

EXPLORING AN INDONESIAN EFL TEACHER'S IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT: A STORY OF HYBRIDITY IN LIMINALITY

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Abstract: *The Indonesian programme of Pendidikan Profesi Guru (PPG) or the Teacher Professional Education (TPE) best describes a liminal space where its participants transform from uncertified status to certified ones. This paper uses the lens of liminality theory to explore the experience of an Indonesian in-service EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher's identity reconstruction during a liminal period of TPE. The participant's liminality made her adopt a new identity as a teacher-student hybrid in becoming a certified EFL teacher. In this single case study, the data were collected from two interviews with Olga (a pseudonym), her reflective writings and lesson plans, and video observations of the teaching practicum. The findings reveal that being a teacher-student hybrid, Olga performed multiple roles simultaneously: as a teacher, student and novice researcher. Olga faced various professional identity tensions during the programme. By exercising agency, Olga transformed tensions into learning experiences and benefited from her hybridity in that it afforded her an opportunity for self-development of learning, cognition, emotion and agency. Thus, this study offered a new way of understanding hybridity in liminality experienced by an EFL teacher while attending an online professional education. The article concludes with implications for educational policies and practices, suggesting the need for continuous support, integration of hybridity, adjustments in teacher training, addressing identity tensions, and conducting future research to enhance teacher development and effectiveness.*

Keywords: *EFL teacher identity, professional identity tension, hybrid identities, liminal space, Teacher Professional Education (Pendidikan Profesi Guru)*

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Introduction

Understanding teacher identity and how it is constructed is necessary because teacher identity plays a crucial role as it holds significant implications in guiding, elucidating, rationalising, and comprehending teachers' professional existence with respect to society and community (MacLure, 1993; Teng, 2019a). As such, any teacher professional development programmes, including *Pendidikan Profesi Guru (PPG)* or, in English, Teacher Professional Education (hereafter abbreviated as TPE), must address teacher identity and its construction (Kong, 2019) to be effective and meaningful for the teachers. Teachers' experience of identity construction and tensions have been explored widely in the last two decades. However, much of the scholarship on professional identity tensions focuses on student teachers or early career teachers (Hong, Day & Greene, 2018; Kılıç & Cinkara, 2020; Loo, Maidom & Kitjaroonchai, 2019; Nasari & Molana, 2020; Schaap, van der Want, Oolbekkink-Marchand & Meijer, 2021; van der Wal, Oolbekkink-Marchand, Schaap & Meijer, 2019). Research on experienced teacher identity in the EFL context is relatively scarce. For instance, Rodrigues, de Pietri, Sanchez, and Kuchah (2018) investigated experienced teachers' roles as mentors in developing pre-service English teachers' professional identities. Huang and Yip (2021) studied experienced EFL teachers' professional identity construction in changing from traditional face-to-face teaching to online at the higher education level. Badia and Liesa (2022) examined experienced teachers' characteristics of professional identity through their voice of I-position.

Identity construction of experienced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers during professional education in the Indonesian context remains underexplored. This paper aims to fill the gap by examining Indonesian EFL teacher identity construction using the lens of liminality and hybridity. This paper reports on a study exploring how an experienced EFL teacher in Indonesia – Olga (a pseudonym), reconstructed her professional identity whilst attending the TPE programme to be a certified teacher. Specifically, this article attempts to answer the following questions:

- (i) What learning experience did Olga face as a teacher-student hybrid in the liminal space of the online TPE?
- (ii) How did her experience during TPE transform her identity?

The answers to the questions are expected to give us a better understanding of how an Indonesian EFL teacher who is still learning the language develops her professional identity to become a certified EFL teacher.

Study Context: Current Teacher Education in Indonesia

Teacher education in Indonesia is carried out by *Lembaga Pendidikan Tenaga Kependidikan* or *LPTKs* (Teacher Education Institutions). *LPTKs* offer four-

year undergraduate programmes, which operate under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Indonesian government appoints *LPTKs* to run the government programme for teacher certification. Since Law Number 14 (2005) was enacted, all teachers must have a four-year university degree and obtain teacher certification. The Indonesian government has aimed to increase the standards of the teaching profession by implementing the Teacher Certification Programme (TCP), which was initially conducted in 2007. In 2009, the government introduced a new teacher certification programme called *Pendidikan Profesi Guru (PPG)* or Teacher Professional Education (TPE), based on the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 8/2009. Teacher certification can only be obtained through undertaking *PPG* or TPE as the enactment of the Republic of Indonesia Government Regulation No. 19 of 2017.

The TPE programme offers two teacher certification pathways: the pre-service TPE programme (*PPG Pra-jabatan*) and the in-service TPE programme (*PPG Dalam Jabatan*). The TPE curriculum is designed to ensure that Indonesian teachers meet the standards of the teaching profession, which include four competencies: pedagogic competence, personal qualities, social competence and subject matter competence. These competencies are stated and elaborated in the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 16/2007. The TPE curriculum emphasises the integration of the four 21st Century skills (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication skills or 4Cs), higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), and technology in the classroom. Besides, teachers are expected to be innovative and capable of conducting Classroom Action Research or CAR (*Penelitian Tindakan Kelas* or *PTK*) to improve the quality of the teaching-learning process.

The 2020 TPE for in-service teachers was specially redesigned to be conducted entirely online. The course had a tight and inflexible schedule as all activities were organised in a centralised Moodle-based learning management system (LMS) from the Ministry of Education and Culture. The research took place during the four-month online TPE from August to November 2020. The course required the participants to attend a synchronous meeting with the lecturer twice every day: a morning session and an afternoon session. In the morning session, the lecturer would explain the topic and assignments. The afternoon session was for reflection, in which the participants shared their learning experiences and challenges with the lecturer and the other participants. The last month of the course focused on the online teaching practicum while conducting CAR, during which the participants practised conducting online teaching with their students.

Literature Review

Liminality Concept

Liminality is a concept that originated from anthropological work by Victor Turner (1969) and Victor Turner and Roger Abrahams (1995), which was developed from a study by Arnold van Gennep (1960) on tribal rituals. The word “liminal” is derived from the Latin root *limen*, meaning “threshold.” Liminal space means crossing over space, where one has left something behind but is not yet fully in something else. Van Gennep (1960; 2004) describes liminal space as a phase in one’s life in which one is in the process of becoming or transitioning in rites of passage. However, the contemporary usage of liminality can “describe the psychological process of transitioning across boundaries and borders” (Larson, 2014, p. 1032).

In the context of teacher education, Cook-Sather (2006) considers the final stage of teacher preparation, which includes student teaching, as a liminal space describing the process of becoming a teacher. In this space, the transformation process takes place from a student identity to a teacher identity. During a liminal phase, a person has to cope with identity conflicts and construct new identities (Croft, Currie & Lockett, 2015). In this state, “a liminal individual” (Turner & Abrahams, 1995) exists between two stages or identities, not fully belonging to either. Such a situation can lead to identity confusion. A liminal space may not be a pleasant space to dwell in since the person is “in between two identity constructions: when they are neither one thing nor the other” (Beech, 2010, p. 2) and when they become “structurally invisible” (Beech, 2010; Rantatalo & Lindberg, 2018). However, according to Rantatalo and Lindberg (2018), liminal experience may not only refer to belonging in neither but may also mean “belonging in more than one practice” (p. 354). In the case of double belonging, a person can be called a “hybrid” (bhabha, 2004), which will be discussed in the following section.

Hybrid Identities

In postcolonial theory, hybridity means the creation of new transcultural forms resulting from contact between cultures at the time of colonisation (bhabha, 2004; Easthope, 1998). As a result of cultural contact, hybridity can take various forms, such as linguistic and racial forms. Adewale, D’Amico, and Salas (2018) explain that hybridity is the synthesis result of two (or more) identities that form a new identity. In colonisation, the double belonging of a hybrid individual is perceived as a defect that results in being marginalised as they belong to a “third space” (bhabha, 2004). However, specifically in professional contexts, Croft et al. (2015) define “professional hybrids as individuals with a professional background who have moved into formal managerial roles” (p. 2), for example, hybrid physicians (Mjåset, 2020), hybrid nurses (Rivet, Steeves, Brennan,

Creamer & Haverly, 2013), teacher-researcher hybrids (Russo, 2020; Yung, 2022) and teacher-leader hybrid (Barkhuizen & Strauss, 2020). A study by Ackesjö, Lindqvist, and Nordäng (2019) found that professional hybrids who face or are exposed to two different professional contexts benefit from it as it allows them to observe the situation from two different points of view. Yet, other studies reveal that professional hybrids may experience identity conflicts as they perform the hybrid roles (Croft et al., 2015). For example, being positioned as a school head, a teacher might be in conflict about whether he should represent the interests of his teacher colleagues or the ruling foundation.

In this paper, hybridity refers to the participant's identities as a teacher-student hybrid. Olga's hybridity was the consequence of being a teacher who is attending a professional education. Using the lens of the hybridity concept, we can analyse how hybrid individuals mitigate the tensions between their identities (Machin, 2017). Liminality and hybridity theories can help us understand a teacher's experience developing a professional identity as they attend TPE. Being an in-service EFL teacher attending TPE results in having hybrid identities as a teacher and a student simultaneously, and the participant is positioned in a liminal space, transitioning from an uncertified to a certified teacher. Applying the concept of liminality allows us to understand how the teacher-student hybrid manages to move from an uncertified to a certified professional, how she develops internally, and the impact that comes with the development (Croft et al., 2015).

Teacher Identity and Professional Identity Tensions

Teacher identity incorporates personal and professional identities (Barkhuizen & Mendieta, 2020, p. 5). Professional identity is related to one's occupation and context (Teng, 2017). It incorporates how we perceive ourselves in relation to our profession. Professional identity is defined as "a particular type of identity that is focused on an individual's sense of self in relation to their occupation, work or professional life" (Fraser-Arnott, 2016, p. 106). According to Billot (2010), professional identity incorporates "the values, beliefs and practices held in common with others of that affiliation" (p. 172). Thus, professional identity is not limited to answering who we are and what we do. Rather, it brings together the person's knowledge, values and beliefs, which underlie their everyday practice as a professional (Watson, 2006). Professional identity is often linked to specific images that people may perceive about the profession and also images that the professional holds (Beijaard & Meijer, 2017). An individual's professional identity comes from a sense of belonging to a specific professional group.

The notion of identity is complex; therefore, teacher professional identity is also not easy to define. Generally, teacher identity is understood as how teachers see themselves as teachers (Teng, 2019b). Teacher identity also has the fundamental nature of identity as being multiple, dynamic and contextual

(Barkhuizen & Strauss, 2020). Teacher identity is never fixed and is constantly under construction as it is context-dependent (Riyanti, 2017; Teng, 2019a). According to Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt (2000), the dynamics of teacher identity depend on three factors: teaching context, teaching experience and teachers' biography. Meanwhile, Yazan (2018) adds three other influential factors in language teacher identity. These factors are teacher learning, teacher cognition, and teacher emotion. The interaction of these factors brings about the complexity and dynamics of teacher identity.

In professional identity construction, teachers, especially in their early careers, often face tensions (Schaap et al., 2021). The term "tension" refers to "feelings of inner turmoil" (Berry, 2008), which broadly covers worries, competence gaps, conflicts and contradictions (Pillen, Beijaard & den Brok, 2013). Professional identity tension, therefore, covers worries, competence gaps, conflicts and contradictions that one may experience within the context of EFL teaching practice (Mak, 2011). In relation to the teaching profession, Douwe Beijaard and Meijer (2017) and Alsup (2006) identify three kinds of tensions: (1) being in a transition period, for example, from a student to a teacher, (2) dissonance between competence and professional expectations, and (3) misalignment between prescribed behaviours and the practice in reality. Although experiencing tensions seems to be unpleasant (Hahl & Mikulec, 2018), it can also have a positive impact on one's professional development (Anspal, Leijen & Löfström, 2018; Schatz-Oppenheimer & Dvir, 2014).

Method

Participant

This single case study explored Olga's (pseudonym) experience attending a professional education to obtain a teaching certificate. Olga, in her mid-30s, had been working as an English teacher for 11 years when she became involved in this study. She was married and had an eight-month-old baby. Olga earned her bachelor's degree in English in 2007. After graduating, she worked as a secretary for two years before returning to her hometown, where she met a college friend who told her about a vacant teaching position at her current school. The school was among the best private schools in the city in terms of students' economic backgrounds and academic achievements. Despite her good English proficiency, Olga struggled hard at the beginning of her teaching career as she lacked pedagogical knowledge. Yet, she found excitement in doing so. Olga was selected to represent a small group of EFL teachers working at a privileged private lower secondary school in a small city in a densely populated province in Indonesia. The students were from middle- and higher-income families. She taught grades 7 to 9, who were mostly mid to upper beginners.

Instruments and Data collection

This article reports a single case study of an Indonesian EFL teacher attending a professional education to be a certified EFL teacher. Despite its lack of generalisability, a single case study offers an in-depth understanding of the subject (Creswell & Poth, 2018) by collecting narrative data based on the subjective experience of the participant in the natural setting (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2010) by focusing not only on the product but also process (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). The qualitative nature of the study offered an opportunity to explore Olga's experience as a teacher-student hybrid in depth. Ethics clearance was obtained from the Swinburne Ethics Committee as a part of a bigger project.

Residing in Indonesia, Prabandari collected the data throughout the four-month programme from August to November 2020 using two semi-structured interviews as the main data source. The interviews were conducted using Zoom at the beginning of August 2020 and upon the completion of the programme early in January 2021. Two interview guides were prepared to capture the participant's changes and development of her professional identity from her perspective. Other supporting instruments include the participant's reflective journals, reflective forums, video observation, and three teaching practicum documents. The ten reflective journals and forums were about Olga's experience during the programme; they were written as parts of her weekly assignments. The reflective forum constituted a discussion forum that allowed participants to reflect and share experiences collaboratively. The course concluded with a series of online teaching practicums. Prior to the practicums, Olga was required to prepare the lesson plans. The videos were recorded in synchronous class sessions of the teaching practicums conducted in November 2020, and each session lasted for forty minutes. Based on the lesson plans, Olga taught her class using Zoom, which she recorded and submitted as the course assignments. The reflective journals, practicum documents and videos were analysed as secondary data to provide evidence supporting the findings from the interviews. These multiple sources of data help maintain the study's trustworthiness.

Data analysis

The research used the primary data derived from the interview, triangulated with supporting data sources such as reflections, videos, and teaching documents to ensure the credibility and validity of the findings and analysis. The narratives derived from the interview transcripts were treated as main data and were analysed following the thematic analysis procedure from Virginia Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, and Terry (2018). While the first author did data collection, all authors performed the analysis. The analysis process involved both manual and software-assisted methods, utilising NVivo12 software to streamline the identification of recurring themes. The teacher's narratives

were read and reread, and the video recordings were observed several times to uncover recurring themes (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Braun et al., 2018). This process indicates the reflexive nature of thematic analysis (Kudaibergenov & Lee, 2022). By employing the thematic analysis, researchers gain valuable insights into the teachers' identity development, illuminating the factors that shape their professional identities and their perceptions of their role as educators (Barkhuizen, 2016; Bullough, 2015).

Findings and Discussion

Olga's Experience of Hybridity in Liminal Space

This section answers the first research question, elaborating on Olga's learning experience as a teacher-student hybrid in the liminal space of the online TPE. During the TPE, she embodied "a liminal individual" (Turner & Abrahams, 1995), navigating the hybrid roles of teacher and student. Olga's narrative described her identity learning while transitioning from an uncertified English teacher to a certified one as she undertook the TPE. Olga felt fortunate because she could join the fully online TPE, which meant she did not have to leave home and could teach her classes and care for her baby. Olga acknowledged that she benefited from being a liminal individual, as she expressed in the interview:

I was facilitated to be more professional. I felt awakened. I was grateful to have time to learn and experiment, although it was not an easy journey because it required me to leave my comfort zone. Once I entered the TPE, I had to be willing to unlearn and re-learn many things to experiment with new ideas. Sometimes, I felt burdened, but I knew I had to try. (Interview 2)

The excerpt suggests a newfound awareness and understanding of her potential or capabilities. Her hybridity lent her a lot of opportunities to develop her professionalism. It also signifies her willingness to challenge existing knowledge and embrace new perspectives, which is an exercise of agency (Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2015).

Olga also set her criteria for success. In her view, she considered herself successful if she could show her best efforts to succeed and pass the TPE and help her peers by sharing and assisting those who needed her help when she said:

I considered myself successful if I could handle all of this "crowdedness" due to my multiple roles, as a wife and a mother of an eight-month-old baby and as a teacher at school while undertaking my responsibility as a TPE student. That is a success for me. But, more importantly, later, beyond the TPE, I should be able to maintain my enthusiasm for learning, ensuring it will not decrease. That is the real success. (Interview 1)

The excerpt showcases a beautiful connection between the two types of success. The individual recognises juggling their current roles as a stepping stone to cultivating a lasting love for learning, which will empower them to tackle future challenges and fulfil their potential in the long run (Block & Betts, 2016).

However, while learning to improve her subject matter expertise, pedagogical and didactical competencies and reflective skills, her teacher identity was challenged as she faced professional identity tensions and experienced several points of disjuncture. These tensions resulted from Olga's being a teacher-student hybrid and a teacher-researcher hybrid. Such tensions resulted from structural inequality and a heavy teaching load as a hybrid individual, which could constrain teacher agency (Liyanage & Walker, 2023). The subsequent discussion presents Olga's learning experience during the programme, the tensions she faced and how she handled them and succeeded in the programme. Figure 1 illustrates Olga's hybrid identities, which she adopted as a consequence of participating in TPE while retaining her role as an active teacher.

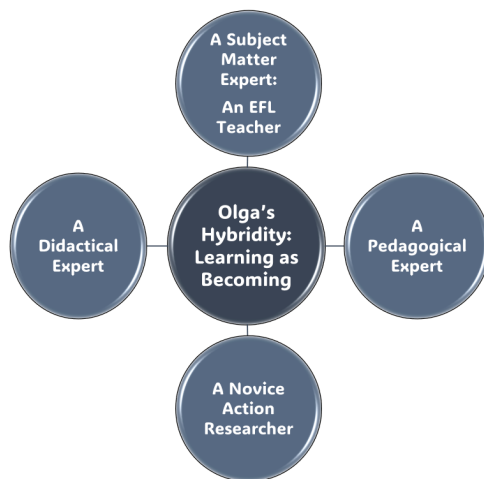


Figure 1. *Hybridity in Liminality*
Multifaceted Teacher Professional Identity Development

Being a teacher-student hybrid

Learning to be a subject matter expert

Beijaard et al. (2000) argue that “teachers require a deep and full understanding of the subject area” (p. 751). To be a competent English teacher, Olga showed enthusiasm in improving her mastery of the subject matter. The programme's first month was allocated for material deepening, including topics about various types of texts and their structures. She wrote in her reflection, “I re-learn them. Understanding and comparing the social functions of texts, text structures,

and the language features of the texts are important to enrich my knowledge (Reflection 1).”

When Olga related the subject contents that she learned in TPE to how they could be helpful for her students, she noted, “My challenge is making students understand and apply them in their daily lives. Later, I will utilise any application to help make learning more fun and understandable (Reflection 1).” It suggests that as a student, Olga was happy to gain new knowledge, but as a teacher, she was made aware of the responsibility to share what she had learned with her students. However, Olga experienced discomfort arising from a perceived inadequacy in her linguistic abilities because she was expected to be a role model in language use (Kudaibergenov & Lee, 2020; Nunan, 2017). It happened in the first practice teaching when Olga greeted her class with, “How do you do?” whereas she should have said, “How are you?” One of her students replied, “How do you do?” Olga realised her mistake when she played back the recording during the discussion meeting with the lecturers and peers, and the lecturer brought up the issue in the discussion.

Learning to be a pedagogical expert: Integrating 4Cs and HOTS

As pedagogues, teachers are responsible for students’ character building, including teaching them norms and values (Beijaard et al., 2000; Chowdhury, 2016; Veugelers & Vedder, 2003). To improve her pedagogical competence in the TPE, Olga learned the importance of teaching 21st-century skills, especially critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (the 4Cs) and higher-order thinking Skills (HOTS) to her students. For Olga, delivering lessons that allow her students to develop the 4Cs and, especially, HOTS was a big challenge. Olga experienced tensions related to a dissonance between competence and professional expectations. She knew a lesson should be learner-centred, promote HOTS and integrate technology. However, Olga voiced doubts about her ability in her reflection and discussion forum: “I feel that my teaching hasn’t involved students’ participation often. And the main thing I have to improve in my lesson plan is to emphasise the HOTS element. I have to learn even harder (Discussion Forum 3).” Tensions may occur when teachers are faced with “two kinds of standards” (Liyanage & Walker, 2023, p. 433). The excerpt describes Olga encountering distress upon realising that she had not met the expectations to promote her students’ engagement in learning while integrating HOTS into her lesson.

Olga’s other tension was caused by a misalignment between her prescribed behaviour and reality (Beijaard & Meijer, 2017; Beijaard et al., 2000). The findings revealed a situation in which the tension occurred. As prescribed in the curriculum, Olga had to integrate the 4Cs, HOTS and technology into her lesson. She planned to teach Greeting Cards to her students. To accommodate the 4Cs, HOTS and technology, Olga assigned students to create greeting cards using

Canva and later asked them to give each other feedback on the design. However, she found: “The students showed interest in using Canva when writing greeting cards. However, they tended to copy designs from Canva instead of using their creativity to design their own (Interview 2).”

Olga had imagined her students would produce creative greeting cards using Canva. However, she expressed her disappointment during the meeting with the lecturer. On the one hand, Olga succeeded in integrating Canva into her lessons. On the other hand, she found the reality that she had not generated creative space (Lorenzi & White, 2019) for her students as she expected. From this experience, Olga learned the importance of sharing the evaluation rubric with students and discussing it with them before she gave the assignment.

Learning to be a Didactical Expert: Integrating Technology into the Classroom

As didactical experts, teachers are responsible for planning, executing, and evaluating their lessons (Beijaard et al., 2000). With the fast development of technology, the TPE requires teachers to possess Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) (Koehler, Mishra & Cain, 2013). Olga shared that she learned to design lessons which integrated technology. She learned to conduct synchronous and asynchronous online classes. Olga practised using various digital platforms in her online class, believing integrating technology into her lesson would make students interested and motivated to learn English.

Olga was fortunate as she taught in an urban school; her students were mostly from middle- and upper-class families. She did not have difficulties inviting students to synchronous meetings or when she assigned them to use YouTube, Google Classroom, Padlet, Google Forms, and Quizziz. Furthermore, the TPE curriculum also requires participants to learn how to create digital-based and internet-based learning materials, media, and assessments. Olga also learned video production and editing. It means that Olga moved up from generic digital competence to didactic digital competence (Brevik, Gudmundsdottir, Lund & Strømme, 2019). During the programme, she had to produce six videos documenting her teaching practicum. Olga recorded herself presenting materials and her synchronous class meetings using Zoom. She had to edit the videos of her class sessions, provide a title, add some background music, give simple animation for the captions, and finally upload them on YouTube. Olga realised that her technological skills needed a lot of improvement. In her reflection, watching her own videos, Olga could spot her weaknesses in teaching online classes; she wrote: “I noticed that I changed positions a lot when speaking, which made the volume of my voice sound unstable. Besides, I need to minimise the noise when taking the video (Reflection 5).”

Although video making and editing were big challenges for her, Olga showed agency in learning it (Schulte, 2019). She put a lot of effort into finding tutorial videos on the internet and searched for tutorial videos on YouTube. This indicates that Olga exhibited transformative agency (Brevik et al., 2019), meaning that Olga did not just adapt to situations but actively changed them for the better. She dreamt about being able to produce learning materials of her own instead of using the available materials on the internet.

Being a teacher-researcher hybrid: Conducting Classroom Action Research

As a TPE student, Olga was required to conduct Classroom Action Research (CAR) while doing the teaching practicum. CAR is preferred as it allows teachers to research that is “small-scale, contextualised and local in character” (Burns & Rochsantiningsih, 2006, p. 22) by identifying and solving teaching-learning issues within a specific classroom context. Olga focused on improving her students’ learning by taking into account the unique characteristics of her classroom. When adopted into daily practice, the self-reflective and systematic nature of action research can promote teachers’ continuous professional development (Yuan & Burns, 2017; Yuan & Mak, 2018). Adopting a teacher-researcher identity was another big challenge for Olga. She admitted that CAR was something new to her. In the discussion forum, Olga consulted her topic and asked for approval from the lecturer:

The topic of my lesson is greeting cards. I think it is an easy topic for most students. However, they seem unmotivated to learn. Therefore, I think I will use Canva to teach the lesson. So, the title for my CAR is “Using Canva to motivate students to write greeting cards”. Is it a good topic for research? (Discussion Forum 3)

The excerpt shows that Olga was uncertain about exploring Canva application in writing instruction to address a contemporary trend and potential real-world implications. Conducting action research in the teaching practicum can trigger the emergence of tensions (Berry, 2008). During the consultation session, she also asked about the theories to be included in the literature review and the research instrument to collect data for her CAR. This evidenced Olga’s struggle to be a reflective teacher and adopt a hybrid identity as a novice teacher-researcher. She had decided on her research topic, but she found it challenging to proceed. She shared:

I had difficulties finding examples of data collection instruments in the form of observations and questionnaires for my CAR.

I feel there were still many weaknesses related to my CAR and innovation. Writing a scientific paper on CAR seems complicated. (Reflection 5)

Olga's reflection evidenced that although CAR promotes systematic reflection among teachers (Yuan & Burns 2017), conducting it requires good preparation. Olga felt unprepared for it because of her limited knowledge at the beginning. However, when she accomplished her CAR, she learned that conducting CAR trained her to become more critical to her professional learning (Yang & Han, 2022). Sharing experiences through group reflection during mentoring promoted learning (Ardi, Widyaningsih & Widiati, 2023; Smith, Tuyan, Békés & Serra, 2021). This forum constituted an arena for Olga to exercise agency (Li, 2023) as she began to position herself as a novice action researcher.

Olga's Transformation of Teacher Identity

This section provides an answer to the second research question, illustrating how Olga's experiences transformed her identity. Professional identity tensions can bring positive or negative impacts (Beijaard, 2019). In Olga's case, these tensions bring more positive than negative impacts. Olga embarked on TPE with a clear goal.

I joined TPE not to earn professional allowance as a certified teacher but because I had witnessed previously certified teachers who did not show improvement in their teaching practice, although their salary was doubled. I don't want to be like them. I want to succeed in TPE so that I can apply what I have learned to improve my teaching, which will impact my students' learning. I just want to be a better teacher. (Interview 1)

Olga's positive mindset made her perceive her TPE learning environment positively. Her sense of empowerment enabled her to see opportunities. Feeling empowered, Olga was able to recognise available resources, which fuelled her self-agency (Teng, 2019b). When Olga experienced professional identity tensions, she showed agentic behaviours when navigating them. Her agency manifested itself in four ways, which van der Wal et al. (2019) identify as impacting behavioural responses: reflecting on experience, seeking peer support, seeking assistance, and taking action.

Firstly, Olga demonstrated agency by reflecting on her experience when she sensed that she had done wrong. She wrote, "Every time I find something bad related to my teaching, I remind myself not to do it again; although it may not work at the beginning, I keep watching myself. I know sometimes it takes time to change bad habits; it takes a process to improve (Reflection 6)." Olga felt awakened when she observed her teaching practice. By reflecting on her negative experience, Olga actively involved her cognition in the process of sense-making, which helped her arrive at a new awareness for better practice in the future. According to Hahl and Mikulec (2018), the reflective habit contributes to identity development, which is indicated by an agency to improve practice.

Olga evidently exercised her agency by reflecting on her performance (Yang & Han, 2022).

Secondly, Olga sought support from her peers when she had difficulties. Olga took the initiative to voice her confusion because she wanted to know if she was not alone on the battlefield. Olga shared her problems in the discussion forum,

To me, designing classroom activities which accommodate HOT is not easy. I still need to learn more. How about you, bapak, ibu?

I had difficulties finding examples of data collection instruments, such as observation forms and questionnaires. Also, I found it hard to write Chapters 3 and 4. It's because conducting CAR is something new to me. Do you have the same problem? (Discussion Forum 3)

Peers played a significant role in supporting Olga. She was aware that there were others in the same boat as her. It evidenced the role of peers as co-constructors of professional identity, as also found by Kiviniemi, Tynjälä, Heikkinen, and Martin (2021). The TPE community provided Olga with the support that she needed to develop her research competence.

Thirdly, seeking assistance is another way Olga chose to resolve tensions. When Olga realised that she did not have much time to finish video editing by herself, Olga said: "I tried to edit the video myself, but it was hard and time-consuming. So, I asked a former student for help (Interview 2)." The excerpt shows how Olga demonstrated agency by taking action to navigate the tensions (van der Wal et al., 2019). She was mindful of the fact that the assignment deadline was not negotiable. Also, when she learned that the teaching practicum was scheduled on Saturday, Olga decided to talk to the school head and asked for his permission to invite students to come to her Saturday class. In doing so, Olga (re)negotiated her position as an agentic teacher (Li, 2023).

From Olga's experience, we learn that professional identity tensions do not always negatively impact the person. In line with Laksana (2018), this study also proves that Olga's hybridity caused pain and discomfort. As Hahl and Mikulec (2018) also found, Olga's experience created tensions, which made her uncomfortable. Despite the tensions and pain, as evidenced by Anspal et al. (2018) and Schatz-Oppenheimer and Dvir (2014), a negative experience, such as Olga's hybridity, opened an opportunity for Olga to develop her professional identity as an EFL teacher, a didactical and pedagogical expert and a novice action researcher. Olga's positive mindset enabled her to change tensions into learning experiences by exerting self-agency. Olga's identity was transformed as she became more agentic in learning, strategic in navigating tensions that she faced.

Conclusions and Implications

This study offers a novel perspective on teacher identity development during professional development programmes, specifically through the lens of liminality and hybridity. Liminal beings are portrayed as “normally passive or humble; they must obey their instructors implicitly and accept arbitrary punishment without complaint” (Turner, 1969, p. 95; Turner & Abrahams, 1995). However, we show that in-service EFL teachers like Olga experienced liminality differently than pre-service or student teachers. While the latter typically occupy a “third space” of non-belonging (Beech, 2010; Rantatalo & Lindberg, 2018), Olga’s liminality allowed her to live a hybrid identity with double belonging – to university and school, which was empowered by her dual status as a TPE student and a permanent teacher. Olga’s hybridity in her liminality challenges traditional views of liminality and hybridity and highlights its potential for agency and growth.

This study reinforces the notion that learning English and learning to teach English are fundamentally different (Berry, 2008). Whereas the former focuses on language acquisition, the latter demands broader skills like understanding human learning, adapting to contexts, and refining teaching practice (Yuan & Liu, 2021). We show how Olga, like many in-service teachers, entered the TPE programme seeking pedagogical growth alongside language improvement. However, Olga did not seem to have enough chances to upgrade her English proficiency. It highlights the need for professional development programmes to cater to this distinct dual focus.

Olga’s experience exemplifies teacher transformative digital agency (Brevik et al., 2019). This was evidenced by Olga’s ability to shape and transform her learning environment and practices actively through the use of digital tools and resources during her teaching practicum. While navigating her hybrid identities, she faced professional identity tensions, which, for experienced teachers like Olga, can be opportunities for reconstruction and strengthening (Salinas & Ayala, 2018; Warner, 2016; Živković, 2018). We see how Olga reauthored her concept of a professional teacher, developing expertise in pedagogy, didactics, and subject matter (Beijaard et al., 2000). It challenges the negative associations with identity tensions and showcases their potential for growth.

The study found extrinsic factors such as workload, organisational ideologies, power structures, and cultural norms within educational institutions potentially impact teachers’ agency and enthusiasm for teaching, just as Liyanage and Walker (2023) have argued. The findings suggest potential implications for educational policies related to professional development. While Li (2023) suggests that the EFL teacher professional development programme should shift from instructional expertise toward “agency and positioning as the underlying elements of their identity and professionalism” (p. 6), this study believes

linguistic, didactical and pedagogical aspects inform teachers to take agentic positioning in enacting their identities.

Teacher education institutions may consider incorporating elements of hybridity into teacher training programmes to foster a more comprehensive and impactful learning experience. Firstly, continuous support for teachers is needed. Universities and teacher educators should extend support beyond formal programmes, building on Olga's case for maintaining relationships with teachers for lifelong learning (Yuan & Burns, 2017). Collaborations in action research can be a powerful tool for this (Burns & Rochsantiningsih, 2006). Secondly, as a practical implication of the study, adjustments to teacher training programmes can be made based on Olga's experiences. The study recommends optimising the reflective practice of the TPE programme to enhance the overall effectiveness of teacher training. Reflection helps teachers navigate challenges, understand their experiences, and enhance their well-being (Ardi, Sari, Hidayat, Dewi & Cahyono, 2023). Teacher educators and mentors play a pivotal role in providing support, guidance, and opportunities for reflection. Through guided reflection and mentor support, teachers were able to explore their evolving identities more deeply, underscoring the importance of educator and mentor involvement in effective identity development during professional education programs (Ardi, Widyaningsih, et al., 2023). It also recommends that improving didactical and pedagogical as well as research competencies must go along with enhancing their English proficiency because foreign language teachers are also life-long language learners.

Future research can investigate to what extent TPE impacts teachers' English proficiency development as an attempt to strengthen their EFL teacher identity. Future research can be conducted by following teachers like Olga into their post-liminal stage (certified teachers) to understand the long-term impact of TPE and the potential tensions teachers might face upon returning to school.

In conclusion, as a single case study, this research is limited in its generalisability. Further studies with larger sample sizes are needed to confirm and expand upon the findings presented here. Nevertheless, this paper not only contributes to the academic discourse on teacher identity but also offers actionable insights for educational policymakers, institutions, and practitioners seeking to enhance the effectiveness of teacher training and support programmes.

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