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Romero, Gloria

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Deconstructing Novice Teachers' Actions and Reactions to Nonharmonic Chilean School Communities of Practice

Deconstruyendo las acciones y reacciones de profesores novatos ante comunidades de práctica no armónicas en Chile

Gloria Romero


Universidad de Santiago de Chile, Santiago, Chile

This paper reports a small section of a larger study that uses a mixed-methods approach to examine participation experiences of novice teachers of English in Chile beginning their careers in nonharmonic public, semiprivate, and private school communities. Drawing on Wenger's framework of communities of practice, this paper reveals that novice teachers come across nonharmonic communities of teachers regardless of the types of schools where they work—that is, schools normally classified by socioeconomic background. As such, new teachers experience varying degrees of challenges that hinder their participation in such school communities. Rather than being a detriment, these nonharmonic communities of practice positively impact novice teachers to strive, including by joining diverse forms of communities, during the first years of teaching.

Keywords: Chilean context, English language teaching, novice teacher, school communities of practice

Este artículo informa una pequeña sección de un estudio más amplio que utiliza un enfoque de métodos mixtos para examinar las experiencias de participación de un grupo de profesores novatos de inglés en Chile que inician sus carreras en comunidades escolares no armónicas del sistema público, subvencionado y privado. Basándose en las comunidades de práctica de Wenger, este documento revela que los profesores novatos encuentran comunidades no armónicas en colegios que son normalmente clasificados por su condición socioeconómica. Allí, los profesores experimentan varios desafíos que dificultan su participación en dichas comunidades. En vez de ser un obstáculo, estas comunidades impactan positivamente a los profesores para salir adelante, quienes se unen a diversas comunidades al inicio de la profesión docente.

Palabras clave: comunidades de práctica escolares, contexto chileno, enseñanza del inglés, profesor novato

Gloria Romero  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1169-0644> · Email: gloria.romero@usach.cl

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Introduction

Ample ink has been spent on novice teachers and the challenges they experience during the first years of teaching. Some have compared a teacher's early teaching period as "reality shocks" or the "sink or swim processes" (Varah et al., 1986; Veenman, 1984)—the result of social, contextual, administrative, pedagogical, and affective challenges novice teachers experience in educational institutions (Falla, 2013; Farrell, 2012, 2016; Huberman, 1993). These challenges directly impact teaching practices and attrition (Avalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Scheopner, 2010).

Studies on the experiences of novice teachers of English, a recent development in English language teaching (ELT), are strongly informed by what has been conducted in general education (Borg, 2008; Farrell, 2008). And Farrell (2016) asserts that in-depth understanding of novice teachers' experiences is still insufficient—hence, little is known about the first ELT years of novice teachers, especially those working in foreign-language contexts and complex educational systems.

This article approaches this debate from the multi-contextual Chilean-school-system perspective. Drawing on Wenger et al.'s (2002) communities of practice (COPs) lens, this paper examines the participation experiences of novice teachers of English in public, semiprivate, and private schools. Wenger (1998) uses the concept of *harmony* to describe COPs' functioning. In harmonic COPs, learning happens through community members' co-participation. However, in the development of the COP theory, Wenger et al. do not conceptualize communities that fail to function. Rather, they briefly identify the downsides of communities within corporations such as the Hewlett-Packard Company (e.g., COPs with disconnected, overconfident, or arrogant experienced members or well-established COPs that leave no room for newcomers to contribute and participate). In this paper, I incorporate the term *nonharmonic* applied to teaching COPs, namely, English teaching school communities of

practice. By these COPs, I refer to already-established communities, formed by experienced and novice teachers, recognized by the school community, and in which established member relationships (e.g., COPs with conflictive, closed, jealous, competitive experienced members) or external factors (e.g., school context) hinder the learning, participation domains, and opportunities of new teachers.

Using a mixed-methods design, this paper deconstructs nonharmonic ELT communities to determine how COPs in diverse school contexts operate, how new teachers navigate their first years, and how those teachers endure Chilean school challenges. It highlights (a) the coping mechanisms developed by Chilean novice teachers of English to survive in nonharmonic or challenging school contexts and (b) the extent socioeconomic resources do not significantly affect COPs' functioning (i.e., nonharmonic communities exist within school types classified by socioeconomic background).

This paper addresses the following questions: (a) How do novice teachers of English experience their participation in nonharmonic school communities? and (b) How do they cope with challenges to thereby thrive in their first teaching years? It begins by over-viewing the Chilean school system and the theoretical framework guiding this study. I later present the study's research methodology and analyze and discuss the findings. The paper concludes with a call for research examining diversified school communities and new-teacher social participation.

Multicontextual Chilean School System

Novice teachers in Chile begin their professional lives in a multi-educational context characterized by socioeconomic issues rooted in educational reforms imposed by the dictatorship in 1980. This new "educational model . . . promoted the privatization of the school system" (Barahona, 2016, p. 17), the Ministry of Educa-

tion's decentralization of school administration, and the creation of semiprivate franchise schools (Elacqua et al., 2011), all of which eroded public education (McEwan et al., 2008; Santiago et al., 2013) and increased social and educational stratification between wealthy and low-income students (Avalos & Aylwin, 2007; Avalos & De los Rios, 2016).

This reality has had severe repercussions on teachers' working conditions. For example, private schools offer better salaries (40% more than public and semiprivate schools) and benefits; paid ongoing lesson preparation, meeting time, and extra hours (Avalos & Aylwin, 2007); and more professional support from principals and peers (Laborde, 2014). In this way, these schools can employ more rigorous hiring procedures and hire teachers considered to be the best qualified (Avalos & Aylwin, 2007; Barahona, 2016; Mizala & Torche, 2012; Valencia & Tant, 2011), thus increasing new-teacher demand and competition for employment. In contrast, teachers in public and semiprivate schools work under precarious conditions (Cornejo, 2009)—they are given inappropriate and poor teaching materials and have to work with inadequate infrastructure and facilities; have little or no time for preparation, collaborative planning, and adequate teamwork; and have little job security. On top of that, they experience burnout, often suffer from lack of social and professional recognition, and find their teaching performance affected (Cornejo, 2009). These conditions result in their diminished interest in pedagogy careers and decrease new-teacher retention in Chilean public schools (Avalos & Valenzuela, 2016, Valenzuela & Sevilla, 2015).

From this multi-context perspective, I argue that new-teacher experiences in schools should be examined from diversified educational contexts. Studies focused on novice teachers' participation experiences in diverse school communities are limited (Avalos, 2009; Avalos & Aylwin, 2007; Avalos & Valenzuela, 2016), especially in Chilean ELT.

Theoretical Framework

The First Years of Teaching: Pushing to Survive

The first years of teaching can be daunting, especially for novice teachers unaware of school challenges (Farrell, 2016) that require new teachers "to act as fully formed teachers" (Barahona, 2016, p. 30), assume full teaching responsibilities, become familiar with school policies and curricula immediately following training, and usually, establish relationships with students, colleagues, parents, and administrative staff (Farrell, 2016; Hancock & Scherff, 2010). That novice teachers must cope with difficult classes, which experienced teachers do not typically want to teach, worsens this "reality shock" (Bartell, 2004; Billingsley et al., 2009; Veenman, 1984).

School organization and work environment are also critical to new teachers. Poor colleague and administrative-staff support, meager colleague feedback, lack of collaboration opportunities, and student discipline and demotivation negatively impact teacher motivation, self-esteem, commitment, and the desire to remain in the profession (Cooper & Alvarado, 2006; Scheopner, 2010). Additionally, new teachers find themselves immersed in "controlling" (Glas et al., 2019) school cultures whereby "points or grades are more important than meaningful learning" (Glas et al., 2019, p. 49) thus hindering student and novice teacher motivation.

ELT shocks result from factors like the gap between teacher preparation and real teacher development, limited contact with program educators after graduation (Farrell, 2012), and how novice teachers "from the first day must face the same challenges as their more experienced colleagues" (Farrell, 2012, p. 436).

Farrell (2016) identifies three main "complications" (p. 104): pedagogical, curricular, and collegial. Pedagogically—and because of administrative issues, isolation, or a need to fit into traditional ELT communities—novice teachers are compelled to modify or abandon approaches and methods, including inter-

active ones, learned in teacher-training programs (Farrell, 2006; Shin, 2012). Pushed by experienced teachers and fearing student-interaction noise and loss of class control, new teachers tend to discard group-work activities (Farrell, 2006). At a curricular level, novice teachers must choose between what they want to teach and department-required and -prepared content designed for test preparation. Collegially, novice teachers are excluded from group meetings and pedagogic activities due to individualistic school cultures or complex relationships (Farrell, 2006); thus, isolated novice teachers have “nobody (perceived or otherwise) to go to for help. This isolation does nothing to help them navigate these difficult waters because they cannot or do not reach out to others for advice and help” (Farrell, 2016, p. 104).

Despite these challenges, novice teachers thus develop mechanisms to “swim” (Varah et al., 1986). Farrell (2019) argues that reflective practice helps teachers examine their beliefs and teaching, become responsible for their professional evolution, and develop strategized survival “resolutions” (Farrell, 2006, p. 213) such as classroom interaction and extra material with which to complement school textbooks. Having realistic workplace expectations; familiarizing themselves with students, teachers, and administrative staff; and having a proactive attitude also help (Hebert & Worthly, 2001). Novice teachers cope better with hurdles if they already have social competence (e.g., they seek support from family, friends, and former classmates); personal efficacy (e.g., they take advantage of student, colleague, and department-head feedback); and problem-solving strategies (e.g., they “persevere, visualize solutions, and solve problems”; Tait, 2008, p. 69). School collaboration, acceptance, and inclusion of new teachers further alleviates the social stress of first years’ teaching (Ulvik et al., 2009).

In sum, novice teachers thrive when they take action and make personal decisions (e.g., reflect, incorporate extra material, familiarize themselves with others, or

develop proactive attitudes). However, in this paper, I add to the personal decision-making skills of new teachers, the social participation aspect present in the communities where they work, grow, and develop.

Theory of Communities of Practice

This study adopts Wenger et al.’s (2002) practitioner-oriented *domain*, *community*, and *practice* framework, wherein COPS are formed by “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 4). Even if an organization’s members do not always work together, during their time together, they discuss and share issues, situations, experiences, time, information, and advice. This well-spent time helps them do their jobs better, solve problems, induct newcomers, and use technology (Wenger et al., 2002).

As social beings, we adhere to more than one community, and experience gained in one COP can be used and applied in a new COP (Wenger et al., 2002). Multi-community membership provides members the opportunity to deal with familiar problems, the “flexibility to face new challenges, and the support to develop creative solutions and knowledge” (Romero & Vasilopoulos, 2020, p. 4). Not all communities are COPS, though—that is, not all groups provide member recognition nor interaction and participation learning opportunities.

In this study’s context, social participation in COPS can enable novice teachers to interact with other community members, do things together, think and reflect, develop belonging, and make sense of the teaching world (Wenger, 1998).

COPS have the following characteristics:

- Domain: Common grounds, purposes, goals, and a “shared domain of interest” and “competence” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 2) encourage member accountability, community-development commitment, and collective-goal valuation.

- **Community:** Community members “engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 2); a solid community fosters interaction, respect, trust, idea sharing, weakness acknowledgement, listening, acting, member involvement, and becoming.
- **Practice:** Community practice is “a set of socially defined ways of doing things in a specific domain: a set of common approaches and shared standards that create a basis for action, communication, problem solving, performance, and accountability” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 38).

Though COPS offer interaction and learning opportunities, communities are not always harmonious or peaceful as member diversity and interaction complexity can generate disharmony and animosity (Wenger, 1998). Wenger et al. (2002) warn that communities have “downsides” and that we should not “romanticise communities of practice or expect them to solve all problems without creating any” (p. 139). COPS can create barriers for member learning, innovation, and participation and create community-growth-and-development obstacles. Wenger et al. stress these downfalls in confronting future challenges.

In this way and through the lenses of domain, community, and practice, I examine nonharmonic COPS as the driving force used by new teachers to navigate first years' Chilean school teaching.

Method

In addressing the research questions, I use a mixed-methods approach: collection and analysis of qualitative data gathered from an open-ended online survey, semistructured interviews, and observation. These data were integrated into a single study to tell a story (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Creswell et al., 2006). All these data sources more completely demonstrate the participation experiences of novice

teachers of English in diverse school communities in Chile. That said, and as Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) parallel, qualitative data capture more in-depth stories of novice teachers.

Recruitment

The study started once ethics approval was granted by the ethics committee from the Ethics Board at my university. Recruitment began with help from the English Opens Doors Program (EODP) in the Chilean Ministry of Education. Information about the study and my contact information were sent to novice teachers and to universities offering English-teacher-education programs. The EODP or the universities did not receive study-participant information, were not involved in the study, had no participant record, and had no study-data access. Respondents signed consent forms and were not asked to identify themselves; their confidentiality was secured by assigned codes: NTE/PU = novice public-school teacher, NTE/SP = novice semiprivate-school teacher, NTE/PR = novice private-school teacher.

Participants

The demographic data from the online survey ($N=138$) revealed 85% of the participants were women and 15% were men; with ages from 22 to 33; and worked in Northern, Central, and Southern Chile. Regarding place of work, 65% of the participants worked in public schools, 20% worked in semiprivate institutions, and 15% worked in the private sector; they had one to five years' teaching experience; worked at all levels from PK to Grade 12; and typically had a B2 English level.¹ Almost all novice teachers in the public and semiprivate schools declared they had side jobs after school or during the

¹ A B2 level indicates a person can understand main ideas of complex texts on concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in their field; interact with fluency and spontaneity that enables regular interaction with native speakers, free of strain for either party; produce clear, detailed text on wide-ranging subjects; and explain a topical viewpoint and provide advantages and independent disadvantages of perspectives (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 24).

week to make ends meet (e.g., ELT in universities and language institutes, worked at more than one school, or taught private lessons to adults or children). This confirms what Chilean scholars have stated about the working conditions of new teachers across different types of schools (Avalos & Aylwin, 2007; Mizala & Torche, 2012; Valencia & Tant, 2011).

Eleven participants took part in the interview and observation process described below. Nine of the eleven interviewees were women and two were men; all were from 23 to 27 years old; four taught in private schools, four in semiprivate schools, and three worked in Santiago's public sector; all had 1 to 4 years' teaching experience; and all worked at all levels, Grades 1 to 12. These novice teachers declared they had C2, C1,² and B2 levels.

Data Collection

This paper reports on a small subsection of a larger study that used a mixed-methods approach. In the larger study, data were collected in three ways: (a) An online survey developed with feedback from teacher trainers in Chile. Close-ended questions gathered demographic data about the participants (e.g., age, gender, years of teaching experience, etc.) and aimed at developing their profile. The open-ended section collected data about the respondents' experiences in diverse school communities (e.g., community participation, membership, school support, joint practice, etc.). The survey was designed and distributed with Fluid Surveys and took no longer than 30 minutes to complete. One hundred and thirty-eight novice teachers responded to the survey. English

and Spanish versions were sent to allow for responses in preferred languages (van Nes et al., 2010). (b) Eleven novice teachers contacted me again to participate in semistructured interviews which were scheduled in advance with participants at times and places of their convenience. Interviews took approximately one hour, were audio recorded, and the English or Spanish option was given (van Nes et al., 2010). Questions resembled the survey's open-section questions and aimed at gathering in-depth stories from participants. (c) To understand how novice teachers navigate varying community types, I conducted nonparticipant observations (Lashley, 2018) of the interviewed study participants in their English-departments staff meetings. Letters were sent to the heads of the English teaching departments explaining the purpose of the study and indicating that attention would be paid to the participation of the interviewees in their COPS. All the department heads agreed to my presence at the meetings via email or phone communication. In the process, I did not interfere but rather took detailed notes about the participation of novice teachers. All meetings took place in schools during the school day at varying times, lasted approximately one and a half to two hours, and were carried out at the English teams' convenience.

In this paper, I report on the novice teachers who expressed working in challenging COPS. To illustrate the findings, I largely use participants' quotes from the interviews, some excerpts from the open-ended part of the survey, and one extract from one observation.

Data Analysis

Inspired by Wenger et al.'s (2002) COP framework, I sought to identify how novice teachers navigate their participation in nonharmonic COPS and how they cope with challenges in such English teaching communities. To address the research questions that guide this study, I started the "process of making sense out of data" (Merriam, 2009, p. 193) following Merriam's guide for qualitative data analysis. The data analysis process

² A C2 level indicates a person can easily understand nearly everything heard or read; summarize information from spoken and written sources; reconstruct arguments and accounts coherently; express themselves spontaneously, fluently, and precisely; and differentiate finer points of proficient meaning, even in complex situations.

A C1 level indicates a person can understand a wide range of demanding, long texts; recognize implicit meaning; express themselves fluently and spontaneously with little obvious searching for expressions; use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes; produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects; show controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 24)

involved seven steps: (a) transcription of the qualitative data collected from the open-ended questions in the online survey, the interviews, and the observations; (b) reading through the transcripts and making tentative notes of how the elements of a COP's domain, community, and practice manifest; (c) identification of patterns and tentative themes; (d) development of initial categories that illustrated the novice teachers' participation experiences while working in Chilean school COPs; (e) as the participants described more complex multiple experiences in their diverse COPs, new categories emerged linked to the three primary components of a COP; (f) development of a coding protocol in order to re-code the data and to identify the most relevant patterns related to the participation of novice teachers in nonharmonic COPs; (g) finally, use of the software NVivo 11 to cross-analyze the data.

Findings

That private schools offer better job opportunities and working conditions to new teachers is a longstanding norm belief, yet my deconstruction of nonharmonic COPs and novice-teacher participation revealed no difference between private, semiprivate, and public schools. Regardless of the type of school where the participating novice teachers worked, they experienced varying degrees of challenges that shaped their participation. This reveals that nonharmonic teaching communities were present in all types of schools no matter their financial resources.

Furthermore, nonharmonic contexts impelled new teachers to find survival and participation strategies. Teachers working in these contexts developed their own goals, formed new COPs, or joined COPs already established inside or outside their schools. For ease of reading and to be consistent with my theoretical framework, I offer my claims by way of Wenger's three COP characteristics (domain, community, practice) and provide excerpts from transcripts obtained from different qualitative-data sources.

Unshared Domains

Regardless of school socioeconomic background, participants characterized nonharmonic ELT communities as lacking clear shared domains and communal goals (e.g., domains were undiscussed or undetermined). New teachers were compelled to establish individual goals or *personal domains* (i.e., independently determined goals as members of teaching communities), which I subcategorized as *instrumental* or *motivational* goals. A novice teacher reflects this: "I don't know if the team shares this goal because we never talk about it. My own goal is to be able to guide the students, to be a good example, and not to teach them bad things" (NTE/SP).

On the one hand, novice teachers saw English as an instrument for students' futures and stressed the importance of teaching students English for the sake of better job prospects and salaries. One teacher asserted, "I want to make students understand that English can help them later to go to university and get a [well-paying] job" (NTE/PR). On the other hand, participants' motivational goals focused on helping learners to like or enjoy English, as illustrated by the following comment:

I wish my students liked English. I don't mind if they don't learn much with me, but I'm happy if they love learning it. Learning English is necessary. It's fundamental because it opens a new world, new job opportunities. My goals are to motivate them to love the language, make them realize that they can learn if they want to and see that a whole world opens when you know another language... I have no clue if the team [teachers in the English department] shares this goal. What they do or want is unknown to me. (NTE/PU)

These statements indicate that undiscussed or unestablished teaching-community joint domains compelled novice teachers to develop their own—often revolving around student communities, not teaching communities. This evidences novice teachers were active, identifying other communities and resolving to direct their teaching despite primary communities' lack of direction.

(Mis)Community Life

Perceiving more downsides in nonharmonic public, semiprivate, and private communities, participants indicated poor integration and a “lack of support” from COP members. Some new teachers reported feeling unwelcome and “isolated,” receiving “mistreatment,” or perceiving “envy” from experienced English COP members. One young teacher commented, “it’s been hard to feel integrated because experienced teachers do not welcome people without experience” (NTE/SP). A novice teacher from a public school shared a similar sentiment:

During my teaching practice and at work, I have always found bitter and impolite colleagues. One notices that in very few places people are willing to welcome you. As a new teacher, one must learn that human relations are complicated. (NTE/PU)

Moreover, in such contexts, other members provided superficial or little support to new-teacher integration in ELT COPS, as illustrated by the following:

When [experienced teachers] see that a new teacher already has a master’s in second language, they feel threatened. The support or help they have given me is good but superficial. Teachers avoid talking about pedagogical issues or how to teach English. I work alone because no one shares their teaching experiences or what is good for a certain group of students. This community is individualist and hedonists [*sic*] to the point that I believe my colleagues are linguistic divas who believe they possess a higher level of knowledge and language than others. I don’t feel integrated in this community. (NTE/PR)

However, this teacher dealt with the challenge by forming a new COP with other novice teachers: “Luckily, there are other new teachers in the science and math department. We have lunch together, give each other tips on classroom management, talk about students or simply laugh” (NTE/PR).

These and other novice teachers who experienced challenges in their immediate ELT COPS sought external communities to survive and thrive. External COPS were formed by teachers from other disciplines within the school. This extract showcases this issue:

I don’t feel integrated in my English community because they’re just a group of people. I feel better with the other teachers in the school. I get on well with 99% of them. My colleagues validate me as a teacher, they respect me. I can tell because they notice me, they observe me, they ask me things, and show interest in what I do. When I’m at my table hiding, working on my things, they approach me and ask: What are you doing? Why are you doing this? (NTE/PU)

Internal COPS conflict also emerged from the data: Though members worked on joint tasks, novice teachers’ suggestions and ideas were not considered by experienced teachers more concerned with internal problems than collaboration. A novice private-school teacher asserted,

As a team we talk. We agree on things as teachers. For example, we choose the material, agree on the dates for evaluations, but I feel like Switzerland, in the middle. When I ask or propose ideas, they don’t listen to me because they are more worried about their coexistence problems in the team . . . the team is divided. (NTE/PR)

I confirmed this conflict when I observed a staff meeting this novice teacher participated in, wherein two experienced teachers and the novice teacher were choosing readers (books) for their grades:

Teacher 1: [Novice teacher], don’t forget it’s complicated if we mix the press publishers.

Teacher 2: [Novice teacher] and this one? Peter Pan... for what class would it be?

Novice teacher: I was thinking of Grades 7 and 8.

Teacher 1: [Novice teacher], tell her that these are for KET (Key English Test) level. I don’t think it should be 7 and 8. It’s more for KET.

Novice teacher (looking at Teacher 2): These are for KET.

Teacher 2: I loved these.

Novice teacher: They are very good.

Teacher 2: And I like them a lot for the culture thing. Tell him that he has to read them this time.

Novice teacher: Hmmm (looking at Teacher 1). OK, it would be good if you read the books.

Data analysis indicated this young teacher possibly felt his community's conflict constrained his participation. Instead of being able to share ideas about teaching or teaching materials or benefiting from more experienced colleagues, he became a mere conflict mediator. Nevertheless, he joined an external COP formed by teachers from other disciplines he could contribute to:

To avoid all this conflict, I spend more time with the other teachers. They know who I am, my pros and cons, my weaknesses and strengths. I feel valued and liked. They consider my opinion and abilities. I provide technology support. We talk. They tell me their problems. Yes, we help each other. (NTE/PR)

Findings possibly indicated that novice teachers joined external communities, formed by experienced or novice teachers from other departments, when COPs did not satisfy their own needs.

Hindered Practice

Some school communities did not offer novice teachers many joint-practice opportunities. A main factor hindering practice was the competitive relationship of some private-sector teachers:

My colleagues here are, let's say, "special." Very competitive, always comparing themselves to others, and if you do something in the classroom that makes you feel proud, you share it, but they question everything, or they run to tell the head of department. They are all the time paying attention to what you do or don't do, and if they have a problem, they don't talk to you directly

. . . they go straight to our boss. So, I end up doing things on my own, quietly and very low key. (NTE/PR)

This novice teacher cocreated a COP to compensate for this situation:

With my university classmates we always talk about our lives at school. Some have a good time while others, like me, don't. So, we formed a WhatsApp group where we share ideas, material, talk about our days, what to do with students, or how to teach things. It has helped me because I don't feel lonely. (NTE/PR)

Survey and interview data revealed joint practice was also restrained by school policies or by challenges imposed by the broader community (i.e., stakeholders running public and semiprivate schools). Authorities did not give experienced and new English teachers enough time or resources to interact, meet, work together, and share ideas. For example, this novice teacher commented,

I have realized that a lot has to do with the principals and coordinators in the institution—their leadership. Here, we don't have time to do anything together. We sometimes talk about our lesson plans or student discipline, but we don't do any activities together, plan, or design evaluations because of lack of time. (NTE/PU)

Another example of hindered joint practice came from a young teacher in a semiprivate school:

In this school, we are paid only one hour every two weeks to meet and to plan lessons. The English team is known for having lots of face-to-face teaching hours, so it's very hard for us to see each other at the same time and work together. Only during our break time, we manage to do something. I normally use my break to prepare material, my PowerPoints, pick up the photocopies, or fill in the class book. (NTE/SP)

Again, public- and semiprivate-school novice teachers did not wait idly for ELT community members to provide joint sharing and learning opportunities—

instead, they joined *macro communities* (e.g., Redes de docentes de inglés or English teachers' networks from the Chilean Ministry of Education) to develop joint practice. One public-sector novice teacher said, "I've done more things with the 'RED de inglés than with my team. At the RED we talk and share experiences; we receive training, get feedback, etc." (NTE/PU).

Novice teachers of English experienced challenges in public, semiprivate, and public-school contexts. My Chilean school COPS deconstruction revealed that challenges in nonharmonic communities were manifested in a lack of community-established domains and shared goals and sometimes turbulent relationships among members. Working conditions directly and negatively impacted coexistence of COPS with novice-teacher practice. Yet despite COP challenges, novice teachers found ways to thrive: cocreating new COPS or joining multiple communities to compensate for their ELT COPS' lack of domains, community support, and joint practices.

In sum, despite schools' socioeconomic background and resources, novice teachers of English experienced challenges independent of the type of school they worked in. Despite each school's hurdles, novice teachers joined different kinds of communities to deal with their struggles.

Discussion

That Chilean private schools provide better working conditions because they have the economic resources to attract the best-qualified novice teachers, pay higher salaries, and offer better job prospects and resources than semiprivate and public-sector schools is a general belief (Avalos & Aylwin, 2007; Barahona, 2016; Cornejo, 2009). This study found that novice teachers from all school types (i.e., nonharmonic public, semiprivate, and private communities) experienced hurdles and turbulence, were not fully integrated, were given an unwelcoming attitude, and experienced conflict among department members. This implies that it is people rather than the school context that influences the quality of life in their communities.

Collegial relationships impact first years' teaching (Farrell, 2016). Novice teachers agonize in educational contexts where they are neglected, undervalued, excluded, or abandoned by colleagues (Farrell, 2006, 2008). This study found that novice teachers in all three school types reported isolation from more experienced, unwelcoming, and competitive colleagues or when there was conflict among COP members. In these contexts, other members were disinterested in discussing relevant teaching issues or providing minimum support of novice-teacher integration into the COPS.

Findings also revealed that these nonharmonic contexts shaped shared domains and practice (Wenger et al., 2002). Participants described their teaching COPS as having few common goals and simplistic or few joint practices. Moreover, the broader public- and semiprivate-school community and school working conditions impacted communal practices (Cornejo, 2009), implying stakeholder-management-policy obstacles which rendered the ELT-community joint practices unfunctional (i.e., school demands constrained novice teachers and colleagues from doing things together); hence, the school at large plays an important role in COP functioning.

Also significant, despite the abovementioned challenges, novice teachers coped with complications (Farrell, 2006) by forming new COPS or joining already-established communities. Findings show that when nonharmonic ELT communities lacked shared domains (Wenger et al., 2002), novice teachers developed their own learner-community-oriented goals. Similarly, when their internal communities (i.e., department heads or experienced teachers of English) failed to provide needed support or opportunities for doing things together, novice teachers sought assistance in the school's other communities (e.g., they asked and received help from teachers in other disciplines), who accepted and encouraged the novice teachers, gave feedback, asked questions, were respectful, showed interest, and provided a sense of inclusion and belonging.

Other novice teachers joined macro communities (i.e., communities external to their school context; e.g., regional ELT networks organized by the Chilean Ministry of Education, like “red de inglés” or Whatsapp COPS, cocreated with novice teachers’ former university classmates). In these communities, novice teachers could share practice (Wenger et al., 2002), as reflected by the activities they described (e.g., asking questions, sharing ideas and materials, receiving feedback, and providing teaching/teacher support). I draw on Wenger et al.’s (2002) theory of COPS to argue novice teachers find better ways to thrive when they belong to at least one community whose members and interactions help them shape coping strategies and thrive in education.

Concluding Remarks, Limitations and Implications

This paper deconstructed downsides of ELT school COPS to better elucidate novice teachers’ first-years’ experience in the multi-complex Chilean-school context. It addressed novice-teacher and ELT-community concerns. Nonharmonic communities delimit new teachers yet impel them to navigate schools normally stratified by socioeconomic resources. Regardless of available external resources, novice teachers were able to find teacher-development strategies, including integration into diverse, supportive communities. Community support (or lack thereof) is critical at both cop and macro levels. Community members cannot develop if the broader community and stakeholders do not provide experienced and novice teachers’ co-participation opportunities and time to share experiences and practice. Government role is key and directly impacts young teachers. In this paper, I introduced the concept of nonharmonic English teaching COPS. This adds to Wenger et al.’s (2002) downsides within COPS in the world of corporations. From the context of this study, young teachers perceive COPS as nonharmonic when there is a lack of actively engaged core members in the social functioning of the communities. As such,

new teachers join ongoing COPS where there is tension among experienced members or enmity toward novice teachers; lack of joint practices and communally established domains; and nonfluid opportunities to participate and learn from others. Identifying how such COPS operate is valuable for novice teachers. In this way, they can learn how to turn the challenges of the first years of teaching into possibilities.

I acknowledge that the findings concerning the participation experiences of new teachers in COPS are limited to what teachers express. The current study did not query experienced teachers as participating members of COPS. A more comprehensive view of the participation experiences of novice teachers should involve the views of experienced members. The study may have benefitted from more than one perspective. Moreover, the findings and conclusions drawn from this study are context-bound and therefore, this may limit its generalizability. Still, some characteristics of the Chilean context and the impact of COPS on novice teacher participation can be identified elsewhere.

The narratives of novice teachers point to future directions for further research: what happens with experienced teachers in this process? How do they engage as members of COPS with young teachers? Another important avenue of research is to consider how Chilean schools receive and welcome novice teachers, how they support them and prepare them in their journey of becoming an experienced teacher. Indeed, there is a need to study the other side of the coin: How do novice teachers experience their participation in ELT communities that offer support and opportunities to grow? Future investigation may attempt to map the influences of harmonic and nonharmonic COPS in the new teachers’ language teaching classroom practices. Ultimately, this paper could benefit authorities, stakeholders, and experienced teachers to think back and reflect on how they treat and welcome new teachers, how they can strengthen English-teaching COPS, and how to help them stay in the profession.

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About the Author

Gloria Romero has a PhD in second language education from the University of Ottawa, Canada. She is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Humanities, Universidad de Santiago de Chile. Her research interests are novice teachers in school communities, volunteer English teaching, professional development, ELT in Chile, and social justice.