Identity Tensions Experienced by Iranian Novice EFL Teachers

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Abstract

Early-career language teachers, who are struggling with transitory stages of identity development from students to teachers, can experience a collection of negative emotions known as identity tensions. This exploratory mixed-methods study helps novice teachers to identify their tensions, especially identity tensions, and be more familiar with and manage various types of them. To this end, first an interview has been conducted with 16 teachers and, afterward, a developed questionnaire to 150 participants has been administrated. Thematic analysis and between-groups analysis of t-tests and ANOVAs were used for the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study respectively. The study found that gender was not associated with identity tensions, but that age, years of experience, and educational background were positively associated with identity tensions.

Keywords— identity tensions, novice teachers, identity

I. INTRODUCTION

Although identity may seem axiomatic, from a scientific point of view identity and its definitions are more complicated. The complication lies in the various ways identity has been defined. Identity tensions started to attract attention in language teacher studies in the 21st century when researchers realized the indispensable challenges and threats leveled at the permeable identity of teachers. Identity tension is defined as "a tension between how sometimes we are assigned identities that may or may not be congruent with how we see ourselves or how we wish to be seen, and our efforts to assert perhaps different, more desirable identities" (Toohey, 2017, p. 13). Particularly, when novice teachers adventurously step foot onto the thorny lands of their career, the processes of constructing and reconstructing their new and yet constantly developing identity can change into sites of resistance, self-transformation, and conflicting emotions (Zembylas, 2003).

Researchers who study teachers' professional identity seem to agree that professional identity is not a stable entity, but rather a continually changing, dynamic, active, and ongoing process, developing over time and influenced by the teacher's characteristics, learning history and prior experiences, on the one hand, and professional contexts, including significant others, knowledge, skills and attitudes that are found relevant by teacher educators.

Apparently, student teachers must experience an evolution in identity as they move through programs of teacher education and accept positions as teachers in today's challenging school contexts. Moreover, further identity shifts may occur through a teacher's job as a consequence of interactions within schools and in wider communities. Yet, the notion of identity is a complicated one, and even a cursory examination of the literature makes known that there is much to understand if one is to appreciate the importance of identity in teacher development.

Primarily identity was seen as an individual and innate sense of self by scholars (Erikson, 1968; Mead, 1934). After some years, Bourdieu (1991) hypothesized beliefs, attitudes, and values that form who and what we are, what is called *habitus*, through our interaction with others in the form of playing roles (Goffman, 1959) and how we situate ourselves and others through speech and actions **(**Davies & Harre, 1990, 1999; Harre & van Langenhove, 1999). People are indirectly aware of

which communities they do and do not belong to. Among members of these groups *the degree of involvement*, or *modes of belonging* (Wenger, 1998) are different, *degree of involvement* functions as an insider for some people in some groups and plays a role as a peripheral member in others. These members are authorized to distinguish their membership, with the degree of negotiability, which can lead to identities of participation or identities of non-participation.

The present exploratory mixed-methods study formed the following research questions:

1. What identity tensions do novice Iranian EFL teachers experience?
2. Are the identity tensions experienced by EFL teachers related to their gender, age, years of experience, and educational background?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Identity is a part and parcel of each profession. Such as other professions, teaching foreign languages has its own identity. The development of a teacher identity is who one believes oneself to be and who one would like to become and also it is an evolving process of interpretation and reinterpretation (Beijaard et al., 2004).2.1. Language Teacher Identity (LTI)

Language teacher identities (LTIs) are cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical—they are both inside the teacher and outside in the social, material, and technological world. LTIs are being and doing, feeling and imagining, and storying. They are struggle and harmony: they are contested and resisted, by self and others, and they are also accepted, acknowledged and valued, by self and others. They are core and peripheral, personal and professional, they are dynamic, multiple, and hybrid, and they are foregrounded and backgrounded. And LTIs change, short-term and over time—discursively in social interaction with teacher educators, learners, teachers, administrators, and the wider community, and material interaction with spaces, places, and objects in classrooms, institutions, and online.

Recent conceptualizations of teacher identity seem to reflect postmodern views on identity, describing teacher identity as involving 'sub-identities' (referring to multiplicity), as being 'an ongoing process of construction' (referring to discontinuity) and as 'relating to various social contexts and relationships' (referring to the social nature of identity). We believe these characterizations are extremely interesting and valuable as they bring forward a radically different

stance towards teacher identity from the one existing before, when teacher identity was more or less seen as the possession of a defined set of assets required for the profession (e.g., Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986). Nevertheless, each of the three characterizations requires careful explanation and nuance. Current literature on teacher identity provides some insightful theoretical suggestions, but leaves several important questions unanswered.

Firstly, the idea of multiplicity seems to be commonly accepted in recent literature on teacher identity. For example, Sutherland, Howard, and Markauskaite (2010) distinguished professional identity as one component of multiple perspectives of a persons' identity. Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, and Gu (2007) distinguished three 'dimensions of identity' (p. 106): professional identity, situated identity, and personal identity. Beijaard et al. (2000) described teacher identity as consisting of three sub-identities: the teacher as a subject matter expert, pedagogical expert, and didactical expert. More generally, Beijaard et al. (2004) concluded from their literature review that a teachers' professional identity consists of sub-identities relating to teachers' different contexts and relationships. Recent literature also speaks of different 'identities' or 'sub-identities' to denote the multiplicity of teacher identity (Alsup, 2006; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Sutherland et al., 2010). Yet, how such sub-identities should be seen remains vague. What makes up a sub-identity? How does it come into existence? When introducing the idea of multiplicity, literature on teacher identity needs to address these questions in more detail.

Secondly, in relation to the notion of discontinuity, several scholars in the field of teacher identity described identity as fluid and shifting from moment to moment and context to context. Based on their review of literature on teachers' professional identity, Beijaard et al. (2004) stated that identity is an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences. Hence, they argued that identity can be seen as an answer to the recurrent question: "Who am I at this moment?" (p. 108). In a similar vein, Rodgers and Scott (2008) argued that identity is 'shifting' and 'unstable'. In defining beginning teachers' identity, Danielewicz (2001) concluded that 'every person is composed of multiple, often conflicting, identities, which exist in volatile states of construction or reconstruction, reformation or erosion, addition, or expansion' (p.10) and indicated change as most characteristic about selves and identities. And Gee

(1990) considered a professional identity to be a 'person narrativization of what consists of his or her (never fully formed or always potentially changing) core identity as a teacher' (Sutherland et al., 2010). Basic to these statements is the idea of a discontinuous nature of identity, which seems to be a plausible acknowledgement of the dynamic instead of static nature of identity. Nevertheless, in response to these statements, it is of interest to understand 'what' is shifting and what determines the direction of shifting. Is every different act an indication of a shift in identity? Is it just a lottery that determines which side of identity pops up at a certain moment? Though probably not intending to imply such extreme ideas, current literature on teacher identity has not (yet) addressed such questions in detail.

Thirdly, in relation to the social nature of identity, the literature on teachers gives different versions. For example, Flores and Day (2006) reported a strong interaction between personal histories of novice teachers and the contextual influences of the workplace in influencing the shaping and reshaping of these teachers' identities. Likewise, Rodgers and Scott (2008) theorized that identity is formed in relationship with others. Alsup (2006) stressed that identities are formed in social, communicative contexts and for socially significant reasons. Cohen (2010) discussed how teachers negotiate their professional identity in collaborative exchanges, concluding that colleagues constitute key actors in teachers' formation of professional identity.During the process of shaping novice teachers' professional identity, they probably encounter various sorts of tensions. Such tensions can be real dilemmas for beginning teachers .According to Voinea and PăOăúan (2013), shaping a professional identity is a complicated and lengthy process which is full of challenges and problems. This process happens in a culturally specific context. Many factors are involved such as personal, social, cultural, political, professional, global, and so on. Experts more and more admit that teacher identity is at the center of the teaching profession (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). The development of a teacher's identity is who one believes oneself to be and who one would like to become and also it is an evolving process of interpretation and reinterpretation (Beijaard et al., 2004). According to the previous literature, several factors contribute to the development of teacher identity. In the development of a teacher identity five psychological processes were found to be involved: a sense of appreciation, a sense of connectedness, a sense

of competence, a sense of commitment, and imagining a future career trajectory.

Over the years, the concept of identity has changed from a fixed and limited version to a more integrative concept, which has brought historical, social, and political contexts into consideration. Most authors suggest that identity or self has developed from a notion of essentialism to one of constructivism (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; De Fina et al., 2006). On one side, as has been viewed by essentialists, identity is said to integrate different ideas (Nganga, 2011). The first one is about the fact that there is a division between public and private life; the second one points out that there is a true and original self in all human beings and the last one presumes that members of a group share an essential and unified sense of self. On the other hand, constructivists' notions of identity emerge to refuse the idea of a fixed self by integrating concepts such as generalized other (Mead, 1934), multiple selves (Goffman, 1959), situated identity (Ball, 1972), and discourse practices (Fairclough, 1989), that challenge the essentialists and integrate the social, fluid and situated attributes. Most current approaches believe that identity is constructed in a social context; it is shifting and dynamic rather than being stable and fixed (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Developing teacher identity cannot take place in a vacuum, but rather in a context that brings social and cultural forces (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Penuel &Wertsch, 1995). While the development of teacher identity is considered unproblematic, most authors identify it as a struggling, sometimes conflicting one (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Researches on professional identity formation often concentrate on how a profession is learned in higher education or working life (Hodkinson, et al., 2008). Results show a discrepancy between these two areas regarding what knowledge is prioritized and how to practice the profession. This type of investigation usually emphasizes the individual as a learner within a specific setting at a specific time (Hodkinson, et al., 2008) with longitudinal studies of the transition from higher education to working life being scarce. Barkhuizen (2017) offers probably one of the most comprehensive definitions of LTI by trying to reconcile the diverging interpretations of the term:

Teachers' Identity Tensions

As it has been reported in the previous part, teachers' identity is a significant factor in the teaching profession and also some tensions threaten teachers' identity. In this section, teachers' identity tensions, an array of

conflicts, and internal struggles about unpleasant situations, as one of the subsets of the professional identity of beginning teachers will be presented.

Identity formation is a rather complex process of constant construction, co-construction, and reconstruction of one's image of self and its relation to the social world through positioning, agency, and subjectivity (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). It must be recognized that various novice teachers, in the process of shaping their professional identity, encounter tensions. If the balance between the personal and professional side of a novice teacher is wrecked, then "what is found relevant to the profession may conflict with the personal desires of teachers and what they experience as good" (Beijaard, et al., p.109). The complicated set of influences makes teachers encounter their identities in new and sometimes disruptive ways between their lives as students and their lives as professionals (Flores & Day, 2006).

Tensions can be real dilemma for beginning teachers (Volkmann & Anderson, 1998) when they feel as if they have to pick out between equally undesirable options (Berube, 1982). An example of such a dilemma was mentioned by Volkmann and Anderson (1998), who intended at discovering the nature of the creation of a beginning chemistry teacher's professional identity.

Teachers still felt like students, but were seen by their students and colleagues as real adult teachers. One of these dilemmas which can be mentioned is that they felt stuck between two different worlds.

Pillen's Model of Identity Tensions

A lot of research has been done on teachers' professional identity tensions regarding their changing role from student to teacher, their way of how to deal with students, and their vision of their own position and role in education (e.g., Anspal, et al., 2018; Pillen, et al., 2013; Smagorinsky, et al. 2004; Warin, et al., 2006)

It should be acknowledged that the tensions derived from the literature were often not conceptualized from a professional identity perspective by the original authors, but were interpreted by me as such, because they met the needs of a conflict between personal and professional desires of teachers (Kälvemark et al., 2004; Katz & Raths, 1992).

Recent empirical studies addressing teachers' identity tensions have significantly contributed to our understanding of the topic. For instance, Pillen, Beijard, and den Brok (2013a, b) focused on the identity tensions experienced by novice teachers in a series of studies. Pillen et al. (2013) extracted three themes from those 13 tensions, which will be illustrated in this chart:

Table 1: *Three Themes and Corresponding Professional Identity Tensions*

Theme	Tensions
I. The changing role from being a student to becoming a teacher	1. Feeling like a student versus being expected to act like an adult teacher (Fuller & Bown, 1975; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998)
	2. Wanting to care for students versus being expected to be tough (Fuller & Bown, 1975; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998)
	3. Feeling incompetent of knowledge versus being expected to be an expert (Fuller & Bown, 1975; Katz & Raths, 1992; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998)
	4. Wanting to invest time in practicing teaching versus feeling pressured to invest time in other tasks that are part of the teaching profession (Fuller & Bown, 1975; Kälvemark et al., 2004)
	5. Feeling treated like a student versus wanting to take responsibility as a teacher (Pillen et al., in press)
	6. Feeling like a peer versus wanting to take responsibility as a teacher (Pillen et al., in press)
II. Conflicts between desired and actual support given to students	7. Wanting to respect students' integrity versus feeling the need to work against this integrity (Kälvemark et al., 2004; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011)

		8. Wanting to treat pupils as persons as a whole versus feeling the need to treat them as learners (or vice versa) (Berlak & Berlak, 1981)
		9. Experiencing difficulties in maintaining an emotional distance (Fuller & Bown, 1975; Veenman, 1984)
		10. Experiencing conflicts between one's own and others' orientations regarding learning to teach (Alsup, 2006; Rajuan, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2007).
III.	Conflicting conceptions of learning to teach	11. Being exposed to contradictory institutional attitudes (Hatch, 1993; Olsen, 2010; Smagorinsky et al., 2004)
		12. Feeling dependent on a mentor (colleague/supervisor) versus wanting to go one's own way in teaching (Pillenet., al., in press)
		13. Wanting to invest in a private life versus feeling pressured to spend time and energy on work (Pillen et al.)

Considering this list of tensions some can be considered as real difficulty, while others are more constrainted. Experiencing them may be serious, emotional matters that beginning teachers have to cope with. In the following section, methodology of the study will be presented.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study utilized an exploratory mixed-methods design to first, identify what identity tensions novice Iranian EFL teachers experience, subsequently, elicit the most frequent identity tensions which have been uttered by Iranian EFL teachers, and third, to investigate the relationship between gender, age, years of experience, and educational background of novice Iranian EFL teachers and the type of identity tensions they experience.

Participants

For the qualitative phase of the study, 16 Iranian EFL teachers, including three male and 13 female instructors from various educational backgrounds, and different levels of proficiency, employed at different private language institutes and non-profit schools in Tehran, were recruited based on purposive sampling. These teachers, with an average age of 26, enjoyed a noticeable variety in experience, from two months to 27 years, and were selected among those who were willing to partake in interview sessions and appeared to fit the purpose of the study as rather rich informants. The criterion for this purposive sampling was to target teachers who were either at the early stages of their careers or experienced ones who had reported struggling with their roles as teachers throughout their career.

For the quantitative phase of the study, apart from 36 teachers who contributed to the piloting of the questionnaire, 150 individuals, including 24 male (16%) and 126 female (84%) EFL teachers with ages ranging between 19 and 50 and the average age of 28 were targeted based on convenience sampling. The participants were categorized into four experience groups including more than five years ($N = 58$), three to five years ($N = 32$), one to three years ($N = 39$), and below one year ($N = 21$) according to self-reports. These participants also came from a variety of educational backgrounds including extensive training through university programs and long-term training ($N = 71$), intensive training with short-term teacher training courses ($N = 55$), periodical on-job training only ($N = 7$), and no training with irrelevant university majors and no specific training courses passed ($N = 17$).

Instruments

A semi-structured interview with six questions, inspired by reviewing the previous literature including Pillen et al. (2013a, b) as well as Volkmann and Anderson (1998), was designed and implemented for the qualitative phase of the study (see Appendix A).

In order to establish the content validity of the interview, three university instructors familiar with the topic were asked to comment on the questions and their

feedback was used to revise the items. Each interview lasted for approximately 15 to 20 minutes and was audio-recorded with the prior consent of the interviewees.

For the quantitative phase of the study, the list of 25 identity tensions extracted through the qualitative phase was utilized to create a questionnaire with six-point Likert scales ranging from *Never* to *Always* to elicit the frequency with which EFL teachers employed each strategy (See Appendix B). The final list of these strategies, achieved through hybrid thematic analysis, was an aggregate of theories available in the literature (e.g., Admiraal, et al., 2000) and as well as the themes emerging in participants' interviews.

Procedure

The initial qualitative phase of the study set out to explore the most common identity tensions which teachers experience, especially in their early days, through some warm-up questions in the semi-structured interview. The interviews began by asking the participants to brainstorm on general tensions in their career and the interviewer gradually channeled their attention towards identity tensions in particular. Whenever necessary, they were provided with supplementary hints and descriptions from a list of identity tensions adapted from Pillen etal,. (2013a, b). The participants were occasionally reminded of the most frequently reported identity tensions in all five categories of *Self-image, Conflicting Roles, Conflicting Realities, Imposed Frustrations,* and *Professional Conflicts* in order to elicit their choices in case of more tangible situations.

The extracted themes from the previous stage, summing up to 16 identity tensions in total, were then utilized to develop a questionnaire featuring a six-level Likert scale from *Never* (0) to *Always* (5) to be used in the quantitative phase of the study. To ensure the reliability of the scale and run item analysis, the questionnaire was first piloted with 36 EFL teachers similar to the target sample of the study. The questionnaire was found to be quite reliable with an internal consistency of Cronbach alpha equal to .86. It was also given to three TEFL professors with relevant experience for the purpose of establishing its content validity by asking them to mark their judgments of its clarity, accuracy, completeness, relevance, compressive strength, and length of items across a researcher-made checklist and offer their detailed insights in written form. Building on the analyses and feedback from this stage, the researchers made minor revisions to the wording of the items to fortify their clarity and enhance the reliability and validity of the scale. The items were randomly distributed along the questionnaire.

In the quantitative stage of the study, the identity tensions questionnaire resulting from the previous stage was uploaded to Google Forms and the link was sent out to accessible Iranian EFL teachers mostly through online forums and social networks. Finally, 150 questionnaires were returned to the researchers, which were used for the quantitative analysis of the study. The questionnaires also collected the demographic information of the participants.

IV. RESULTS

As explained earlier, the initial qualitative stage sought out the most frequent identity tensions. To achieve that goal, the transcribed data from 16 semi-structured interviews were subjected to hybrid thematic analysis, as a combination of inductive and deductive coding. This approach was adopted in order to simultaneously benefit from the findings of previous literature as well as the local informants' insights and experiences and also, the researcher served as a coder of the qualitative data.

The thematic analysis resulted in 22 detailed themes and the coder also decided that the themes conveniently fitted into four broader categories, *Personal Competence, Social Conflicts, Class Management and Organizational Pressure*, for enhanced presentation and discussion of the data.

Iranian EFL teachers experience a variety of general occupational tensions throughout their job either novice or experienced. Four categories have been excluded based on the interview which have been presented in the table2. All extracted themes are summarized in Table 2 below in order of frequency in their respective categories.

Table 2: General Occupational Tensions Reported by Iranian EFL Teachers

No.	Category	Tension	Freq.
1	Personal Competence	Feeling the need to be perfect	1
		Feeling unconfident to speak in front of others	2
		Making mistakes (in pronunciation, etc.)	3
		Feeling a mismatch between desired self and actual self	5
		Lacking knowledge	9
2	Social Conflicts	Dealing with different personalities (various cultural, educational, social backgrounds)	1
		Dealing with students' parents	4
		Experiencing conflict with colleagues	1
		Not being taken seriously	3
		Being exposed to others' judgment	2
3	Class Management	Managing time	5
		Dealing with trouble makers	4
		Dealing with demotivated and apathetic students	2
		Dealing with all students at the same time	6
		Dealing with budget and facility limitations	5
4	Organizational Pressure	Meeting supervisors' expectations	10
		Feeling occupational insecurity	3
		Disfavoring work hours	2
		Resenting the student-centered approach of schools	2
		Meeting students/their parents' expectations	5
		Being unhappy with payment	5
		Putting up with administrative demands	6

As evident in Table 2, *organizational pressure* in general tensions took the lead with the frequency of thirty- three. Within this category *Meeting supervisors' expectations* is the most challenging one. In contrast, *Social Conflicts* are the least frequent (*N*=11).

General tensions have been investigated in order to identify the portion of identity tensions among all tensions which teachers possess. To clarify what portions of teachers' concerns and tensions are related to identity, there should be claimed that, more than half of their mentioned tensions can be related to identity matters, it is approximately sixteen out of twenty-two tensions.

Subsequently, within all tensions which teachers experienced in their career, the researcher decided to categorize teachers' experiences of identity tensions into five general terms of *Social image and rapport*, *Conflicting Roles*, *Institutional support*, *Self-achievement,* and *Professional Conflicts*, and examine other sub-themes under these five umbrella terms.

As general tensions for nominating these themes, there was an attempt to apply terminologies which have been used in the literature in the case of overlap, for preventing confusion and being more unified. Furthermore, in the occasions that there were not any categories, according to the teachers' speech themes were put in the greater classification in parallel with the literature's name.

All extracted themes are summarized in Table 3 below in order of frequency in their respective categories.

Table 3: Identity Tensions Reported by Iranian EFL Teachers

No	Category	Tensions	Freq.		Examples/subcategories
1	Social image and rapport	Trying to be friendly & genuine but serious at the same time	1		speaking in front of people is stressful perfectionism laughing in the occasion that you mustn't
		Being judged by supervisors and students	2		
		Not being taken seriously (because of age, experience, etc.)	3		
		Being accepted as a peer by colleagues	1		
		Maintaining confidence	2	21	
		Maintaining social distance	5		
		Appearing as a competent and knowledgeable teacher	11		
2	Conflicting Roles	Feeling like a teacher vs. a caregiver or parent	1		feeling like their parents in some occasions
		Feeling like a teacher vs. a monitor to control or entertain the class	6	7	
3	Institutional support	Feeling ignored as a teacher and too much focus on students	2		Having student centered Institutes Having difficulties in satisfying supervisors and managers
		Feeling the need for more support from supervisors	6	24	
		Feeling underpaid for the job demands	16		
4	Self-achievement	Not being able to meet one's own expectations	5		mismatch btw desire self and actual self scare of having boring classes
		Not being able to meet students' or their parents' expectations	5		
		Not being able to create a lively and interesting atmosphere	1	13	
		Having a job with an underestimated social status	2		

According to Table 2, the most frequent identity tensions which have been experienced by teachers belong to "*Feeling underpaid for the job demands*" (*N*=16) which is a subset of *Institutional support.* And the least frequent are *"Not being able to create a lively and interesting atmosphere","* *Feeling like a teacher vs. a caregiver or parent*", "*Being accepted as a peer by colleagues*", "*Trying to be friendly & genuine but serious at the same time*" with the same frequency (*N*=1), belong to various categories.

All in all, the qualitative analysis showed that regarding identity tensions, institutional support is the main concern among Iranian EFL teachers, in contrast, conflicting roles (*N*=7) are the least.

In the quantitative phase, according to the developed questionnaire (Basiri, 2020) by computing the mean value the most frequent tensions have been extracted. Item 15 had the highest mean showing that the teachers experience the identity tension related to this item (i.e., I feel I am underpaid for the workload I do as a teacher.) the most in comparison to the rest of the

tensions. This tension was followed by the tension stated in item 8 (i.e., Now, I think the actual teaching experience is very different from what they taught us in courses and training). On the other hand, tensions stated in items 19, 12, 3, and 18 were those never experienced on average by the teachers. In order to see what categories of tensions teachers experience, the mean value for each subscale was computed. Results showed that tensions related to imposed frustrations were the most frequently experienced kind of tension, and tensions related to social status are the least frequently experienced kind of tension.

With regard to the second research question, to examine the correlation between the gender of EFL teachers on one hand and the degree and type of identity tensions they experience on the other hand, eta, a correlation between a nominal variable and an interval variable, was run. And the result shows that there is no significant relationship between the gender of novice EFL teachers on one hand and the degree and type of identity tensions they experience on the other.

Table 4: Eta (Novice Teachers)

		Gender
Social. Status	Eta	-.096
Conflicting. Roles	Eta	.082
Realistic. Conflicts	Eta	-.059
Frustration. Causes	Eta	-.095
Professional. Conflicts	Eta	.128
Total. Tensions	Eta	-.022

To explore the correlation between the age of EFL teachers on one hand and the degree and type of identity tensions they experience on the other hand, Spearman rho as a correlation between ordinal variables was run. When all teachers are considered, there is a significant inverse relationship between conflicting realities and age (.210) When only novice teachers are considered, there is a significant positive relationship between social status and age (.261).

To investigate the correlation between years of experience of EFL teachers on the one hand and the degree and type of identity tensions they experience on the other hand, eta as a correlation between a nominal variable and an interval variable was run. When all teachers are considered:

Table 7: Eta Correlations (All Teachers)

Interval Variable	Nominal Variable	Eta
Social.Status		-.362
Conflicting.Roles		-.213
Realistic.Conflicts	Experience Level	-.242
Frustration.Causes		-.091
Professional.Conflicts		-.373
Total.Tensions		-.341

There is a significant relationship between social status (. -362), conflicting roles (-.213), realistic goals (-.242), professional conflicts (-.373), and total tensions (-.341) mean scores on the one hand, and experience level on the other hand.

When novice teachers are only considered:

There is a significant relationship between social status (-.362), conflicting roles
(-.213), realistic goals (-.242), and total tensions (-.341) mean scores on the one hand, and experience level on the other hand.

To examine the correlation between the educational background of EFL teachers on the one hand and the degree and type of identity tensions they experience on the other hand, eta as a correlation between a nominal variable and an interval variable was run. When all teachers are considered:

Table 8: Directional Measures (All Teachers)

Interval Variable	Nominal Variable	Eta Value
Social. Status		.170
Conflicting. Roles		.097
Realistic. Conflicts	Educational Background	.094
Frustration. Causes		.227
Professional. Conflicts		.075
Total. Tensions		.087

There is a significant relationship between imposed frustrations (.227) mean scores on the one hand, and educational background on the other hand.

When novice teachers are only considered:

Table 9: Directional Measures (Novice Teachers)

Interval Variable	Nominal Variable	Eta Value
Social. Status		.195
Conflicting. Roles		.288
Realistic. Conflicts	Educational Background	.204
Frustration. Causes		.514
Professional. Conflicts		.115
Total. Tensions		.247

There is a significant relationship between conflicting roles (.288), realistic goals (.204), imposed frustrations (.514), and total tensions (.247) mean scores on the one hand, and educational background on the other hand. These findings are further elaborated on and discussed in the next section.

V. DISCUSSION

With respect to the quantitative phase of the study, item 15 has the highest mean showing that the teachers experience the identity tension related to "I feel I am underpaid for the workload I do as a teacher" the most in comparison to the rest of the tensions. This tension is followed by the tension stated in item 8. "Now, I think the actual teaching experience is very different from what they taught us in courses and trainings".). The top three of professional identity tensions experienced by beginning teachers were 'Wanting to care for students, versus being expected to be tough', 'Wanting to invest in a private life versus feeling pressured to spend time and energy on work' and 'Experiencing conflicts between one's own and others' orientations regarding learning to teach'.

In fact, items 8 and 15 are the only items with mean answers above 3 (i.e., "often" on the Likert scale) showing that teachers "often" experience these two tensions. On the other hand, tensions stated in items 19, 12, 3, and 18 are those never experienced on the average by the teachers.

Pillen, et al., (2013) identifies four main categories of teacher identity tensions:

1. Personal-professional tensions: These tensions arise from the conflict between teachers'

personal identities and their professional identities.

2. Intrapersonal tensions: These tensions arise from the conflict within teachers' own identities, such as between their beliefs about teaching and their experiences in the classroom.

3. Interpersonal tensions: These tensions arise from the conflict between teachers and others, such as students, parents, or administrators.

4. Contextual tensions: These tensions arise from the conflict between teachers and the context in which they work, such as the school culture or educational policies.

The results of this article are consistent with those of the previous study of Pillen, et al., (2013) in the case of intrapersonal tensions which are in line with item 8 in which the participants claim that actual teaching experience is different from what they taught them in courses. On the other hand, item 15 which is the most frequent tension in this study, feeling underpaid for workload, isn't mentioned in Pillen's study. Items 2,10,13,17 are in line with these tensions arise from the conflict between teachers and others, such as students, parents, or administrators. Additionally, personal and professional identities have been mentioned by participants as in item 16, I wish I could spend more time on my personal life but there's always a lot from work to do at home,

According to the gained results, there is a relationship between educational background and identity tensions and novice teachers experience more tensions than experienced teachers. Nonetheless, according to Pillen et al., (2012), the main article for this study, there is no significant relationship between educational background and identity tensions.

The relationship between gender and teacher identity tensions is a complex and nuanced issue. There is no single answer that can capture the full complexity of this relationship. Although some studies have found that women teachers may experience more identity tensions than men teachers, in the present study there is no relationship between gender and teacher identity tensions.

One study, conducted by Day and Kington (2008), found that women teachers were more likely than men teachers to experience tensions between their personal and professional identities. This may be because women teachers are often expected to conform to traditional gender roles, which can conflict with the demands of teaching.

Another study, conducted by Beijaard, et al., (2009), found that women teachers were more likely than men teachers to experience tensions between their beliefs about teaching and their experiences in the classroom. This may be because women teachers are more likely to be working in schools with high levels of poverty or violence, which can make it difficult to live up to their ideals of teaching. However, it is important to note that these studies are just two examples, and there is no clear consensus on the relationship between gender and teacher identity tensions. More research is needed to fully understand this complex issue.

The present research mostly concerns a quantitative approach to verify the number of professional identity tensions, whereas Pillen et al., (2013) laid emphasis on a more qualitative approach based upon literature review and interviews.

Based on Fadie Hanna (2019), there are nine categories for tensions which of all nine constructs found in that research, seven are in line with Pillen et al., 's (2013) which reflected thirteen professional identity tensions. And the other two constructs, teaching in urban classrooms and leaving training versus becoming a teacher, have nothing to do with what have been found in this article and Pillen's.Anspal (2018) found that student teachers described themselves as teachers and their experiences through the tensions they experience. Three different themes were identified: (1) conception of self-versus professional role expectations; (2) role expectations versus university training; and (3) multiple professional role expectations. These themes are incongruent with what has been extracted in this article as self-achievement such as 'Not being able to meet one's own expectations and supervisor's expectations', a feeling that teachers called "mismatch btw desire self and actual self.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study focused on the identity tensions which have been experienced by Iranian EFL teachers. These tensions are defined as incongruences in the balance between the personal and professional aspects of developing one's identity as a teacher embodied in subjectivities and ideologies of the individuals divergent from what is imposed or expected by the professional context (Beijard et al., 2004; Pillen et al., 2013b; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998).The findings from the initial qualitative and the follow-up quantitative phases

of the study showed that, based on the interview, the most frequent identity tensions which were reported by novice teachers were lacking knowledge and meeting supervisors' expectations. In addition, based on the developed questionnaire the most frequent identity tensions were I feel I am underpaid for the workload I do as a teacher and I think the actual teaching experience is very different from what they taught us in courses and training. Subsequently, there is no significant relationship between the gender of novice EFL teachers and identity tensions and a significant relationship between age, experience level, and educational background.

A number of theoretical and pedagogical implications are derived from these findings. First, researchers in the realm of teacher identity can benefit from the proposed taxonomy of identity tensions and the resulting questionnaire, especially in EFL contexts similar to Iran. Second, language teachers, particularly less experienced ones, should become familiar more with various sorts of identity tensions and those which their coworker experience and have extensive insight into the field of TEFL. Also, supervisors and mentors are recommended to take identity tensions and the resulting emotions extremely serious by providing both professional and personal support to their younger colleagues as they pass through the early stages of identity development.

Similar to any other study, the current research was affected by a number of limitations, which can be dealt with in future studies. The number of male and female teachers as well as the teachers in diverse training groups were not balanced in the current study. Although it might be argued that these proportions are actually representing their real portions in the Iranian EFL teachers' population, it is recommended to replicate the study with cohorts more balanced in number.

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Appendix A: Developed Interview

1. Do you think teaching English is a stressful job?

2. As an EFL teacher, what kinds of tensions have you faced most frequently in your practice?

3. Have you ever felt confused or insecure about your role, responsibilities, authority, or value as a teacher?

4. If we define identity tension as an array of conflicts and internal struggle affecting your self-image with regard to unpleasant situations, conflicts or mismatches between your desired *self* and your perception of your*self* in reality, or any other confusions regarding your identity as a language teacher, do you remember any instances when you faced an identity tension? What was it?

5. Have you ever encountered the following tensions in terms of your identity as a teacher? (A list of tensions)

6. Do you think these tensions have reduced or changed in nature since the time you started your career as a novice teacher?

Appendix B: Identity Tensions

Gender: [F] [M] Age: ......

Years of experience as a teacher: [less than 1] [1-3] [3-5] [more than 5]

Which one(s) are true about how you started your career:

[1] I have passed (I am passing) university courses or long-term training programs.

[2] I have passed short-term teacher training courses.

[3] I have had on-job-training courses.

[4] My academic studies are irrelevant; I just started teaching and I learned during my job.

No.	Statement	Never	Rarely	Someti	Often	Usually,	Always
A. Which of the following tensions have you experienced as an early-career English teacher? How often? Mark the proper option from "never" to "always".							
1	I feel I am still a student in need of learning more but people expect me to act like a professional teacher.	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	I feel ignored as a teacher and the whole focus of the institute seems to be on the students.	0	1	2	3	4	5
3	I think nobody takes me seriously because I have just started my career.	0	1	2	3	4	5
4	I'd like to spend more time on my self-development as a teacher but I'm too busy meeting the job demands.	0	1	2	3	4	5
5	I find it difficult to maintain my confidence as a teacher.	0	1	2	3	4	5
6	I feel incompetent in managing my class professionally.	0	1	2	3	4	5
7	I'm afraid I fail to appear as a competent and knowledgeable teacher.	0	1	2	3	4	5
8	Now, I think the actual teaching experience is very different from what they taught us in courses and trainings.	0	1	2	3	4	5
9	I wonder if my job is to deliver my teaching or to control the students and their behavior and to entertain them.	0	1	2	3	4	5
10	I feel uncomfortable because I think I am being judged by supervisors, colleagues, or my students and their families.	0	1	2	3	4	5
11	I feel supervisors and colleagues treat me like a student but I want to take more responsibility in my career.	0	1	2	3	4	5
12	I feel my students are bored or disengaged because I fail to lead a lively and interesting class.	0	1	2	3	4	5
13	I wish my supervisors were more supportive.	0	1	2	3	4	5
14	I find it difficult to maintain a proper social distance with my students.	0	1	2	3	4	5
15	I feel I am underpaid for the workload I do as a teacher.	0	1	2	3	4	5
16	I wish I could spend more time on my personal life but there's always a lot from work to do at home.	0	1	2	3	4	5
17	I feel I can't meet students' or their families' expectations.	0	1	2	3	4	5
18	I feel left-out in my workplace because it seems to me that my colleagues haven't accepted me just yet.	0	1	2	3	4	5

19	I'm not happy with my social status as a teacher.	0	1	2	3	4	5
20	Since I have started my career, I have realized this job is very different from what I expected.	0	1	2	3	4	5
21	I feel confused whether I am a teacher or a caregiver/parent for my students.	0	1	2	3	4	5
22	When dealing with students, I find it difficult to create a balance between being tough as a teacher and friendly as a genuine person.	0	1	2	3	4	5
23	I feel my ideas and personal theories of teaching are very different from what others say about it.	0	1	2	3	4	5
24	I think I can do much better and I'm not happy with my current performance as a teacher.	0	1	2	3	4	5
25	I feel confused because administrators or supervisors display all sorts of conflicting views and I'm not sure who I should really listen to.	0	1	2	3	4	5