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Professional development and learning for Chilean teachers and researchers through

podcasts: The case of RICELT

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Abstract

This study investigates a novel professional development and learning (PDL) program designed by the Red de Investigación Chilena en ELT (RICELT), a Chilean Language Teacher Association, to address the pervasive issue of decontextualized, top-down teacher training in English Language Teaching in Chile. The "Teachers4Teachers Podcasts" project empowered ELT teacher-researchers as co-designers and content creators, fostering the sharing of locally relevant classroom research. Employing a qualitative case study with five teacher-designers, this research explored their evaluations of the experience and how the PDL program prompted them to contribute to educational and social changes. Findings reveal three main themes: a) RICELT PDL

Program as a motivation to share equal voices, b) PDL as a critical pedagogical tool for academic and social change, c) RICELT as a supportive LTA for schoolteachers' professional and personal development. The study underscores the transformative potential of Language Teacher Associations in fostering contextually relevant and socially responsible professional growth, advocating for teacher-driven initiatives that empower educators and enhance pedagogical practices, particularly in educational contexts characterized by disparities.

Keywords: Chile; language teacher association; podcast; professional development; teacher-researchers

Introduction

Professional development and learning (PDL) is an ongoing process in which teachers enhance their knowledge and skills to remain aligned with current pedagogical trends (Apple & Apple, 2019; Borg, 2015; Macalister, 2018). Beyond keeping up to date, PDL programs also serve as opportunities for teachers to critically reflect on their professional practices, refine their instructional strategies, and promote student success and educational inclusion. In Chile, teacher PDL is supported through the National System of Teacher Professional Development (Diario Oficial de la República de Chile, 2016), a national policy aimed at transforming the educational system by strengthening the teaching profession through structured development opportunities and peer collaboration. Within this framework, PDL programs are recognized as key mechanisms for promoting professional growth and supporting teachers' career progression.

In the case of English language teachers, the Chilean Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) has played a central role in advancing PDL via the *Programa Inglés Abre Puertas* [English Opens Doors Program] (PIAP). Their initiatives foster reflective teaching practices and upgrade pedagogical methodologies for teachers to support students in learning and using English effectively. Most PIAP PDL programs have been developed in collaboration with local universities, the British Council, and the U.S. Embassy's Regional English Language Office, and are typically led by teacher educators, language specialists, or researchers.

Nonetheless, despite these instances, very few of the PDL programs offered in Chile incorporate English language teaching (ELT) teachers in their design. Rather than planning alongside these teachers, a top-down institutional approach has usually been imposed on them,

resulting in low levels of engagement, either due to a lack of ELT-specific focus or the stress associated with mandatory completion requirements (Mora et al., 2014). As a result, ELT teachers may perceive PDL as a bureaucratic obligation rather than a meaningful opportunity for professional growth (Sadeghi & Richards, 2021). When teachers' voices are embedded in the design of PDL programs, the content becomes more contextually relevant and applicable to classroom realities (Mortari et al., 2016), supporting deeper professional reflection and dialogue rooted in contextually appropriate concerns (Glas et al., 2021).

In this context, Language Teacher Associations (LTAs) are critical in advancing the research and teacher training, offering less prescriptive and more flexible and specialized PDL opportunities. As LTAs can be agents of change (Banegas et al., 2022), the Red de Investigación Chilena en ELT [Network of Chilean Research in ELT] (RICELT), a Chilean LTA established in 2014, has taken on a role of promoting transformative PDL programs driven by teachers' interests and motivations, rather than merely receiving external mandates.

RICELT aims to bridge the gap between foreign and local knowledge for and by ELT teachers. RICELT promotes research conducted by teachers within the Chilean context, acknowledging teachers as teacher-researchers as they continuously engage in classroom research. This LTA also addresses an important issue in foreign language contexts, namely the scarcity of locally relevant research and teaching material. RICELT challenges materials and PDL programs that contain heavily oriented Western-centric content that diminishes the value of local knowledge in Chile (Riquelme-Sanderson & Pereira, 2024). RICELT asserts that foreign research may not always be suitable for local classrooms due to contextual factors and that locally produced research is necessary for teachers to have readily accessible professional

learning that speaks directly to their classroom realities. The previous situation is a persistent and pressing issue that ELT teachers in Chile encounter regarding contextualized, relevant PDL content.

In response, RICELT initiated the *Teachers4Teachers Podcasts*[1], a project funded by the A.S. Hornby Educational Trust in 2022, that emphasizes teachers' participation in designing a PDL program with locally produced content. The purpose of this project was to share classroom research experiences and expertise of K-12th-grade ELT teachers through podcasts, acknowledging the particularity and practicality of the content (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). As a requirement, the PDL program had to provide validated experiences that improved learning outcomes for students, helping to reduce the existing language and academic gap between private and public schools (Agencia de la Calidad, 2019). These experiences could be applicable in similar educational settings where teachers face similar needs.

Three reasons informed the use of podcasts in this project. First, podcasts can enhance teacher PDL by offering insights into ELT, fostering autonomous learning, and facilitating dialogue among researchers (Swiatek, 2018; Turner et al., 2021). Another reason was the democratization of voices. Podcasts can propose a bottom-up design where teachers can lead conversations, being themselves the main protagonists and agents, instead of just mere guests. In this case, teachers' voices and experiences become critical in the PDL content. Lastly, in the context of educational disparities, podcasts can serve as a tool for social justice as teachers can reflect on the power of their voices, ideologies, pedagogies, and the impact of their work on their students and peers (Ferrer et al., 2019; Waldron et al., 2023). Thus, the podcast-based PDL program

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[1] https://www.ricelt.cl/projects/

employed an integrative approach grounded in classroom research, with a socially responsible lens informed by contextualized and local content to improve English language learning in Chile.

As a novel PDL initiative designed *by* and *for* teachers, RICELT sought to evaluate the project's impact on participants' professional growth as well as their social and educational contributions, addressing a gap in the literature, which tends to focus on program recipients rather than designers (e.g., Novozhenina & López Pinzón, 2018; Ulla, 2022; Weisi & Salari, 2024). This evaluation offers a foundation for fostering transformative discussions on the role of LTAs in advancing teachers' professional growth as designers of PDL programs, particularly in contexts characterized by educational disparities and ongoing change.

Framed within a qualitative case study, this article presents the findings of a study that addresses the following research question: *How do participants who co-designed a podcast initiative as part of a PDL program evaluate their experience and its effect on their own professional development and perspective on educational change*?

Language Teacher Professional Development and Learning

Teacher PDL is fundamental in preparing educators to adopt new methodologies, technologies, and respond to changes in ELT and education. PDL encompasses a continuous learning process that enhances teachers' careers and improves educational quality, ensuring current and practical skills and knowledge development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Additionally, due to its context-responsive and collaborative nature, PDL stimulates the exchange of experiences and knowledge with other teachers (Kennedy, 2016; Kraft et al., 2018). It also encourages teachers to reflect on their educational practice and seek ways to improve their pedagogies through a metacognitive process in the classroom.

A growing body of scholarship has highlighted the potential of PDL initiatives to strengthen ELT teachers' capacity to support effective learning environments in the language classroom (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Hayes, 2014; Jacobs & Farrell, 2008). These developments, in turn, have been shown to impact student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes positively (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Giraldo, 2014; Richards & Farrell, 2005). However, ELT professionals often engage with PDL through externally organized conferences, seminars, and workshops, where the content delivered may not be sufficiently aligned with their school contexts or immediate classroom realities. In such cases, teachers may be positioned as passive recipients of knowledge rather than as active participants in the construction of knowledge and pedagogical innovation. To address this limitation, PDL programs should be locally grounded and responsive to the specific sociocultural, institutional, and pedagogical needs of teachers and their learners. When PDL is tailored in this way, it can foster greater teacher agency, sustained professional growth, and more meaningful connections between theory and classroom practice.

Contextual relevance in PDL programs ensures that the information and strategies presented are practical and applicable, which in turn can enhance the teaching profession and improve classroom practice (Barrera-Pedemonte, 2016; Guskey, 2002). However, other factors intertwine in the PDL program design, such as interactions and disagreements with knowledge, colleagues, pedagogical leaders, and personal reflective processes (Aparicio-Molina & Sepúlveda-López, 2023). Despite the complexities of the teaching profession and experiences with some PDL initiatives, positive perceptions and constructive feedback are crucial for advancing ELT (Balachandran et al., 2021).

Within a transformative and critical pedagogical context, the active involvement of teachers in designing PDL initiatives is essential for valuing and equitably integrating diverse forms of knowledge and experience. When teachers design PDL programs, they are better positioned to contextualize instructional content and pedagogical strategies to address the specific needs of their classrooms and communities. In doing so, they not only support the professional development of their peers but also engage in their own growth by critically reflecting on their practice and developing structured ways to share that knowledge. Moreover, teacher-led PDL initiatives offer opportunities to connect language education with pressing social issues, encouraging ELT professionals to adopt socially responsible practices and advocate for educational equity and justice (Al-Issa, 2017; Poteau & Winkle, 2022). Participating in the design and implementation of such programs fosters critical collaboration among educators and a collective professional identity grounded in shared values and commitments. These efforts can extend beyond individual classrooms, contributing to broader social transformation through critical pedagogical actions in ELT (Başar & Çomoğlu, 2024).

Teachers4Teachers Podcasts as a Form of Professional Development and Learning

One of RICELT's core principles is the dissemination of ELT knowledge produced within Chile, addressing the limited impact of local research and the persistent undervaluation of national educational expertise. RICELT actively challenges the dominance of hegemonic, decontextualized knowledge often imported from English-speaking countries, which frequently marginalizes local voices, ideologies, and pedagogical resources. In response to this imbalance, RICELT launched the *Teachers4Teachers Podcasts* PDL initiative, which was a project designed to provide ELT practitioners with monthly access to locally situated research and reflections. By

making such content accessible through podcasts, the initiative sought to narrow academic and

performance gaps within the educational system and empower teachers through contextually

relevant PDL.

Podcasts, as a newly dynamic resource for teachers, offer valuable insights into ELT

history, methodology, and second language acquisition, and have proven influential among

teachers (Turner et al., 2021). Producing podcasts encourages teachers to engage with research,

broaden their disciplinary horizons, and participate in informal learning projects, increasing

autonomous PDL (Lowe et al., 2017). Podcasts also support collaborative knowledge-building and

critical friendships, characteristics that are essential for professional growth (Farrell, 2018; Lee et

al., 2008). Through these interactions, educators can explore new areas of inquiry, developing

novel theories and ideas for research (Choi & Richards, 2017).

The dialogic nature of podcasts, often featuring conversations between researchers,

enhances professional development by enabling teachers to explore research findings about

lived, human experiences (Swiatek, 2018). Podcasts promote engagement and reflective practice

among listeners, who are encouraged to share their insights and interpretations within online

communities (Mann & Walsh, 2017). This format helps flatten traditional hierarchies between

researchers and practitioners, placing teachers' experiences and research-informed perspectives

on a more horizontal plane. In this manner, it questions and problematizes the notion that

expertise is held exclusively by language experts or teacher educators. Beyond serving as

platforms for sharing experiences and disseminating research, podcasts offer critical spaces for

questioning established pedagogical norms and teaching practices that influence broader social

and educational outcomes. They invite discussion, critique, and the proposal of context-sensitive

solutions that can be adapted and replicated in similar educational settings. Hence, podcasts should not be seen merely as communication tools, but as powerful PDL resources that support evidence-informed decision-making across classrooms, schools, and educational systems.

Teachers' Participation and Description of the Professional Development and Learning Program

RICELT's *Teachers4Teachers Podcasts* series (RICELT, 2022), a podcast-based PDL program, was designed to allow ELT teachers to report on their findings and experiences from research projects carried out in their educational institutions, and how they contributed to students' learning and social changes. The project had three main goals: a) share locally produced knowledge by teacher-researchers with the ELT community in Chile, b) foster a collaborative learning experience through conversations about local classroom-based ELT research, and c) recognize the value of ELT knowledge that emerges from local contexts for social change.

Within the transformative and dialogic potential of podcasts, teachers' active participation in the design and implementation of the PDL initiative was essential for foregrounding and legitimizing local knowledge. As Aparicio-Molina and Sepúlveda-López (2023) argue, knowledge should be co-constructed with those directly involved, rather than imposed through top-down approaches. In contexts marked by persistent shortages of educational resources, it is crucial that those at the forefront of teaching, rather than being sidelined, are empowered to shape professional learning. This initiative thus became a critical response to the dominance of externally mandated knowledge frameworks, aiming to disrupt hierarchical knowledge production and address the educational inequities that continue to affect the Chilean system.

The project consisted of eight podcast episodes and was structured into three key phases. The first step was an open call, shared via social media, teacher networks, and universities, to recruit ELT teacher-researchers interested in sharing their classroom research. In the second step, eight teams were formed, each comprising a teacher-researcher presenting their work, a peer commentator, and an LTA member who moderated the podcast episode. The final step focused on podcast preparation. Each *Teachers4Teachers* episode featured a study by a teacher-researcher and was developed over a series of meetings spanning three to four weeks. In the initial meeting, an LTA moderator and the teacher-researchers selected the topic and collaboratively developed a set of guiding questions to shape the discussion. Following this step, teacher-researchers prepared for the interview. In the second meeting, they met with the LTA moderator to rehearse and test the technology. The podcast was recorded during the third meeting and then edited by a sound engineer. Each episode ran between 20 and 35 minutes. A final meeting was held to launch the episode on Spotify and promote it via social media and the LTA mailing list.

During these four meetings, the teacher-researchers met their peers and shared their research interests and impact on student learning. While the idea was to prepare for the podcast recording, they also exchanged teaching practices and reflected upon the implications of their research projects and educational impact. The conversations also centered on the benefits of designing this PDL initiative and how it might contribute to their own professional and personal growth, as well as fighting educational disparities in their classrooms or schools. The eight episodes were based on research projects conducted by teacher-researchers in school contexts. Each episode had a name and primary purpose. Table 1 presents the eight different episodes.

Table 1

Episode	Name of episode	Description
1	Teaching English through games	The episode focused on an action research project that explored the use of games to teach English in southern Chile. The participants highlighted the relevance of engaging students in games for meaningful learning experiences.
2	Speaking using puppets	The episode focused on an action research project aimed at developing speaking skills in young learners through the use of puppets. The participants discussed Chile's diverse teaching contexts and the importance of incorporating the local context for meaningful learning experiences.
3	The Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) rollercoaster	The episode focused on an exploratory study that examined English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' perception of online social learning-based tasks in the classroom. The participants emphasized the importance of allowing learners to experience technology as a means to scaffold autonomous and self-directed learning.
4	Promoting speaking with secondary students	The episode focused on an action research project about maximizing opportunities to enhance secondary students' oral skills. The participants provided valuable insights into the importance of supporting students in improving their oral skills.
5	The ELT tightrope	The episode focused on a study examining parental involvement in EFL learning and its impact on students' engagement in English language learning in a secondary rural school in southern Chile. The participants highlighted the importance of parents' views on learning and the material to support them.
6	Promoting participation in the EFL classroom	The episode focused on an action research project that promoted participation and the development of speaking skills in elementary school students. The participants discussed the importance of implementing games, such as role-play activities, and

		embedding key vocabulary to enable students to speak and use the language effectively in the classroom.
7	Building self-confidence in students	The episode focused on an action research project about helping students build self-confidence while speaking English. The participants discussed a plan created with students to build collaboration and support for speaking English during the lessons.
8	Video gaming on secondary students' willingness to communicate	The episode focused on an exploratory study that examined the effects of video gaming on secondary students' willingness to communicate. The participants discussed the research outcomes and implications for the post-pandemic Chilean EFL context.

Methods

Research Design

In order to explore the research question—*How do participants who co-designed a podcast initiative as part of a PDL program evaluate their experience and its effect on their own professional development and perspective on educational change*? —this study adopted a qualitative approach (Patton, 2014) through a case study design (Yin, 2014). A case study allows for a rich, detailed understanding of a specific setting under investigation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The unit of analysis under investigation was the teacher-researchers who participated in the design of the PDL program. Specifically, this study was a holistic single-case study. In terms of its typology, this study employed a descriptive case study design. The objective of a descriptive case study is to "describe a phenomenon ('the case') in its real-world context" (Yin, 2014, p. 238), making this description as complete and as rich as possible (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). This characteristic enabled us to understand the participants' experiences in relation to their own PDL.

Participants

Five ELT teacher-researchers from different regions of Chile participated in the study, including three women and two men. Table 2 outlines their key characteristics. Participants were selected through convenience sampling (Patton, 2014). The participant selection criteria involved inviting all teachers who had taken part in the podcast project, regardless of gender, professional preparation, or type of school where they taught. From the recruitment, five teachers agreed to participate. To ensure ethical standards were met, all participants signed an informed consent form detailing the study's purpose, their rights, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and the measures taken to ensure data confidentiality and secure storage. To protect their anonymity, no real names were used. Instead, participants were identified as Participant 1 through Participant 5.

Table 2

Participant	School experience	Current role	Teaching experience	Education
1	Public schools in Chile.	ELT schoolteacher and coordinator of a local teacher network.	18 years.	BA in English Language Teaching (Chile); Fulbright Teaching Excellence Program.
2	Various schools in Chile and the USA.	English as a second language (ESL) teacher and Language proficiency assistant for a Latin community in the USA.	7 years.	BA in English Language Teaching (Chile); Master's in teaching EFL (Chile).

3	Public schools in Chile.	ELT schoolteacher, mentor teacher certified by MINEDUC, and member of the Teachers of Teachers network.	20 years.	BA in English Language Teaching (Chile); Master's in educational science and Curriculum Assessment (Chile).
4	Public and private schools; universities in Chile.	ELT teacher; Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of an ELT consultant company.	Over 20 years.	Master's in education (Chile).
5	Public, semi-public, and private schools; universities in Chile.	ELT teacher; University lecturer.	16 years.	TESOL MA in Teacher's Education (U.K.).

Data Collection and Analysis

The research team collected data through a focus group and semi-structured interviews. The focus group aimed to explore participants' experiences and motivations for designing the podcasts and was held three months after the project ended. Participants responded to five questions during a one-hour online session. The semi-structured interviews complemented the focus group data, offering broader insights into participants' perspectives. These interviews aimed to understand the project's impact on their professional development and educational outlook. Each interview, conducted online a year after the podcast project concluded, lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Questions for both the focus group and interviews were developed by the RICELT team, grounded in principles of localized research, participation, and

social responsibility (see Appendix A). All data were collected and analyzed in Spanish; only the excerpts presented in this article were translated. To ensure translation accuracy and fidelity, two RICELT members, both ELT educators, reviewed the translations.

Once transcribed, the data were analyzed using thematic coding (Miles et al., 2014). This method was well suited to present rich, detailed accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2021) and to identify how participants evaluated their participation as a PDL experience. Using both inductive and deductive approaches, the team identified patterns and themes based on the questions posed in the focus group and interviews (Patton, 2014). These themes were then categorized through iterative cycles of coding (Miles et al., 2014).

To establish credibility and trustworthiness various strategies were employed. The team used peer review (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to obtain enriching feedback on approximating the data throughout the collection process. Another strategy was the researchers' positionality. As some of the researchers were part of the team that collaborated in designing the podcasts, other research members ensured that these individuals critically reflected on their assumptions and biases regarding the study. Notes were taken to differentiate their positionality and the data provided, which were elicited during the data analysis and discussion.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings under three main categories: a) RICELT PDL Program as a motivation to share equal voices, b) PDL as a critical pedagogical tool for academic and social change, c) RICELT as a supportive LTA for schoolteachers' professional and personal development.

RICELT PDL Program as a motivation to share equal voices

This category describes the participants' motivations for participating in the LTA project and how they recognized the podcast-based PDL program as an opportunity to democratize experiences and build professional communities.

As expected from the RICELT project's goals, one of the main reasons to join the program was to share and discuss classroom research. What was relevant, notwithstanding, is that teachers viewed their participation as a different type of contribution that included their voices and experiences, in contrast to mainstream PDL programs, which are often mediated by experts in the field of ELT. For instance, Participant 1 explained:

As teachers, sometimes do not value what we know as classroom teachers, and podcasts have helped us realize that we are not alone—projects like RICELT's become a voice for other teachers. Most of the time, we receive support from teacher educators or the PIAP, but we rarely hear about the success of other teachers.

In a similar vein, Participant 3 linked this motivation to a need for professional recognition.

I felt motivated because I wanted to experience doing something new. I had never done a podcast or something similar before. This project was also great because I got to share my work in this new format, and I had the opportunity to voice my positionality as a high school teacher, which is usually overlooked when we attend courses or PDL programs.

Both excerpts illustrate that RICELT is an LTA that enables the validation and democratization of teachers' voices. It positions teachers' experiences as reliable sources of information that could transform the top-down structure of PDL programs when teachers are heard and feel motivated to support their peers. This observation does not imply that the expertise of language specialists or researchers should be diminished; on the contrary, teacher knowledge should be integrated to complement PDL design from a different perspective.

A genuine interest in personal growth also drove teachers' motivation, as they are often seen as undervalued interlocutors in the field. Podcasts became a platform for visibility, enabling teachers to share their research and reflect on their practice. In this sense, it is argued that this LTA's initiative triggered teacher engagement in research, promoting more profound professional commitment and identity (Richards & Farrell, 2005). The participants were not only eager to try something new but also to advocate for their profession through accessible knowledge-sharing formats.

For Participant 5, contributing with classroom-based research to the design of the podcast offered an appealing way to learn from others and engage with the ELT community:

I have always enjoyed sharing my work with colleagues, and I appreciate listening to what my peers are doing. I also believe that podcasts are beneficial for individuals because I was the main protagonist when I talked with the other colleague and the RICELT member. It is great to build this community.

The inclusion of podcasts represented an engaging and accessible method for connecting with other educators and contributing to the field. Their reflections support the idea that effective PDL should be dynamic, participatory, and contextually relevant (Turner et al., 2021). Moreover, these findings also align with the growing literature on the benefits of podcasts for teacher learning (Lowe et al., 2017). In this context, learning should not be viewed as merely discussing disciplinary or ELT knowledge. Learning through podcasts can be seen as a disruptive approach to the homogenization of information that teachers receive from textbooks, videos, or other types of accessible information, in response to the dominant information that comes from English-speaking countries or societal contexts.

As a means of personal professional growth, as exemplified by Participant 3, it was observed that teachers also valued their participation as an opportunity to reflect on their practices. It could be claimed that reflective practice was an essential aspect of PDL (Farrell, 2018; Lee et al., 2008). This finding reinforces the idea that participating in collaborative design processes can prompt a deeper engagement with one's own pedagogical identity.

Beyond individual growth, RICELT's PDL program also became an instance to build professional networks. Participant 5 explained that:

Teachers in Chile do not have the opportunity to gather and share research because
there are few conferences dedicated to this purpose. They also lack the time to share
their work in an engaging way and stay in touch with colleagues. I believe this
experience benefits those who want to learn more in a relaxed manner, as podcasts

can offer greater freedom to discuss personal experiences that can enhance

classroom discussions to improve student engagement and learning.

This excerpt illustrates how a teacher-based PDL program could draw on community and collaboration as powerful motivators. Being part of a collective effort supports professional dialogue, aligning with the collaborative ethos of PDL initiatives advocated by Kennedy (2016). It also counters the isolation often felt by teachers in Chile. In this sense, this LTA initiative became a tool for cultivating a community of practice (Wenger, 1998), where ELT professionals could connect, learn, and construct shared identities (Varghese et al., 2005).

Overall, RICELT places teachers' voices and experiences at the forefront of a PDL program, motivating educators to grow professionally and creating communities through podcasts as a democratic tool to share localized knowledge. The podcast-based PDL program addressed deeper professional and relational needs often unmet in traditional, top-down PDL models in Chile. This LTA program also exemplified teachers' desire to support fellow educators in a space of mutual learning, where podcasts served as a means to present their voices equally in an asymmetrical power dynamic. Furthermore, their participation went beyond sharing research; it involved presenting themselves as recognized and respected voices for other schoolteachers through the podcasts. Thus, LTAs can promote progress toward advocating for peers, reflecting on practice, and building community based on teachers' positionality, experiences, and ideologies.

PDL as a critical pedagogical tool for academic and social change

The findings and discussion in this section illustrate how this podcast-based PDL program served as a platform for educational changes and the pursuit of social justice through local, classroom-based research.

Although podcasts were initially intended to serve as PDL for listeners, this LTA program fostered critical engagement with the broader educational context. Participants explained that preparing and discussing their research for the podcasts prompted them to re-evaluate and refine their teaching practices for their own and other contexts. Participant 1 noted:

This PDL led me to reflect on and reanalyze the relevance of the strategies my colleague presented in the podcasts. I wondered how other teachers and I could support students' performance in English if we applied and contextualized these findings, since all students are different.

The participants considered the benefits of the content for other schools and teachers, reinforcing that designing a PDL program can be a dialogic process that allows teachers to critically evaluate its potential impact. Besides, what is significant and illustrative about the previous excerpt is that PDL and podcasts can elicit critical analysis of teaching, not only by those who receive the program but also by those who design it. In this program, the LTA had a profound impact on the participants as they developed professionally and learned while listening to and discussing with their colleagues. This idea implies that PDL does not necessarily occur when someone participates in a program or attends a workshop; it happens as individuals revisit and assess their knowledge and experience to influence other educational contexts while creating the program.

The data also indicates how research-based practices prompted an examination of locally based pedagogical decisions regarding peers' experiences to improve student academic performance. Participant 5 stated that:

When I listened to my colleague describe her action research and the academic

impact it had on her students, I realized that the strategies she applied in her study

could also be adapted to my context. For example, she used puppets named after

Chilean plants, and also Chilean games, so I thought why not trying that too. I then

came to question the activities that I currently use in my classes. Are they

appropriate? Is that a reason why my students are struggling? The activities that I

use are usually based on Cambridge or Oxford textbooks, or worksheets that I find

online for ESL teachers, so maybe that could be a reason.

In this example, the LTA program facilitated an examination of the pedagogical decisions employed by teachers and their relevance to their contexts through the PDL program. Critiquing the material and showing a disposition for teaching adaptation to the educational settings were identified as elements that can be elicited from participating in the design of a program. This finding reveals that podcasts can become spaces for critical conversations, emphasizing the need for locally based, practical examples and resources grounded in classroom realities, especially in relation to the development of communicative competence —a central objective in Chile's national English curriculum. Furthermore, in line with Kumaravadivelu's (2006) notion of particularity, which underscores the importance of context-sensitive pedagogy, these participant-driven suggestions reinforce the need for professional learning models that emerge

from teachers' lived experiences and local realities, moving beyond prescriptive approaches toward more dynamic, situated forms of teacher development.

In terms of podcasts as a tool for social change and justice, the participants mentioned that this digital resource was a practical and scalable response for resource-limited settings to argue against educational and social challenges. Participant 4 noted that:

Podcasts allow us to stay informed about the latest debates in our field and society by engaging with diverse experiences and perspectives. They promote self-learning, which is essential for professional development and for obtaining or sharing ideas that tackle the challenges we face in Chile, particularly the educational disparities in our schools. In fact, I now wonder how my research can assist colleagues who lack resources and work in overcrowded classrooms, or the gender inequity that exists in our schools.

The findings demonstrate that the PDL stimulated thoughts and discussions that linked the participants' classroom research experiences with societal and educational demands. In other words, RICELT was an LTA that prompted change, as teachers could express their awareness of structural issues in Chilean education and how their research could contribute to making an impact on society at large. It is then necessary for LTAs to develop PDL programs that highlight the value of sustained dialogue and reflection, which are often missing in fragmented, one-off professional development activities that overlook social issues affecting education. Social justice can be achieved from multiple perspectives (Domingo-Martos et al., 2024; Kumashiro, 2024),

especially in ELT (Brown, 2024; Ramos et al., 2019), thus RICELT can be an advocate for social justice education through localized research.

Overall, the data revealed that the LTA podcast initiative provided an alternative forum for discussing, questioning, and resisting some of the dominant narratives and pressures shaping ELT in Chile. The participants explored their practices and reflected beyond language learning. They positioned their research in other contexts, contextualized focus, and response to the situation in the challenge, reflecting what Başar and Çomoğlu (2024) describe as critical pedagogical action to improve English language learning and make social justice changes, and with Barrera-Pedemonte's (2016) call for PDL programing tailored to teachers' specific professional contexts.

RICELT as a supportive LTA for schoolteachers' professional and personal development

This last category presents the participants' perspectives on how RICELT advanced the conversation on the lack of locally relevant research through the podcast-based program for their own PDL.

Beyond reflection and analysis of practices during and after the conversations held in podcasts, the participants expressed that the LTA PDL program supported them in innovating and developing digital skills. Participant 2 reflected:

After a year participating in the podcast, I have explored new ways of communicating and teaching, integrating digital and multimedia skills. I have learned to create attractive and relevant content, which has improved my ability to capture and maintain students' attention with material grounded in my students' context.

This finding informs that the contributions of podcasts were not only seen as innovative teaching tools but as contextually responsive forms of professional learning. They encouraged digital skill development and made teachers revise their pedagogies and positionalities. Participant 1 mentioned:

I believe I have also learned to evaluate the rationale behind my pedagogical

decisions and the materials I use in the classroom. For example, I feel more prepared

to analyze the activities and their impact on my students' ability to communicate in

English. I now even offer suggestions to my student-teachers to visit the podcast so

they can use it as a reflective tool for their own teaching.

This excerpt suggests that podcast-based PDL programs can be viewed as a powerful means to develop teacher philosophies, increase professional resilience, and transform education for others (Kraft et al., 2018). Likewise, an LTA PDL program could be a positive example of impacting multiple educational stakeholders when there is democratic participation in its design. Besides the idea shared by Participant 1, Participant 4 stressed the need for broader representation and diverse perspectives in PDL programming:

I think it is essential to have people with diverse viewpoints and experiences to have

a solid conversation and complement our study's implications and impact on

education and society. Perhaps I would invite other teachers or student-teachers to

be part of the podcasts to hear their experiences and possible applications of our

research in their contexts.

Advocating for the inclusion of diverse voices, such as those of newly graduated teachers and their undergraduate research, can broaden the scope of knowledge and ideologies shared through the podcast platform. Collectively, these suggestions speak to the limitations of traditional, top-down professional development in Chile and underscore the need for learning opportunities that are teacher-led, context-responsive, and inclusive. Participants emphasize that RICELT's PDL innovations should not envision podcasts as merely a content delivery tool, but as a space for critical, community-driven engagement that values practitioner knowledge and supports professional growth through collaboration and reflection.

The participants' insights strongly align with Kennedy's (2016) model of transformative professional development, which emphasizes the co-construction of knowledge and the development of professional autonomy. Additionally, the significance of their arguments suggests enhancing PDL programs as a participatory and transformative model that addresses fundamental challenges in Chile's ELT landscape. It is, therefore, necessary to advance into a more inclusive, practice-oriented, and interconnected form of PDL programs that adopt a dialogic, representative, and contextually relevant model, capable of supporting English language teachers throughout Chile in navigating and confronting systemic inequalities in their professional environments.

Conclusions

This study highlighted how an LTA PDL initiative contributed to the personal and professional growth of schoolteachers as they designed a PDL program, and how it uncovered the possibility of producing educational and social changes through reflection on classroom-

based research. RICELT's *Teachers4Teachers* podcast-based PDL program played a transformative role in fostering agency, reflection, and professional collaboration. By involving teachers in the design and delivery of this PDL, particularly through podcasts, such an initiative supported more inclusive, empowering, and contextually grounded forms of professional growth.

RICELT's project impact, in addition to acknowledging the value of teachers' experiences and democratic participation, has indirectly created a space where participants have challenged dominant, monolithic models of ELT knowledge production that often marginalize teacher-generated expertise, especially in non-English-dominant contexts. Podcasts functioned as a platform for decentering hegemonic norms in ELT, validating local research, and fostering new forms of dialogue that responded to the contextual realities of Chilean ELT classrooms. By doing so, the initiative addresses broader concerns related to equity, linguistic justice, and the over-reliance on top-down, externally imposed PDL frameworks.

Moreover, the study highlights persistent gaps between the application of local and foreign theory and practices that emerge from research. Participants expressed a clear need for PDL to have contextualized content that responds to society and educational problems, which should be co-constructed with diverse voices, and opportunities for collaborative inquiry. RICELT's PDL program offers a critique of conventional models that overlook teachers' lived experiences and the structural challenges they face, including isolation, external pressures, and a lack of resources.

This study, therefore, contributes to a growing body of scholarship advocating for teacher-led, critically informed, and locally responsive PDL, as well as the role of LTAs in driving

educational and social change. It positions LTAs, such as RICELT, as key actors in resisting deficit-oriented narratives in favor of a more just and inclusive vision of teacher learning that foregrounds reflection, peer support, and knowledge co-construction.

Future research could investigate the long-term effects of LTA's PDL initiatives on teachers' professional identities, classroom practices, and students' outcomes. In addition, incorporating the perspectives of podcast listeners would offer further insight into how such initiatives are received, interpreted, and applied. This would support deepening ELT educators' understanding of their potential for system-wide influence. As the field of ELT continues to navigate questions of power, access, and representation, grassroots models like the podcast-based PDL program offer valuable examples of how teacher PDL can be reimagined from the ground up.

Acknowledgment

Disclosure of interest

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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Appendix A

Focus group questions:

1. Why did you decide to participate in this PDL program? What motivated you?

2. What do you believe is the value of engaging in this type of PDL program?

3. Have there been any changes in what you thought about your teacher research before and after making the podcast, in terms of social and educational contribution?

4. How do you see podcasts as a way to help other teachers and students improve learning or address any educational challenges?

5. What suggestions do you have if we were to create a second series of podcasts?

Interview questions:

1. How did working on the podcasts contribute to your professional development?

2. How do you think the podcasts contribute to the professional development of teachers, student teachers, and researchers?

3. What is your opinion on the format of the podcasts, meaning the interviews between researchers and teachers?

4. How can the chosen topics be useful for your own professional development? For example, how are they relevant/pertinent to your work context? Why?

5. How are the podcasts useful/relevant/appropriate resources for professional development and transformation in education?

6. How do you see the podcasts as an avenue for social change in Chile?

7. How can the research presented in the podcast help other teachers improve the learning outcomes of their students?

Dear editors,

We have made the revisions suggested. These have been detailed in the following table.

Best regards,

The authors.

Reviewer's comments	Author's response
1. Provide more detail about participant selection criteria.	We appreciate the reviewer's comment. Due to word limit, we have included one idea that provides information about the participant selection criteria. This sentence was added in the "Participants" section.
2. Describe how data credibility and trustworthiness were assured.	We thank the reviewer for this comment. We have added a short paragraph at the end of the "Data Collection and Analysis" section.