INDONESIAN NOVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: GETTING ALONG WITH TENSIONS

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Abstract. In the early years of teaching, it is prevalent that novice EFL teachers should make a lot of adjustments to the new working place which may cause some tensions for them. Under a narrative inquiry framework, the researcher collected reflective stories of five Indonesian novice EFL teachers and interviewed them to examine common tensions experienced and how they cope with these tensions. The findings revealed 19 kinds of tensions the participants faced. Self-image building and independence vs dependence on others are the most common tensions experienced while the others are related to professional, pedagogical, and cultural matters. Furthermore, four common strategies were identified, namely looking for solutions by themselves, accepting as the situation as it is, receiving help without asking, and sharing with significant others. It is suggested that fellow teachers, school staff, and related authorities give more help to novice teachers in handling the tensions.
Keywords: novice EFL teachers, coping strategies, identity, tensions

1. INTRODUCTION

First years of teaching is often considered as difficult time for novice teachers (Cui, 2012; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Meijer, De Graaf, & Meirink, 2011; Popper-Giveon & Shayshon, 2016), as it is the transition period of being a student and becoming a teacher where a shift of identity happens (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). It is also the crucial time when novice teachers – teachers who are in their first stage of teaching career within less than 5 years (Lassila, 2017) – are improving their teaching competence and their identity as a teacher (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017). In this period, novice teachers should make many adjustments in many aspects and construct their teacher identity.

The way novice teachers teach and position themselves during their first teaching years is still highly influenced by their imagined identities – identities on the relation between self and others in a particular place and time built within subjects' imagination where they have not had chances to have direct interactions with (Norton, 2001) – rather than their practiced identities (Xu, 2013). Unfortunately, the reality they encounter in the real teaching world can be different from what they have imagined and might not be suitable for what their imagined identities are. Hence, it is not a surprise to know that many novice teachers experience a reality shock during this period (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017; Flores & Day, 2006; Meijer et al., 2011; Xu, 2013).

To make things more complicated, it is generally known that once the novice teachers enter the teaching profession, almost immediately, they have the same responsibility as those who have been teaching for years (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009), which also happens in the context of the research, Indonesia. Even though there is a regulation in Indonesia that discusses the induction program for novice teachers to be familiar with the teaching profession (Ministerial Regulation

No 27/2010), not all schools in Indonesia strictly implement this regulation. Hence, novice teachers in Indonesia are immediately expected to act and behave like experienced teachers. They will directly face abundant tasks, such as educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students (Article 1 of Indonesian Law No 14/2005).

The need to adapt to the new context, added with some expectations from the school – for instance, to introduce the newest teaching technique – often make novice teachers have a difficult time in their early teaching career (Sabar, 2004). For many, this transition period is characterized by some struggles which may "be caused by or lead to tensions" in one's professional identity (Pillen, 2013, p.241). Tensions happen when teachers have a vague idea to act appropriately especially when two (or more) concepts are in conflict and there are some possibilities of action to take (Lassila, 2017).

Alsup (2006) mentions common tensions pre-service teacher could experience in the period of adjusting themselves as a teacher. Firstly, he finds that pre-service teachers may experience student vs teacher selves as they move from university student to high school teacher. In addition, they may also experience dilemmas when their own personal beliefs are clashing with professional expectations. Furthermore, some gaps between university ideologies and practicality found in the reality in teaching may also result in tensions (Alsup, 2006).

Many kinds of tensions can also emerge from other conflicts. Supporting Alsup (2006), another research has found that tensions can occur from the gap between novice teachers' belief about how ideal teacher should be like versus the expectation from the school environment (Kumazawa, 2013; Lassila, 2017; Yuan, 2016). It has also been found that tensions may happen because there are conflicts between personal and public perceptions of the teaching profession, imagined teaching life conflicting with reality (Schatz-Oppenheimer & Dvir, 2014), urge to care about students versus expectation to be tough, and feeling of being incompetent about the subject matter conflicting with school's expectation to be an expert (Volkmann & Anderson, 1998).

Furthermore, by studying a substantial amount of literature, Pillen et al. (2013) offer a beneficial list containing 13 tensions experienced by novice teachers. Some of which overlap with those mentioned in the previous literature. These include dilemmas related to: one's own lay theories vs other theories considered pertinent for teaching, own vs others' orientations on learning to teach, the need to invest time in teaching practice vs the need to do other teaching-related tasks, urge to respect students' integrity vs the need to work against this integrity on certain occasions, the need to be loyal to students vs to colleagues, the desire to treat students as a whole vs the need to see them as learners, the wish to be emotionally close to students vs the need to keep a distance, the confusion on which approaches to use in teaching, the need to manage private life vs the expectation to spend time and energy on work, and the urge to depend on a mentor/colleagues vs the wish to go on own way in teaching (see Pillen et al., 2013).

Moreover, possible tensions for novice teachers may also arise from the culture they belong to. In the context of this research, Indonesia, for example, 'total obedience', especially to older people or people with higher social status, is still very prevalent (Dardjowidjojo, 2001). Going further, Indonesian people tend to hold onto *ewuh-pekeweuh* (uncomfortable-uneasy) philosophy, especially when they have to question and disagree with elders' decisions (Dardjowidjojo, 2001). These cultural bounds may suppress novice teachers' desire to speak which eventually may emerge as tensions.

Because tensions confront novice teachers' moods, values, principles, or perceptions (Pillen, 2013, p.17) and may influence the ability of novice teachers to learn and function normally (Pillen et al., 2013), it is necessary that novice teachers have some coping strategies to survive. They must own the ability to manage troubled relations between a person and the environment (Admiraal, Korthagen, & Wubbels, 2000). Good coping strategies exercised by novice teachers will likely result in successful teaching (see Alsup, 2006).

Coping strategies utilized by novice teachers can vary a lot. Pillen (2013), for instance, identifies four common novice teachers' coping strategies to deal with tensions. These include sharing with significant others, looking for solutions by themselves, accepting the situation as it is, and receiving help without asking (Pillen, 2013). Furthermore, novice teachers can also cope with the difficulties if they believe that, eventually, things will get better and if they have a sense of hope and persistent attitude (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). The coping strategies used by novice teachers are tailored to the needs and context where the tensions happen.

In fact, the tensions novice teachers are facing have been well researched throughout the world until recently (e.g. Kumazawa, 2013; Lassila, 2017; Schatz-Oppenheimer & Dvir, 2014; Yuan, 2016). Although these studies have demonstrated many insightful findings of what kind of tensions novice teachers are facing, they have not provided much information about how novice teachers cope with these tensions. When coping strategies are researched, however, the studies mostly focus on the coping strategies exercised by teachers within difficult times in general (e.g. Carton & Fruchart, 2014; Foley & Murphy, 2015; McCann & Johannessen, 2004; Salkovsky et al., 2015), not necessarily focus on coping strategies used by novice teachers in dealing with tensions – except for some studies (e.g. Beach & Pearson, 1998; Jang, 2004; Pillen et al., 2013; Pillen, 2013) conducted in western countries. Therefore, by addressing common tensions and their coping strategies of Indonesian novice English language teachers, this study is trying to mend this lack of literature as well as expand the knowledge in a new context.

To maintain the focus of this research, two research questions are formulated as follows: 1) what common tensions do the novice teachers face during their early years of teaching? and 2) how do novice teachers cope with these tensions?

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Participants

The participants involved in this study were five Indonesian novice English language teachers who have been teaching less than 2 years in a private or government school. Convenience sampling−collecting data from volunteers willing to join this research−was used (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Razavieh, 2010, p. 155). The participants were relatively young, ranging from 23-25 years old. To ensure the confidentiality of this research, every participant was given a pseudonym – Anne, Becca, Choe, David, and Ed. Table 2.1. shows the overview of the participants' background.

Table 2.1. Participants' background

Name	Gender	Age	Level taught	Teaching experience
Anne	F	24	Senior High	1 months
Becca	F	25	Elementary	13 months
Chloe	F	23	Kindergarten	9 months
David	M	24	Elementary	12 months
Ed	M	24	Elementary and Junior High	9 months

2.2. Data collection and analysis

Narrative inquiry was used in this qualitative research because it allowed the researcher to examine the pathway the teachers take into teaching and create a narrative analysis about it (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Razavieh, 2010, p.31). To do this, the researcher inquired about participants' stories related to their teaching life as stories can be media where people can understand

themselves and the environment where they are living (Lassila, 2017). The participants were asked to share their stories in the form of a reflection regarding their tensions experienced in their early years of teaching. The reflective story writing process was guided with several prompts developed from several related theories, such as whether or not the participants feel confused about which one to prioritize: teaching tasks or personal matters, or about the way they position themselves in the class whether as a friendly teacher or a discipline one. In addition, semi structured interviews were used to collect deeper information about the topic discussed by the participants (Creswell, 2012, p.218). The question protocols were designed based on the reflection written by each participant.

The interview data will be transcribed as well as the reflective story, they were coded in three steps: 1) open coding – where the researcher categorized the chunks of information into several open categories, 2) axial coding – where the researcher put back the categories together to produce some general themes, 3) selective coding – where the researcher brought the themes back together and compared them into the available literature (Ary et al., 2010, p.465). The data then were discussed, interpreted, and served in the form of a thick description.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

3.11.Tensions experienced

Many tensions were mentioned and shared by novice teachers, which fall into 19 types of tension. A few participants mentioned a small number of tensions, while others reported arguably a lot of tensions. Table 3.1. shows the summary of tensions reported by the participants followed by the reports and discussions of the tensions.

Table 3.1. Tensions experienced

No	Tensions	Participants				
		Anne	Becca	Chloe	David	Ed
1	ideal vs reality/expectation					✓
2	personal vs public perceptions		✓	✓		✓
3	feeling like student vs role as teacher	✓		✓	✓	✓
4	imagined teaching life vs reality	✓	✓	✓		✓
5	caring teacher vs tough teacher	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	incompetence vs expectation to be expert	✓				✓
7	university ideologies vs practicality					✓
8	own lay theories vs other theories					✓
9	own vs others' orientations on learning to teach			✓		
10	practice teaching vs do other tasks				✓	✓
11	loyal to students vs to colleagues			✓	✓	✓
12	treating pupils as persons vs as learners			✓		✓
13	emotionally close to vs distancing to students				✓	
14	using this vs those teaching theories		✓			✓
15	private life vs work life			✓	✓	✓
16	depending/following vs going on own way	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
17	expressing opinions vs in total obedience		✓			✓
18	letting vs not letting students be spoiled			✓		
19	own integrity vs toxic school culture					✓

TOTAL	5	6	10	7	16

3.1.1 Being a care teacher vs tough teacher

All participants reported that they were not sure whether they should be a care teacher or a discipline and strict one. This tension was generally caused by the wish they had to be close to students by being such a caring teacher. However, it was conflicting with the need to discipline the students – or vice versa. For instance, Ed mentioned "*I tried to be their friend and be friendly with them. Yet, this makes them spoiled and more volatile. In the other hand, if I become too strict and keep some distance with them, they will feel pressured in learning*." Similar to Ed, Becca was also in the same boat, sharing how sometimes a teacher's friendliness and care made "*students feel comfortable and induced close relationship*" between them, yet, in the same time this made students "*less discipline*". In reverse, Chloe shared how she was "*stern, strict, and discipline"* but she could not be like that because she feared that the little kids she taught would cry. Likewise, Anne shared a similar tone that she was "*stern by nature*" but afraid that she became "*too restricting for students*", which made her confused on what to do.

It is not surprising that this tension, being care vs tough, became so common among the participants as other research have shown that novice teachers tend to be controller in the class while being care at the same time (e.g. Pillen et al., 2013; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). This tension may be attributed to the way they have not fully developed their professional identity as a teacher – what kind of teacher they are or want to be. In Volkmann & Anderson's (1998) study, this tension could not really be attributed to the lack of subject matter competency, but was strongly related to what Education Council (2013) describes as "adherence to vs relaxation of the rules", where the participants felt some hesitation related to what extent they had to consistently enforce classroom rules – being strict, stern, discipline – or to let the rules be loose – being caring, understanding, friendly. The participants generally acknowledged that being strict, stern, and discipline to students would make them feel uncomfortable, pressured, restricted, or in Chloe's case, the little students would cry. Yet, if they were too care with the students – a characteristic which teachers commonly mention when they describe a good teacher (Bullock, 2010) – they felt afraid that the students would feel be spoiled, volatile, and indiscipline. These seemingly two dichotomous choices proved to be confusing to novice teachers.

3.1.2 Depending/following vs going on own way

Another tension that was very common to all the participants joining this research was related to whether they had to follow or depend on their colleagues during their early years of teaching. For instance, when they received some suggestions from their senior teachers, ranging from suggestions about how to teach or what to do when something came up, they felt confused whether they had to follow the tips or not. David, who was expected to be a professional teacher in his institution, shared, "*They gave a lot of inputs on how to become an ideal teacher. On the other side, I feel uncomfortable and I am not used to this".* Similar to David, Ed also mentioned how sometimes his colleagues gave some recommendations on how to teach and how to handle troubled students, yet he felt that "*their suggestions [were] not appropriate to do*". In the same boat was also Anne, who was suggested to meet a certain senior teacher for getting some teaching materials. Yet, inside, she preferred to develop her own teaching materials.

In addition to the "unwanted" suggestions given by the fellow teachers, some participants reported the same tensions emerged from the different styles of teaching they had with their fellow teachers. Becca shared, "*I am confused whether I have to follow and imitate the teaching styles of the teacher I consider more respected by other teachers*". Likewise, as a kindergarten teacher, Chole and her fellow teacher had different styles of teaching and she experiences doubt

about what to do. She wrote, "*In teaching them to color a drawing, for instance, my colleague wants the students to understand instantly. There is no need to repeat the explanation. Yet, I myself like to emphasize every step in my teaching."* These different teaching styles made both Becca and Chloe confused.

The tension the participants experienced here has some resemblance with the findings of Pillen et al., (2013). In their study, it is observed that more than 20% of novice teachers joining the research felt that they were not sure whether they had to follow and match their mentor/colleagues' ways of teaching – even if the teaching styles were not really suitable to them – or to use their own teaching styles. In this present study, Becca and Chloe reported the same tension. They were not sure whether they wanted to follow, or even imitate their colleagues or going on their own way. This especially happened because both participants taught little kids more than one teacher taught in the same classroom. Hence, it is clear that they felt a dilemma whether they have to be independent or dependent on others in terms of teaching.

The other three participants of the study, however, reported the similar tension in a slightly bigger context than the one related to teaching in the classroom discussed by Pillen et al., (2013). David, Ed, Anne, who were teaching older students, mentioned the tension on being independent or dependent to their colleagues outside of the classroom context, especially whenever they received some 'uninvited' suggestions by their colleagues. It is interesting to note how usually mentoring – giving guidance and suggestions – helps novice teachers (McCormack & Thomas, 2003). Meanwhile, the novice teachers in this study sometimes did not feel comfortable receiving it. It may be attributed to the way these colleagues were too imposing their styles rather than helping novice teachers find their own style, one of two dangers when working with novices as discussed by Feiman-Nemser (2001).

3.1.3 Expressing opinions vs being in total obedience

A question of whether to express one's opinion about something or to stay silent and follow the voice of the majority became one unique tension found in this study. As a novice teacher, Ed reported his confusion when he had different thoughts or perspectives with his seniors, "*whether [he] had to express his own opinion or not because they were more senior than [he] was*". Being in a similar position with Ed, Becca also reported the same tension she experienced during a meeting. She was afraid that "*the seniors will bully [her] or think~~ing~~ negatively about [her]".* Yet, she also felt annoyed about being 'forced' to be silent and regarded this tension as one of her biggest tensions she experienced as a novice teacher.

In the context of this research, Indonesia, the uncomfortable-uneasy feeling – *ewuh-pekewuh* – towards people who are older or hold higher social status to the person is still high (Dardjowidjojo, 2001). Indonesian people who are in the lower social status generally find it difficult to disagree to the elder people's words. Unfortunately, as Frinaldi & Embi (2014) have found out, despite its positive side (promoting high appreciation for the authority), this *ewuh-pekewuh* culture may create an uncritical work culture, which discourages people to express their suggestions and opinions. This becomes worse since usually novice teachers (juniors) are expected to be obedient with their seniors (Lassila, 2017). This cultural bound made Becca and Ed felt *ewuh-pekewuh* whenever they wanted to express their opinion. Even Becca perceived expressing her opinion as a threat because she might be bullied by other teachers. Feeling discouraged, they experienced this dilemma inside because they had to suppress their wish to speak up.

3.1.4 Maintaining own integrity vs agreeing with toxic school culture

Among many tensions experienced by the participants, there was another unique tension related to dealing with the toxic school culture mentioned by Ed. He shared how he felt wrong

when he was asked to level up his students' score unconditionally when he was processing school reports. Unfortunately, the leveling up was actually expected by the foundation and headmaster "*for the sake that the school accrediation will be good"* as the school is still relatively new and developing. To make things worse, he was also afraid of being considered incompetent because he knew that "*if there are more than 25% of students whose scores are under the minimal standard, the teacher is considered not competent enough to teach."* On the other side, Ed knew he would ruin her integrity as a teacher if he chose to 'help' his students. These facts made Ed feel annoyed.

The tension Ed reported here, leveling up students score – or score manipulation – has been claimed to be an issue in this era (Priyambodo, 2011) and what kind of teachers in Gunawan, Utanto, & Maretta's (2017) study. When presented with some stories of dilemmas, such as whether or not they wanted to 'help' students achieve a certain grade, the participants tended to look out for moral compasses – such as following the rule, being fair, and religious teaching – to eventually choose not to help them. Unfortunately, what Ed was facing here was not just a story of a dilemma, rather, it was a real tension happening under his nose, which caused him to experience the discomfort of the real tension.

3.1.5 (Many) other tensions

Apart from the four tensions discussed in the previous parts, there were still many tensions experienced by the participants (see Table 3.1). Most of the tensions mentioned were related to day-to-day matters including using their own lay theories vs other theories in teaching; own vs others' orientations on learning to teach; practice teaching vs do other tasks related to teaching; loyal to students vs to colleagues when students take novice teachers into confidence regarding a colleague; treating pupils as persons vs as learners; being emotionally close to vs distancing to students; using this vs those teaching theories; and investing on private life vs finishing teaching assignments. However, there were also some other tensions mentioned which were experienced in a 'higher level' than just day-to-day choice as they usually involved two really opposing concepts. These kinds of tensions include novice teachers' standard of ideal teacher vs reality/expectation; personal vs public perceptions of teaching profession; feeling like student inside vs present role as teacher; imagined teaching life vs reality; feeling incompetent vs expectation to be an expert on the subject matter; and university ideologies vs practicality. In the end, considering there were so many tensions experienced by novice teachers, it became necessary for them to exercise some coping strategies to survive during their early years of teaching.

3.2 Coping strategies

The tensions caused some uncomfortable feelings to the participants – annoyed, confused, afraid, etc. – which necessitated the participants to cope with these feelings. Along with the tensions they shared, the ways they dealt with those tensions were also elaborated. Table 5.2 is the summary of the coping strategies exercised by the participants.

Table 5.2. Coping strategies exercised

No	Coping Strategies	Total frequencies across tensions*	Total frequencies across tensions in %
1	**Looking for solutions by themselves**	**31**	**70,4**
	a. negotiating	*21*	*47,7*
	b. choosing one stream	*8*	*18,1*

	c. learning more about something	*2*	*4,5*
2.	**Accepting as the situation as it is**	**12**	**27,2**
3	**Receiving help without asking**	**1**	**2,2**
4	**Sharing with significant others**	All participants mentioned this strategy during the interview	

3.2.1 Looking for solutions by themselves

Generally, the participants chose to look for solutions to the tensions by themselves. They reflected the tensions they faced and thought of the most possible way to cope with them. Three kinds of strategies that belong to this coping strategy emerged.

a. **Negotiating**

Negotiating became the most common strategy the participants used to deal with the tensions. When exposed to some of those tensions, the participants often decided to negotiate to compromise in the middle of streams or choices. Within a tension whether to be a caring or tough teacher, for instance, Chloe chose to negotiate to be in between these two ends by "*trying to be discipline but not stern so students would not be afraid*". Similarly, when confused about whether or not he had to depend on (and follow) his colleagues' suggestion or being on his own, Ed shared that he had to "*see the situation and condition"* to decide what he wanted to do. Whenever possible, Ed would try to follow the suggestions but if not, he chose to go on his own way.

In facing tensions, negotiating became a coping strategy utilized the most by the participants. It is not surprising because this strategy utilizes logic that can be used to mediate and compromise between internal and external pressures (Ball & Maroy, 2009). By using this coping strategy, the participants tried to balance between two forces so that they still could survive in between. They seemed to be aware that some tensions were not questions of *either-or* (e.g. either being caring or strict). Rather, they sometimes were problems of how to mediate between two dichotomous streams. By negotiating to, somehow, stay in the middle of these two streams, the participants were able to cope with the situations and continued their journey as teachers.

b. **Choosing one stream**

To cope with tensions, the participants also quite often decided to choose one of the two streams the tension brought and were willing to deal with the consequences later. Ed, for example, eventually decided to '*level up*' some of students' score and dealt with the reluctant feelings his choice brought. In addition, Becca also did the similar thing when she was confused about whether or not she had to express her opinion of being in total obedient in a meeting. In the end, she chose to "*express [her] opinion*" and dealt with the consequences of being bullied by her seniors later.

It was often that the participants decided to choose to be in one side to what is like dichotomous choices. What the participants in this study choose here is greatly similar to what a prospective teacher experienced in Jang's (2004) study. When encountering similar tensions, she also decided to choose one of the two choices available; she chose to rely on her personal values and neglect others' expectations on her. This choice to be on one side might be attributed to the consideration that the participants could no longer negotiate between the two choices. There might be possible consequences that would follow this kind of decision which necessitated them to deal with it. Nevertheless, this coping strategy seems to work well for the time being.

c. **Learn more about something**

Some participants also mentioned that they tried to advance themselves to cope better

with some tensions. A case in point, when realizing that teaching life was not easy as she imagined, Chloe chose to learn more about teaching and how to handle students by "*learning from senior teachers and reading some books about teaching little kids*". Similarly, whenever Ed was confused about what to do in his present role as a teacher – because sometimes he still felt like a student inside, – he decided to "*ask other teachers if [he] did not understand and ask for clarity about what [he] must do*." From the examples above, some novice teachers chose to learn something so that they could minimize the tensions and their negative effects.

It has been noted that being confused about what to do and how to do it seems to be a common issue for novice teachers. Yet, it is vital to remember that novice teachers are not the finished product of teacher education, rather, they have undeniable learning needs to be fulfilled in the real context of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Thus, what these participants were doing, trying to learn more about something, had demonstrated a good effort to cope in a difficult situation they experienced.

3.2.2 Accepting as the situation as it is

Instead of looking for solutions for themselves, the participants also mentioned that sometimes they tried to accept the situation as it was, especially when they felt that the situation could not be changed at all. When exposed to different perspectives her parents had about teaching profession to what she had, Becca mentioned that she "*always faced it with a smile" and "tried and never gave up*". Similarly, when exposed with abundant teaching administrative tasks he had never imagined before, David chose to "*accept it and try to get used to*" these abundant tasks.

The coping strategy the participants used here are related to what Richards (2012) regards of displaying positive attitudes. He argues that when things go out of control, letting go of and displaying positive attitudes helps to cope with it. Here, Becca and David had shown a determination to be okay with the situations of discomfort and tried to get on with it. No longer complaining, they had displayed positive attitude towards the situation and letting go of the things that they could not control, such as other's perspective about teaching the profession. They chose to accept the situation as it was.

3.2.3 Receiving help (without asking)

Another coping strategy mentioned when dealing with tensions was receiving help from other people. When having a tension about feeling incompetent versus being expected to be an expert in the subject matter, Anne felt that her 'mentors' helped her a lot to increase her confidence. She shared, "*my mentors' words can make me more confident with my own competency and the belief that I can learn"*. In addition, she often perceived that her 'mentors' were sensitive enough towards what she felt and knew what to do. She mentioned, "*They sometimes know from my expressions, how I am feeling. Then, they give me suggestions and try to improve my confidence".* In the end, by mentioning "*it's a good thing to have them around like that*", Anne showed how she felt grateful for her companions and their help in her journey of adjusting herself.

The coping strategy used by Anne when dealing with her confidence-related tension was to receive some help from her colleagues she considered as 'mentors'. Anne perceived her 'mentors' to be very helpful in providing her emotional support to help her to grow and become good teachers, just like how supportive teachers should be (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). This kind of support that matches with novice teachers' needs has been found to help novice teachers to stay in the profession and stay in the same school (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). By receiving the support

from her 'mentors', Anne felt better to face the tensions she experienced.

3.2.4 Sharing with significant others

The participants also acknowledged that sharing with significant others, either to family, friends, or other people, could be very beneficial to the way they could cope with the dilemmatic situations. Interestingly, no participants hinted this coping strategy in the reflective writing, yet, in the interview, they all mentioned that they shared with their significant others when they were dealing with tensions and they all acknowledged how beneficial it was to do so. This perhaps could be attributed to the way the participants perceived this coping strategy as a holistic strategy to deal with discomfort across tensions. Anne, for example, admitted that sharing with others would not make the problem solved, yet, it helped her to "*arrange her mind*" and "*decide what to do based on logic instead of emotion.*" In the same way, David who preferred to share with his friends understood that sharing made him realize the feeling of "*I am not alone*" as his friends also had their own problems.

This coping strategy used in dealing with overall tensions were very beneficial for the participants to survive. It is in line with Murray-Harvey et al., (2000) who perceive social coping strategy as a significant way to deal with tensions. They argued that discussion with family and friends or being involved in social events were perceived as beneficial to people dealing with stressful events. Furthermore, this coping strategy is in line with the work of Richards (2012), who suggests that spending some time for family and friends can be a good support system and it has been proven by teachers in that study that this strategy made "the job less stressful" and "more bearable", especially when they were able to discuss their day-to-day frustrations with people who could relate. Using this coping strategy, all participants felt better and more motivated to live another day as a teacher.

4 CONCLUSION

This present study highlighted many tensions experienced and coping strategies practiced by novice English language teachers, especially in Indonesian context. The tensions were various and complex, including some tensions related to image building and to what extent being dependent on others (such as *being a care teacher vs being a tough teacher* and *depending on /following colleagues vs going on own way*), some tensions which were more dependent on cultural bound (such as *expressing opinions vs being in total obedience* and *own integrity vs toxic school culture*), and some other tensions pertinent to professional and pedagogical problems. Dealing with those tensions, the novice teachers had also shown various coping strategies such as looking for solutions by themselves (by negotiating, choosing one among two streams, and learning more about something), accepting the situation as it is, and receiving help without asking. Moreover, sharing with significant others was also perceived beneficial to help the novice teachers to cope with the tensions.

Unfortunately, some limitations should be noted in this study. Firstly, only a small number of participants were involved in this study; hence, this study cannot be accounted for generalization. Secondly, this study has not yet tapped the support system available for the novice teachers that can induce richer discussion on tensions and coping strategies. Nevertheless, this study has expanded the existing knowledge on novice teacher identity development process, especially seen through the way they faced and handled tensions during their teacher identity construction period. Thus, the researcher hopes that the findings of this research could inspire fellow teachers, school staff, and related authorities to help novice teachers handle the tensions

emerged during their early years of teaching by giving them more time, support, and encouragement.

For future research, the researcher suggests that more studies are conducted to examine a deeper feeling when novice teachers deal with those tensions. Even though this present study has tapped a little about the feeling of discomfort when dealing with the tensions, this study has not yet focused on this matter. Moreover, more studies about tensions emerging from novice teacher-mentors relationship should be done as this relation is very complex, and examining this matter may provide more knowledge on how mentors should help novice teachers.

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