lecturer?" Similarly, prompts, such as "You've been doing this for quite a long time, haven't you?" or "So it was your passion?", were used to clarify participants' specific timeline of trajectories or encourage elaboration. In contrast, when participants had already provided detailed narratives, no follow-up question was asked. Thus, differences in probing reflected participants' varying responses, rather than differences in the substantive focus of the interviews.

The participants in this study consisted of 12 LTEds employed at six different tertiary education institutions in four provinces across three islands in Indonesia. These institutions provide 4-year undergraduate-level initial teacher education programmes, one of which is aimed at TESOL pre-service teachers. As university-based LTEds, they are all responsible for conducting professional work under the *Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi* or three-fold duties in Indonesian higher education, namely teaching, research, and community service (Suwignyo, 2024). Hence, the participants were tasked with a range of duties, ranging from teaching subject courses on English language knowledge and pedagogy, organising teaching practicum, conducting academic research, running community service projects, to supervising undergraduate research. All names of participants and universities in Table 1 are pseudonyms.

Table 1. List of participants.

| Name      | Name and type of university   | Academic rank       | Academic experience |
|-----------|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Mentari   | Universitas Alam (public)     | Lecturer            | 20-30 years         |
| Gemintang | Universitas Jagat (public)    | Associate lecturer  | <10 years           |
| Rembulan  | Universitas Semesta (public)  | Associate lecturer  | <10 years           |
| Kartini   | Universitas Belajar (private) | Associate professor | 10-20 years         |
| Walidah   | Universitas Belajar (private) | Associate lecturer  | <10 years           |
| Sartika   | Universitas Merdeka (private) | Associate lecturer  | 10-20 years         |
| Polim     | Universitas Merdeka (private) | Associate professor | 20-30 years         |
| Tomo      | Universitas Guru (private)    | Lecturer            | >30 years           |
| Suryo     | Universitas Guru (private)    | Lecturer            | <10 years           |

|            |                               |                     |             |
|------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Diponogoro | Universitas Belajar (private) | Associate lecturer  | <10 years   |
| Dewa       | Universitas Guru (private)    | Associate professor | >30 years   |
| Raden      | Universitas Guru (private)    | Lecturer            | 20-30 years |

### ***Data collection and analysis***

The qualitative life course data were collected by using a biographical narrative interview. Guided by semi-structured questions, the researchers invited the participants to tell stories about their lives (Crow & Andrews, 2019) in relation to their biographical decisions to work as LTEs. The guiding questions are: (1) How did you become an LTE? and, (2) Why did you choose to be an LTE? The researchers did not focus on particular periods in the participants' life but let them choose to identify any relevant critical moments (Gray & Dagg, 2018), which consist of the fateful events they underwent and their effects on their academic career decisions. In addition to clarifying the participants' lived experiences, the researchers asked follow-up questions to elicit their reflexivity on those moments (Gray & Dagg, 2018).

As the study draws on interview data from larger projects and the participants chose different numbers and kinds of critical moments, the length of the interviews varied. While the original interviews lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, in this study, we focused on selected segments in which the participants narrated their biographical decisions to work as a LTE. The interviews were done in Indonesian so that the participants felt at ease in expressing their feelings and thoughts.

The data analysis was divided into two stages. In the first stage, data were analysed individually. First, to reflect ontogeny in GM, based on the participants' narratives, a brief biographical sketch was re-constructed for each participant to ascertain the order of events (Belli et al., 2009) over the participant's life span. In addition, ontogenetic critical moments were identified in their narratives to understand lived experiences that had the most influential consequences (Gray & Dagg, 2018) on their academic career decisions. Second, to highlight the participants' development in cultural-historical time, within those identified moments, the researchers uncovered the biographical actors (Heinz, 2016) and any other contextual forces shaping their viewpoints and agentic actions (Giele & Elder, 1998).

In the second stage, the analysis moved away from individual data to a cross-synthesis. We first identified major life phases in the participants' life histories by comparing their biographical sketches, which were re-constructed in the first stage. We then categorised the critical moments identified in the first stage into those life phases. A combined life line was constructed by synthesising all the participants' biographies to mark the entry and exit points at which the participants transitioned between multiple life course dimensions (Heinz, 2016). Afterwards, we matched the biographical actors and contextual factors identified in the first stage to each critical moment in order to examine key life periods that hold shared significance for them (Gray & Dagg, 2018).

Table 2. An example of coding process.

| Excerpt                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Coding focus: Motives for becoming LTEDs                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Ontogenetic trajectory                                                                                                                                  | Ontogenetic critical moments                                                                                          | Cultural-historical influences                                                                                                               |
| <p>“Yes, because my environment in the village was mostly pedicab drivers, so what really influenced me was pedicab drivers at that time...</p> <p>... at that time, my friends were all university students there. Yes, when they chatted, they talked about credit points, assignments, and I was just dumbfounded at that time. Finally, I was motivated to go to college. Why in teaching? Because the context of teaching was different then and now. In the past, [...] [tuition] fees [of teacher education] were cheap.”</p> | <p>Growing up among pedicab drivers, even wanting to be one of them → enrolled in a private course after school hours → studied TESOL at university</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interacting with university students when taking a private course</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspiration about higher education from educational community</li> <li>• Economic reason</li> </ul> |

## Findings

The construction of a combined life line based on the participants' biographical narratives narrowed down our analysis to four critical life phases, namely growing up at home and in the surrounding community, attending schools, obtaining a bachelor's degree in language education, and exploring career options post-graduation. During each of these phases, the participants interacted with significant others through critical episodes, which led to fateful moments (Heinz, 2016) that contributed to their decision of choosing language teacher education as a long-term career pathway.

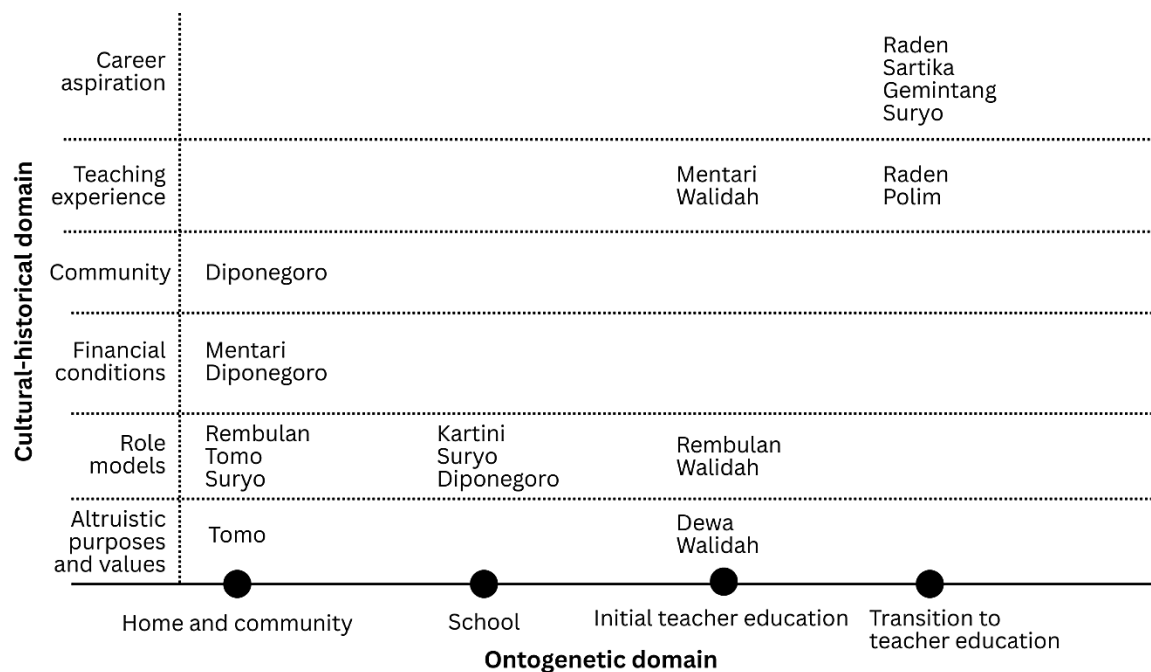


Figure 1. Indonesian ESOL teacher educators' combined biographical life line.

### *Role models and financial constraints within home environment*

The study's findings reveal that family members who worked in the education sector, especially teachers and academics, exert a significant influence on the participants' aspirations to work in the same sector. Although the specific family influences varied, the participants consistently described family contexts as shaping their awareness of and interest in educational careers. For example, since most of his extended family worked at schools, such as teachers, principals, and school supervisors, Suryo was only familiar with "occupations [...] in the school setting". Similarly, Raden's father was a teacher, and the familial influences led his four out of five children to work in the education sector. While participants were introduced to different educational professions, a common pattern was that family experiences helped establish these careers as meaningful and attainable options. As an illustration, Suryo drew on his good childhood memories, such as being "welcomed warmly by [his mother's] students". Inspired by his older siblings who worked as educators and whose family seemed to live a successful life, Tomo concluded that "being an educator is to not only earn money but also instil spirit [of others] in daily life". These early experiences appeared to position educational careers as attractive possibilities long before participants made concrete career decisions. For example, seeing her aunt working as an English lecturer and her extended family members being accustomed to consuming English media, Rembulan grew fondness for English language and developed "a sense of identity" around being an English teacher, eventually considering it as "a career option" as early as the junior high school. These findings indicate that family influences extended beyond introducing potential career paths in the education sector to shaping how those related professions were perceived and valued.

Other than modelling teaching or teacher education as a desirable occupation, family members shaped the participants' educational decisions in relation to financial constraints. For example, Diponegoro acknowledged choosing to study TESOL due to its low tuition fees. Even though his choice seemed pragmatic, it was also driven by his nurturing tendency towards children and knack for teaching. He narrated that in his village, "when there were kids, [he] used to gather and teach them games and other stuff". This suggests that educational decisions were shaped by both personal interests and considerations of accessibility and affordability. Meanwhile, Mentari was more intentional in selecting teacher education for her bachelor's degree because she dreamed of "studying while teaching" to earn extra money. As she explained, "I realised that if my studies depended financially only on my parents, this could be burdensome to them, so it would be better if I was studying while teaching, so I would not burden them". Her reported experience points to studying TESOL as a strategy to manage financial constraints and sustain educational participation. Although the participants responded to their economic circumstances differently, their accounts indicate that family financial conditions shaped how participants evaluated available opportunities and formed an important backdrop against which educational decisions were made.

### ***Inspirational schooling experience***

The participants' educational journey before entering an initial teacher education program was found to be influential for fostering their motives for becoming LTEds. One key biographical actor being mentioned is their former teachers, who inspired the participants by modelling passion and commitment to the teaching profession. For example, Kartini narrated that her English teacher in the junior high school was "motivational [and] inspiring", sparking her interest in being a teacher. Suryo similarly praised his former teachers who were "good and inspirational" and created fun in during the learning process. The participants' accounts imply that schooling experiences contributed to not only their positive perceptions of learning in general but also their understandings of what effective teaching could look like. Suryo further noted that "such happiness can be found in the classroom when there are dynamics among students, [which] cannot be found when working with paper, computers, or numbers". His comparison between teaching and office work can be attributable to his upbringing. He recalled spending a longer holiday with his mother, who was a teacher, in contrast to the short break period of his father, who worked a desk job. In this instance, teaching was viewed favourably in comparison with other professions, reflecting the lasting impact of participants' experiences as learners.

Another key biographical actor is peers who displayed enthusiasm for higher education. In the case of Diponegoro, his role models were neither family members nor former teachers but university students whom he met as classmates while attending a private course. Coming from a neighbourhood whose people mostly worked informally as pedicab drivers, Diponegoro used to imagine working as a pedicab driver before he "saw the outside world". Once encountering those university students, he was inspired and motivated to study at the tertiary level. He reported, "They usually talked about credit points, assignments, and I would just stare blankly [at them]". In the case of Diponegoro, those older peers played a role in providing tangible

examples of educational pathways that he could envision for himself. On top of that, exposure to older peers who attended university seemed to broaden his sense of possible futures beyond those previously available within his immediate family and neighbourhood contexts. Those life stories paint a more nuanced picture of how LTEDs enter initial teacher education via social interactions with members of the larger immediate community, in addition to the family.

### ***Teaching while learning during initial teacher education***

In our study, except for Kartini and Sartika, who majored in English Literature for their bachelor's degree, the participants underwent initial teacher education (ITE) in TESOL in Indonesia. This period was ascertained to be transformative, due to not only the program's formal learning but also other experiences related to teaching and learning. Specifically, attending university as undergraduate TESOL students serves two key influential functions, namely commitment-enhancement and enthusiasm-building.

First, the participants' enrolment in ITE boosted their commitment to teaching, especially if they had been resolute about working as a teacher. In the case of Rembulan, while not many of her friends studied on Java Island, she had the opportunity to temporarily relocate from Borneo to Java to study TESOL. She commented, "My undergraduate years really shaped [my perception] that the lecturers were amazing". Comparing the educational systems in her hometown and in the study location, she found that "the differences [in terms of] the [quality of] education [and] treatment from lecturers to the students were quite shocking". Her journey is similar to other participants who looked up to role models in their family and/school environment, but its effect on her career aspiration is more towards strengthening rather than steering. In comparison, Mentari's passion for teaching was nurtured further through three years of informal work experiences as a part-time teacher at a primary school and a private language institute. She said, "In the early semester, I was not confident being an English student [...] I was not confident in speaking [in English]", and "by teaching I was practising [my English skills]". Hence, in addition to the financial benefit of these experiences, she realised the importance of teaching for upskilling. The examples from Rembulan and Mentari show that rather than initiating interest in teaching, the ITE programme strengthened an already established aspiration to enter a teaching-related profession.

Second, by enrolling in ITE, the participants came to learn the collaborative and interactive nature of teaching and eventually developed enthusiasm in teaching-related professions. To illustrate, different from Rembulan and Mentari, Dewa and Walidah initially never thought of being a teacher, despite studying TESOL. Dewa admitted that being a teacher was not his early career option, as he wanted to be a diplomat, but after learning English and its pedagogy during ITE, he discovered the value of knowledge-sharing. He maintained that "by sharing, we can expand our knowledge". Walidah went through a similar trajectory. While pursuing a bachelor's degree, she mentored younger TESOL students in essay writing and grammar teaching through a peer mentoring program and had a chance to support local schools as a facilitator of English extracurricular activities. Moreover, she was involved in student-led activism, such as participating in intellectual discussions. Although she initially did not have

an interest in teaching, she was drawn to the value of knowledge-sharing. She found her teaching and discussion experiences “nice” because she “could just learn something and share and develop [her] goals”. Different from Mentari who regarded teaching as beneficial for personal gains, Dewa and Walidah deemed teaching valuable for others on the receiving end. That said, ITE and its associated learning experiences exposed Dewa and Walidah to the knowledge-exchange aspect of teaching, which they valued highly as individuals. As reiterated by Raden, “our knowledge as an educator is not only used in the professional setting but also in a wider context, be it our family or the society”. The participants’ narratives suggest that motives for teaching, which comprised motives for becoming LTEs, could emerge during, rather than prior to, university study, and this highlights the role of higher education in shaping professional aspirations.

### ***Strengthening of professional commitment***

After completing their undergraduate-level studies, primarily ITE, the participants’ professional journey began to differ from one another, for example, remaining in the teaching path before pursuing postgraduate education or immediately securing an academic position. The difference between this early professional stage and other critical life phases lies in the variety of social and cultural influences on their career-related decisions.

During the interviews, while reflecting on how their prior experiences, especially in teaching, affected their choice to become an LTE, the participants emphasised their shared zeal for teaching and learning. For Dewa, although his family once asked him to go back to his hometown in Sumatra and find a more high-paying job, he continued teaching because of his love for knowledge-sharing, arguing that “salary is not really interesting”. His statement implies a different socioeconomic standing between him and the other participants, such as Mentari and Diponegoro, who were financially constrained and found teaching as an affordable and profitable option. Polim resonated with Dewa’s opinion in regards to the social impact of teaching. As a teaching staff at a local private language institute, Polim was involved in the development and implementation of interactive multimedia games for teaching. He recalled how “the young learners looked very enthusiastic whenever [he] came to class” and noted a significant increase in classroom interaction. One outstanding trajectory was narrated by Sartika, who took up a tour guiding job at a local travel agent to fund her master’s studies in English Literature. Although she had never taught before, she always longed for intellectual work, which is inherent in the academic and teaching profession. She explained, “I think being a tour guide was a fun job [although] I was tired tracking and [doing] other [tourism] activities, but I felt that my brain couldn’t develop, I felt that something was missing” because she was “always fond of learning”. The three participants did not report any influences from family members or other role models who might have imparted the positive value of teaching. Hence, their accounts underscore their inherent need for professional fulfillment and point to teaching as a rewarding occupation.

At one point in their professional life, the participants embarked on an academic career as university-based LTEs, and they noted various reasons beyond passion for teaching and

learning. Some reasons were overtly articulated during the interviews and might intersect with their non-work aspects of life. One notable finding is the participants' association of academia with reasonable workload. In Raden's opinion, "being an educator is one of the most comfortable positions for a woman". Her statement is contextualised within her social roles as a wife and a mother. She added, "Because we have a family, the fixed schedule [of teaching] can be a guide on when to think of work and when to think of our family". For Tomo, before entering the academia, he held a misconception "that academic profession is a laid-back job but turns out it's not". Raden gave a similar comment that the predictability she imagined in relation to school teaching was in contrast with the reality of academia. This underscores that although the appeal of the academic job within language teacher education was linked to its perceived flexibility and, thus, alignment with the participants' preferred lifestyle, this perception was later revised through experience. Nevertheless, the reported discrepancy between anticipated and lived realities of the occupation as an LTED did not seem to affect their motivation while teaching (Lamb & Wyatt, 2019), as they stayed in the academia.

Furthermore, access to academic job opportunities turned out to be essential in the participants' decision to join the academia. For example, Walidah, who was involved in peer mentoring as a student, was offered a teaching assistantship right after graduation, cementing her passion for knowledge-sharing through teaching into her "purpose of life". Suryo received a referral from his senior who was employed by a private university earlier. Attracted to the institution's value for humanism, which is emphasised in Catholic teachings and "engrained" in him, Suryo followed up on the job opportunity. Interestingly, Suryo and Kartini did not seem to differentiate between school teaching and academic teaching. Kartini said, "I have always wanted to be a teacher, but I didn't expect to be a lecturer. But both require teaching, so it's similar". Her comment highlights that the participants' career decisions were facilitated by an accessible entry into the academic workforce through either a formal job application or relevant people in the existing social networks that could establish a relevant career path.

Their views on academic jobs differ from those of the other participants who clearly drew a line between language teaching and language teacher education. For example, Rembulan's admiration for her lecturers fuelled her determination to be an academic, rather than a teacher, because she considered the former "more popular" and "cooler". In Rembulan's case, this perceived higher prestige of being an LTED was shaped by her former lecturers as role models. Differently, Gemintang, who used to teach at private language institutes, longed for a career progression. He wanted to "advance [his] career" so that it would be "better than working at language schools". By career progression, he meant the academic ranks of university lecturers, which are not commonly held by language teachers working at private language institutes. Their accounts collectively suggest that the attractiveness of being an LTED was constructed through perceived social respect for the profession due to relational influence and expectations of upward career opportunities due to clear progression hierarchy within the profession.

## **Discussion**

By tracing the participants' ontogeny as manifested in critical moments, the study's findings shed light on the temporal dimension of motives for becoming LTEds. Two findings are notable in this regard. First, the analysis of the participants' biographical narratives reveals that motives for becoming LTEds can be traced back to their childhood and school years. This presents new empirical evidence that extends our current understanding of temporality in LTEds' motives, which is limited to the transition from teaching to teacher education (Banegas & Pozo Beamud, 2022). Second, while eight participants (Tomo, Kartini, Walidah, Dewa, Raden, Polim, Sartika, and Gemintang) reported critical moments in only one critical life phase, four of them (Diponegoro, Suryo, Rembulan, and Mentari) underwent multiple critical moments in more than one segment of personal history. This indicates that the development of their motives for becoming LTEds was not concentrated on one chronological period; instead, their motives appeared to develop cumulatively through the interplay of multiple influences. While previous studies have uncovered multiple sources of influence on motives for becoming LTEds (Banegas & Pozo Beamud, 2022; Giurastante, 2024), they tended to examine various motivational factors as discrete categories with separate contribution to LTEds' motives. Hence, this study presents new evidence on how those factors are interconnected and dynamically shape motives across the life course.

That cumulative and integrative pattern across different life stages is reflected in the four participants' accounts. To illustrate, for Suryo, his fun learning experience with inspirational teachers at school reactivated his positive impression on the teaching profession held by his mother, which informed his decision to study TESOL. Subsequently, his affinity with humanist thought, which was grounded in his family's Catholic worldview, influenced his decision to take a job as an LTEd at a workplace that promoted similar values. For Rembulan, prolonged exposure to English media in her family led her to study TESOL, during which she developed an aspiration to become an LTEd, inspired by her former lecturers, and this interaction between familial and schooling influences culminated in her decision to pursue an academic career rather than school teaching. Although the nature of cross-stage influence differed between them, in all four cases the development of their motives emerged through the reinterpretation and integration of experiences across time. This finding, hence, reiterates the concept of whole people development among LTEds (Sak & Yuan, 2025) and stresses temporality in motives for becoming LTEds. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasise that this pattern is not uniformly evident across the dataset, so it should be understood as a tentative conceptual synthesis.

Furthermore, this study affords a contextual perspective on individual's motives for becoming LTEds, with three key findings. First, the study brings empirical contribution by discovering the central role of biographical actors within family and school contexts in motivational development through initial exposure to teaching-related professions and the construction of positive meanings around learning and teaching. This finding does not surface in previous studies situated in the Global North, which only mention family as the reason for their familiarity with the language being taught (Giurastante, 2024). The finding is also contrary to parental pressures constraining autonomy in career decision-making among Indonesian pre-

service teachers (Pratiwi et al., 2026; Suryani & George, 2021), as Indonesian LTEds in this study looked up to influential family members and voluntarily chose teaching as a primary career option.

The finding also indicates that more than introducing teaching-related professions, those early relational experiences shaped how teaching and teacher education were understood as meaningful and socially valuable forms of work. While the altruistic motivational drive to teach as an intrinsic motive, such as the desire to help others, has been frequently found among language teachers (Hiver et al., 2018) and LTEds (Banegas & Pozo Beamud, 2022), earlier studies did not investigate the source of development of such motives. In contrast, the present study suggests that the participants' articulations of motives in altruistic terms, such as sharing knowledge, might originate from their early interactions with significant biographical actors, through which teaching-related professions became associated with a sense of impact on others. Beyond family contexts, the participants' accounts indicate how their former teachers and lecturers modelled that teaching is rewarding through day-to-day classroom interactions. Related to this finding, previous research has described the transmission of teacher identity through role-modelling (Pratiwi et al., 2026), whereby individuals develop understandings of teaching by observing experienced practitioners. This can be conceptualised as a process of mediation, in which meanings and professional orientations are formed through socially situated interactions with others (Dang & Cross, 2022).

Second, the study found that motives for becoming LTEds are shaped through experiential reinterpretations of the profession. As the participants' initial inspiration for becoming an LTED emerged through socially situated experiences along their ontogenetic trajectory, this process was further consolidated through microgenetic moments of engagement with teaching practice in formal (e.g., teaching practicum and part-time teaching jobs at schools or language schools), informal (e.g., peer mentoring), or non-formal (e.g., voluntary educational activities in a rural community) settings. These direct experiences of teaching led to their enjoyment of teaching, as found in past research on LTEds' intrinsic motives (Giurastante, 2024), and reinforced the participants' earlier motivational orientations. In addition to encouraging the participants to take up an academic job and its professional complexity, efficacy gained from past teaching experience has been found to sustain the motivation of pre-service teachers (Pratiwi et al., 2026) and LTEds (Banegas & Pozo Beamud, 2022).

Other than fulfilment in teaching, the participants were drawn to the intellectual work associated with university-based language teacher education. This is consistent with past research findings that intellectual challenges in terms of subject matter, language proficiency, and responsibilities were found to be a factor that sustained LTEds' motivation while teaching (Banegas & Pozo Beamud, 2022). Being an LTED was also linked to flexibility, although the participants revised this view, in line with the reported constraint on autonomy among LTEds (Giurastante, 2024). From a genetic method perspective, expectations around being an LTED were not abstract beliefs; rather, they were shaped through micro-level experiences of work contexts. For some participants, direct engagement with language teacher education at tertiary institutions might confirm the perceived intellectual stimulation and flexibility of the

profession, while for others it revealed tensions between expectations and actual demands. In this way, the perceived intellectual stimulation and flexibility emerged not as fixed occupational attributes, but as meanings constructed and reconstructed over time through distributed cognitive processes embedded in social interaction and lived experiences (Cole & Engeström, 1993).

Third, the study found that the participants' strong intrinsic motives, as shaped by the different biographical actors, were strengthened with broader structural forces, including socioeconomic conditions of individuals and social networks within professional contexts. Those experiencing financial constraints chose language teacher education as an area of study, as this option was the most affordable and gave them an opportunity to earn extra money. In line with previous research (Suryani & George, 2021), Indonesian pre-service teachers chose teacher education for its low tuition fees and undertook paid work while completing ITE. Interestingly, material rewards were not emphasised by the participants as a deciding factor for choosing to work as an LTed. Instead, they were attracted by the possibility of advancing their career from their current teaching or non-teaching occupations, echoing prior studies on LTeds' motives (Banegas & Pozo Beamud, 2022; Giurastante, 2024). This means that altruistic orientation, while deemed strong in teacher motivation (Hiver et al., 2018; Pratiwi et al., 2026), interacted with professional development orientation, which is referred to as the need for competence (Giurastante, 2024), in shaping motives for becoming LTeds. Meanwhile, professional networks, which may include former lecturers and colleagues at their previous workplace, functioned both as gateways to employment opportunities, such as through teaching assistantship. People in such networks represent communities of practice (Banegas & Pozo Beamud, 2022), who allowed the participants to develop understandings of the profession through participation in shared professional activity.

## **Conclusion**

The study carries both theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, by using GM and employing life course research design, this study extends existing understandings of individuals' motives for becoming LTeds by incorporating a temporal dimension. Its findings provide an empirical base to conceptualise professional motives as a developmental phenomenon. Specifically, the study illustrates how motives are evolving over time, as LTeds went through different life phases, during which they interacted with key biographical actors. The study also accentuates the pivotal role of contextual factors in shaping LTeds' motives, as such influences determined their agentic capacity in accomplishing their goal of becoming an LTed. Moreover, the study highlights the potential for motives for becoming LTeds to develop cumulatively across the life course, with experiences from different stages interacting in complex and evolving ways. Although this integrative pattern was evident only in a small number of cases, it suggests that motives for becoming LTeds may be constructed through the dynamic interplay of experiences across different stages of development, rather than emerging from isolated influences. This study, therefore, contributes

to a more integrated understanding of motives for becoming LTEds by highlighting how different influences interact and evolve over time.

From a practical perspective, this study has three implications for teacher education. Firstly, given the study's findings regarding Indonesian LTEds' passion for intellectual discussions and a mismatch between their expectation of having ideal working hours and their actual workload, teacher education programs should foreground the main role of teacher educators as subject matter experts and provide on-going support for them to develop their subject expertise. Teacher education institutions should also provide a safeguard workload mechanism to protect LTEds from doing administrative work that can be automated or delegated to support officers. Second, with regards to relatedness in teacher motivation (Pratiwi et al., 2026), teacher education institutions need to think of ways to support LTEds in building safe and positive relationships with their students (pre-service teachers) and their mentors. Finally, considering LTEds' need for competence (Giurastante, 2024), to support LTEds' ongoing commitment, it is important that higher education institutions provide in-house professional development opportunities tailored to their interests, such as dialogic teaching training for LTEds who are interested in social activism and action research programs for research-oriented LTEds.

Despite those implications, the study is subject to several limitations. To begin with, the use of biographical interviews as the sole data-collecting instrument may limit the breadth of perspectives. A further limitation concerns the retrospective nature of the interview data, as the findings represent contemporary interpretations of developmental trajectories, rather than objective records of motives in the past, so the participants' accounts are influenced by processes of memory selectivity. Accordingly, the analysis does not seek to recover participants' past motives in an objective sense but rather to examine how they currently organised and assigned meaning to experiences that they perceived as significant. Moreover, this study only invited a small number of participants and may not fully represent all Indonesian LTEds. Therefore, future research can incorporate other data sources, such as observations and diaries, to investigate not only motives for becoming LTEds but how they are reflected in LTEds' day-to-day professional practices. To follow up on the study's finding on former lecturers as one key biographical actor, future studies can investigate how LTEds' motives shape their pre-service teachers' motives for teaching. Another methodological limitation is that because follow-up questions during the interviews were responsive, the two interviewers may have influenced the depth and emphasis of participants' accounts. In addition, the interviews explored participants' motives for becoming LTEds holistically, rather than probing each component of the Indonesian *Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi* (i.e., teaching, research, and community service), so their motivational drives beyond teaching might not have been comprehensively captured. To reflect the complex nature of LTEds' professional work more accurately, future studies using more targeted questions across these duties may generate richer accounts.

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