

EMOTIONAL ODYSSEY: A JOURNEY THROUGH EFL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PRACTICUM EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

Aim. In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education, the emotional journey of pre-service teachers remains a relatively unexplored terrain. The present case study addresses this gap by delving into the intricate emotional landscape traversed by pre-service EFL teachers during their initial teaching practicum. Our research objectives are to discern the sources of pre-practicum anxiety among student teachers and compare these with their actual experiences and while-practicum emotions.

Methods. Altogether thirteen student teachers in the Czech Republic were interviewed. The data were qualitatively content analysed.

Results. The study not only identifies pre-practicum anxieties – including concerns related to rapport, language proficiency, lesson design, and group dynamics, but also scrutinises the transformation of these concerns into nuanced daily classroom management intricacies during the practicum. The research further investigates the positive emotions experienced by pre-service EFL teachers during their practicum, highlighting factors such as a sense of achievement, fruitful interactions, and meaningful teacher-learner relationships.

Conclusions. Notably, this study contributes to the understanding of the multifaceted dynamics of pre-service teachers' professional identities, shedding light on the interplay between anxieties, positive emotions, and the development of teaching identity. The observed shift towards more engaging teaching approaches prompts reflections on emotionally-oriented TEFL, suggesting future research paths and curriculum adjustments.

Keywords: EFL teacher education, student teachers, emotions, practicum experiences, teaching identity

INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning a foreign language can spark a plethora of emotions which together with cognition play a significant role in both dimensions. The need to regard learning as a powerful combination of cognition and emotion was recognised decades ago (Piaget, 1981). However, the attention of scholars and researchers was mostly directed to the cognitive dimension and has been redirected to the affective domain with changes in views in psychology and the rise of positive psychology in the 1990s and 2000s (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 2008, 2013; Fredrickson, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2006; Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986).

Concerning the emotional dimension, the researchers concentrated on the teachers' emotions (Chen, 2021; Fried et al., 2015; Hargreaves, 1998; Junjun, 2019; Richards, 2022; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Yin, 2016; Zembylas, 2003). In the context of central Europe, only Zdenka Kráľová (2016) and Kráľová et al. (2017) discussed the sources and reasons for foreign language teachers' anxiety, who were born as non-native speakers of EFL, i.e. in Slovakia (former Czechoslovakia).

While concerning the learners' emotions, a lot of attention has been dedicated to their types and effects on learning per se (Pekrun, 2006, 2014) as well as on foreign language learning (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016; Dewaele et al., 2018; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014; Horwitz et al., 1986; Kanazawa, 2021; Kráľová et al., 2022; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2017;). The research done in this area also suggested a significant relationship between teacher emotions and their impact on learners (Chen, 2021; Wang et al., 2022).

Several researchers paid attention to the emotional dimension of pre-service teachers—in Asia (Chen et al., 2011; Cojorn & Sonsupap, 2022; Gorospe, 2022; Ji et al., 2022; Zhu, 2017) as well as European countries (Holappa et al., 2021; Kráľová, 2016; Kráľová et al., 2017; Timoštšuk et al., 2016; Uitto et al., 2015). However, the research in this area remains scarce, especially in the European context.

Embarking on their teaching career, pre-service teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) often navigate a complex emotional terrain. To the best of our knowledge, there have not yet been studies conducted on the pre-service teachers'

emotions which would examine the pre-service teachers' pre-practicum anxiety sources and compare them with the actual experience and post-practicum emotions.

Therefore, the main research objectives of the present study are:

- To find the reasons for the anxiety that pre-service EFL teachers experienced *before* and *during* their practicum.
- To find out if the pre-service EFL teachers experienced any positive emotions *during* their practicum and whether it had any impact on their teaching identity.

Regarding the above-mentioned research objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

- What are the sources of anxiety among EFL pre-service teachers *before* their first teaching practicum?
- Do the challenges that EFL pre-service teachers experienced *during* the practicum reflect their anxieties?
- What positive emotions did the EFL pre-service teachers experience *during* their practicum and what caused them?
- Did the pre-service EFL teachers notice any changes in their teaching identity *after* the practicum?

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Shift to Emotional Dimension

Regarding the shift in scholars' attention towards the emotional dimension of learning (as opposed to the cognitive dimension), Robert C. Gardner (1985) was the first who studied the emotional dimension of foreign language (FL) learning – he hypothesised that the anxiety experienced during FL learning is related to the achievement in that particular FL. Further foreign language anxiety (FLA) has been defined by Elaine K. Horwitz et al. (1986) as a complex amalgamation of self-perceptions and anxieties in language learning. It was analysed through the lenses of its origins, manifestations, and impact on learners. In opposition to the negative sides of human *psyché*, positive psychology evolved in the 1990s and 2000s. Most significant works undoubtedly include works by Barbara L. Fredrickson on positive emotions (1998, 2001, 2003, 2006) and by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 2008, 2013), who defined *flow* as an optimal experience.

Learners' Emotions

In the context of EFL learning, the researchers' attention has been directed mostly towards the learners. For several years, their positive emotions had been overlooked

in favour of FLA. With the rise of positive psychology, also the attention of scholars and researchers in the context of EFL has shifted towards positive emotions. Reinhard Pekrun (2014) defined the following academic emotions that are especially relevant for students' learning:

- *Achievement emotions* are associated with tasks related to accomplishment and the outcomes of those tasks, such as success or failure. These emotions encompass feelings like the joy of learning, hope, relief, and pride following success, as well as anger, anxiety, shame, and hopelessness in response to failure.
- *Epistemic emotions* arise from cognitive challenges. They include reactions such as surprise when encountering a new task, curiosity, confusion, and frustration when facing obstacles, and delight when resolving a problem. These emotions are particularly significant in the process of learning new and unfamiliar tasks.
- *Topic emotions* are linked to the subjects covered in lessons. They include empathy for a character in a novel, anxiety, and disgust when studying medical topics, or enjoyment of a painting in an art course. Both positive and negative topic emotions can stimulate a learner's interest in the learning material.
- *Social emotions* pertain to the interactions with teachers and peers within the classroom, especially during group activities and class discussions. These emotions encompass feelings such as love, sympathy, compassion, admiration, contempt, envy, anger, or social anxiety.

Regarding positive emotions in the context of learning a foreign language, much attention has been directed towards foreign language enjoyment (FLE). Enjoyment has been defined as a sense of satisfaction and reward derived from engaging in an activity and/or its outcomes (Ainley & Hidi, 2014); the significance of a supportive learning environment and positive teacher-student interactions was proved by Sarah Mercer and Stephen Ryan (2010). FLE and its impact was discussed by Jean-Marc Dewaele and Peter MacIntyre (2014) while another study (Jin & Zhang, 2018) dealt with the FLE pivotal role in determining the extent to which learners experience enjoyable episodes in language learning situations.

The impact of emotions experienced during the EFL on the memory and retention of the target information has been further emphasised by Yu Kanazawa (2021) when he proposed the *Emotion-Involved Processing Hypothesis*, and by Kráľová et al. (2022), when the impact of emotionally competent stimuli (later called *emotional hooks*) on learners' memories and retention has been empirically proven.

Teachers' Emotions

Several authors emphasise that it is mostly learner-teacher relationships and the teaching itself that are the major sources of emotional experiences among teachers

(Caires & Almeida, 2005; Hargreaves, 2000; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2012; Wu & Chen, 2018; Yin et al., 2019).

Due to the dynamics of the process of teaching and its unpredictability, teachers might experience a spectrum of positive (e.g. enthusiasm, happiness, satisfaction, joy, etc.) and negative emotions (e.g. disappointment, anger, anxiety, burnout, etc.). Several researchers tried to illuminate the area of teachers' emotions (Chen, 2016, 2021; Fried et al., 2015; Hargreaves, 1998; Junjun, 2019; Král'ová, 2016; Nias, 1996; Richards, 2022; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Yin, 2016; Zembylas, 2003).

The fact that emotions are contagious, especially in the teacher-learner relationship, has been emphasised by Pekrun (2014). The author emphasises that both positive and negative emotions can be passed on – which makes it even more important for the teachers to know how to regulate them. A significant relationship between teacher emotions and their impact on learners has been further emphasised by Junjun Chen (2021) and Jianhua Wang et al. (2022). Vice versa, the high achievements of learners can be a source of positive emotional experiences for teachers, (Beilock et al., 2010; Frenzel, 2014; Hargreaves, 2000;), while on the contrary, learners' misbehaviour can evoke negative emotional experiences among teachers, which include mostly anger and anxiety (Chang, 2009; Frenzel, Goetz, Lüdtke et al., 2009; Frenzel, Goetz, Stephens et al., 2009; Hargreaves, 2000).

EFL Student Teachers' Emotions and Practicum

Student teachers' application of theoretical knowledge and development of practical teaching skills is realised during a period of teaching practice or practicum. Such practicums, though including a variety of alternatives in terms of their length, amount of hours taught, academic-year period, etc. (Orlova, 2015) are unanimously recognised as an essential component of initial teacher professional education (Calderhead, 1989; Crookes, 2003; Farrell, 2007; Heppner, 1994; Richards & Crookes, 1988; Stoyhoff, 1999; Ulvik & Smith, 2011; Wilson, 2006; Yuan & Lee, 2014)

The benefits of practice teaching are hard to overestimate. Firstly, this is the time for student teachers to examine and further construct in a real classroom context the competences acquired during various classes within initial education. Secondly, close cooperation with mentors and their guidance (or lack of it) may be crucial for evolving teaching identity of pre-service teachers. Thirdly, as for many student teachers, the practicum is their first hands-on experience within the teaching profession, they can get a deeper insight into themselves as personalities, and try out interactive skills cooperating with learners and school professionals. Thus, practicum can be figuratively considered a litmus test of student teachers' commitment in the future to teaching (or not) as a professional career. It is evident that the teaching practicum

is accompanied by a range of emotions, and a heightened level of anxiety among pre-service teachers can prevail in this range.

According to Melanie M. Keller et al. (2014), anxiety occurs among pre-service teachers especially when they are unprepared to teach and are unable to meet the demands of teaching. Emotions experienced during teaching practicum are rather dynamic – especially over time. According to Gang Zhu (2017), at the beginning of their practicum, pre-service teachers experience craving and anxiety. After their teaching, they often have to face shock and embarrassment. And, at the end, they often feel guilt and regret. Even though they very often tend to be full of enthusiasm and self-confidence, once they enter their roles as educators, the pre-service teachers may feel stress and anxiety (Mapfumo et al., 2012) as well as other negative emotions that include helplessness, frustration, confusion, embarrassment, and even hostility (Timoštšuk et al., 2016).

However, the study by Yilong Ji et al. (2022) sheds light on the pre-service teachers' emotions in a complex way, taking into consideration both positive and negative emotions experienced – for instance, happiness, excitement, satisfaction, enthusiasm, pride, gratefulness, etc. as well as nervousness, distress, sadness, irritation, fear, helplessness, etc. To add, the authors divided the sources of anxiety into three types, which include the following (Ji et al., 2022):

- Microsystem: the personal reasons – emotional intelligence, teacher professional identity, teacher belief);
- Mesosystem: the organisational factor – student, instructor, internship peer, school leader;
- Microsystem: the background factor – social culture, education reform.

Recently, the emotional dimension of pre-service teachers has been a centre of attention among Asian researchers – including Chinese, Filipino, etc. (Chen et al., 2011; Cojorn & Sonsupap, 2022; Gorospe, 2022; Ji et al., 2022; Zhu, 2017). However, in European countries, the research in this area remains rather limited (Holappa et al., 2021; Kráľová et al., 2017; Timoštšuk et al., 2016; Uitto et al., 2015).

Lynn Thomas and Catherine Beauchamp (2011) and Ling Cheng (2021) have explored the relationship between shifts in emotional experiences and the evolving process of professional identity development in novice teachers. It is extremely important to understand the dual identity of pre-service teachers when they enter their practicum – they continue to be university students with particular duties, but at the same time they also undergo an evolution into novice teachers – which gives rise to specific anxieties arising before and during the teaching practicum. Understanding and addressing these anxieties is crucial for fostering the professional development of pre-service EFL teachers and ensuring a positive trajectory as they embark on their teaching careers.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The current study was conducted at the English Department of the Faculty of Education of University of J. E. Purkyne in Usti nad Labem, Czech Republic. The University is comprised of 8 faculties among which the Faculty of Education is the oldest one.

Students of the English department have a possibility to graduate with BA in English Language and Literature and/or an MA in teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Students may be involved in solo and major/minor programmes as teachers of other school subjects.

Graduates who complete their MA degree in TEFL, apart from subjects in linguistics and literature, are provided with comprehensive courses in ELT methodology. The MA programme also includes two practicums, with the length of 3 weeks each. During the practicums, student teachers are placed at low-secondary or upper secondary schools where they teach lessons in the cooperating teacher's classes. The cooperating teacher or mentor in the majority of cases is assigned or at least approved by a university supervisor.

During the periods of practice teaching, or practicum, students are required first to observe classes of the cooperating teacher and then teach a particular amount of English classes, students are also requested to keep a reflective journal based on the selected descriptors from the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Language, the EPOSTL (Newby et.al, 2007) to foster their reflection.

The participants in the current study are 13 student teachers completing their Master's degree in TEFL. All students, though studying different types of major/minor programmes, had classes in EFL Didactics as one group, and had the same amount of classes in TEFL. Within the classes, English was used as a medium of instruction. The sample included two students studying TEFL in a solo program, 9 students having TEFL as their major combined with such subjects as the Czech language and Social science, while for 2 students TEFL is a minor. The participants shared an additional number of variables: nationality (Czech), native language (Czech), age (24-25 years old), English proficiency level (C1 according to CEFR), age of onset of EFL learning (6-7 years), a comparable amount of experience in an English-speaking environment (no longer than several days).

The objectives of this case study are to examine whether student teachers' anxiety before practicum corresponded with their in-practicum concerns and to learn what type of emotions prevailed in practice teaching.

Instruments

In this study, several instruments and materials were utilised to collect and analyse the data:

- Interview Schedule: The primary instrument for data collection was a semi-structured interview schedule. This schedule consisted of five of open-ended questions designed to elicit student teachers' reflections on their practicum experiences, focusing on their anxieties, challenges, and emotions. The questions were crafted to encourage in-depth responses while allowing flexibility for participants to express their thoughts freely. The interview schedule was piloted with a small group of similar participants to ensure clarity and appropriateness of the questions.
- Audio Recording Device: A TASCAM DR-07 portable digital recorder was used to capture the interviews accurately. This device was chosen for its high-quality audio recording capabilities, ensuring clear capture of participants' responses. The recordings were essential for accurate transcription and subsequent qualitative analysis.
- Transcription Software: The audio recordings were transcribed using Express Scribe Transcription Software. This tool facilitated efficient transcription of the interviews, providing a text-based dataset for further analysis. The transcription process involved listening to the recordings multiple times to ensure accuracy and completeness.
- Text Analysis Software: For the analysis of the qualitative data, the text content was examined manually, and a lexical survey was conducted using Voyant Tools, an online platform for text analysis. Voyant Tools was employed to quantify the frequency of specific lexical items related to positive emotions. This combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis tools enabled a comprehensive examination of the data.

Procedure

The empirical data for this qualitative research was obtained from student teachers' interviews, each interview was face-to-face, and all participants gave their consent to audio-record their answers on an anonymous basis. The recordings took place during a series of reflective sessions, conducted by one of the authors of this paper.

The interview schedule, i.e. "a list of questions or prompts" (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 290), consisted of the following open-ended questions:

- What were you mostly anxious about *before* the Practicum?
- What were the greatest challenges you faced *during* the Practicum?
- Did you experience any positive emotions during the Practicum? If yes, which ones?
- If yes, what caused them?
- Have you noticed any change in your teaching identity? If yes, what was it?

Each student teacher could read the printed questions and after a short period of time, not longer than 5 minutes was asked to react to the questions. Thus, researchers wanted to have genuine and authentic respondents' reactions to the issues under study.

Data Analysis

The method used in this case study is text content analysis, aimed at identifying similar concepts in the student teachers' opinions.

For the convenience of the qualitative content analysis, the audio-recorded interviews were consecutively transcribed – using Express Scribe Transcription Software. The full transcript of the recorded interviews contained 5 974 words. Each student teacher was labeled as ST with a particular number (e.g. ST01, ST02, ST13, etc.). Further, the transcript was restructured, i.e. sections of the interviews in reaction to a particular question were grouped accordingly. This enabled the authors to do both vertical and horizontal comparisons when necessary. By the former, we mean processing and analysing the views of all participants to the interview questions in general, while the latter enabled the authors to trace the opinion (or its change) of a particular respondent in reaction to some of the questions.

Together with the qualitative content text analysis, the quantitative text analysis in the form of a lexical survey aimed at discovering the frequency of lexical items attributed to positive emotions was undertaken – using Voyant Tools software.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

The data received in reaction to the question of what student teachers were most anxious about before the Practicum show respondents' concerns about the social dimension of the learning process and establishing good interpersonal relationships, or rapport, with learners. Five students out of 13 confessed that (the grammar of the original is preserved):

- ST06: "...the most anxious about working with older learners"
- ST03: "...I was a bit worried that they won't be very cooperative"
- ST01: "I was also anxious about their age and how they would react to me."
- ST11: "...if I will not have their (learners') respect and they will misbehave"
- ST08: "how they would accept me and work with me!"
- ST04: "...if I will motivate them"

Proficiency in English, both learners' and student teachers' was mentioned 4 times. Some of the examples include:

- ST07: “... they have some subjects in English, so I was afraid that they will have much broader vocabulary and so on that they will be better than me in this.”
- ST11: “I was mostly anxious about the learners and their level of English. I didn’t know what to expect.”

Three respondents were mostly anxious about challenges while teaching English to a particular age group either at the lower-secondary or upper-secondary level, as one student confessed: “I am most anxious about working with older learners because it’s not something I have quite a lot of experience” (ST09).

Concerns that can be attributed to the logistics of the practicum were articulated by two interviewees. The reason for that was that both students were enrolled in a double major programme and during practicum they had to teach not only English but also the other subject. Since it was problematic to ensure teaching their combinations at one school, they had to do so at two schools located not far away from each other. With this in view, one student confessed: “I was mostly anxious about the time schedule that was due to me studying two majors and we had some problems in scheduling with my chemistry practicum, but it all worked out in the end” (ST12).

Only one student had some light concerns about relationships with the mentor: “I was a bit worried about my mentor. If we would see eye to eye, maybe if we would get along, if he would provide enough reflection and points for me to improve on...” (ST04). Surprisingly, one student (ST02) admitted that they had no anxiety before practicum because it was their second time in the same school and they knew what to expect.

The following table presents a short summary of the aforementioned issues.

Table 1

Student-Teachers’ Concerns before Practicum.

Reasons of anxiety before practicum	Number of occurrences
Establishing rapport with students	5
Proficiency in English	4
Designing lessons interesting for students	3
Working with a particular age group	3
Administration	2
Mentor	1
Lack of anxiety	1

Source. Own research.

Analysis of the answers to the second questions of the interview, i.e. the challenges student teachers experienced *during* practicum, enables us to outline two main areas of concerns, e. g. designing lessons which are motivating and engaging for learners and various aspects of classroom management.

Seven student teachers stated that it was time consuming but finally rewarding to plan lessons painstakingly. The following transcript of student teacher's (ST11) answer to the question illustrate the common opinion best of all:

When I was preparing for the lessons, and then in school, it was more like a reward that you actually could see how your ideas work and how the students will respond. But my biggest challenge was actually thinking about the lessons, constructing them, and I really try to make them meaningful, which proved to be challenging. Of course, I could just follow the textbook and it would be much easier and less time-consuming, but I feel like I took my time and it paid off.

The second issue which caused a great amount of concerns among student teachers was various aspects of classroom management which included working with mixed ability classes (mentioned 3 times), time management during the lesson (mentioned 4 times), maintaining student's attention during classes (1), formulating clear instructions while giving tasks (2 times).

Another challenge stated with various degree of explicitness was the amount of time student teachers had to spend while designing lessons (ST13):

I spent all my time even at the weekends, preparing for the lessons and planning activities, it was really, really difficult because I didn't have much sleep and free time for me to spend with family or friends or with my hobbies. So, I was really exhausted at the end of the practicum. But on the other hand, I know it was worth because students loved my lessons and when I read their anonymous feedback, I'm convinced about that...

Unfortunately, one student teacher was not getting well along with the mentor and this view was expressed as follows (ST10):

I think the greatest challenge was actually my mentor because we didn't really hit it off at the beginning. I have a little different opinion on how things should be taught in school. But I actually managed to have conversations with my mentor and to overcome this. I realised that since he is the senior and he is the most more experienced than me, it should be done in his way and I should follow the way, but I was not exactly happy with how the lessons turned out.

While comparing this particular student teacher's concerns before and during practicum, we have to state that they did not coincide as student teacher's main concern before Practicum was in the area of lesson planning. At the same time, a respondent whose main worry before Practicum was relationship with the mentor (ST04) stated that Practicum in general was a "pleasant experience".

These concerns about partnership with a mentor are in tune with studies which identify mentors or cooperating teachers as significant figures who can provide student teachers with emotional and professional support (Farrell, 2001; Funk et al., 2012)

Interestingly, the same student teacher who expressed concerns about discipline problems before Practicum, admitted to having them in one class which "was very loud

and it was very difficult to calm them down and make them listen to me.” The reasons for this may be not the student teacher herself but learners’ previous school experience.

As researchers wanted to get data concerning the general feeling(s) prevailing during practice teaching, the interview included the question whether student teachers experienced positive emotions during Practicum, followed by a request for clarification, e.g. *if yes, what caused them?* To the great satisfaction of the authors all student teachers unanimously stated that they felt positive emotions during Practicum, providing further clarification of the reasons for such experiences.

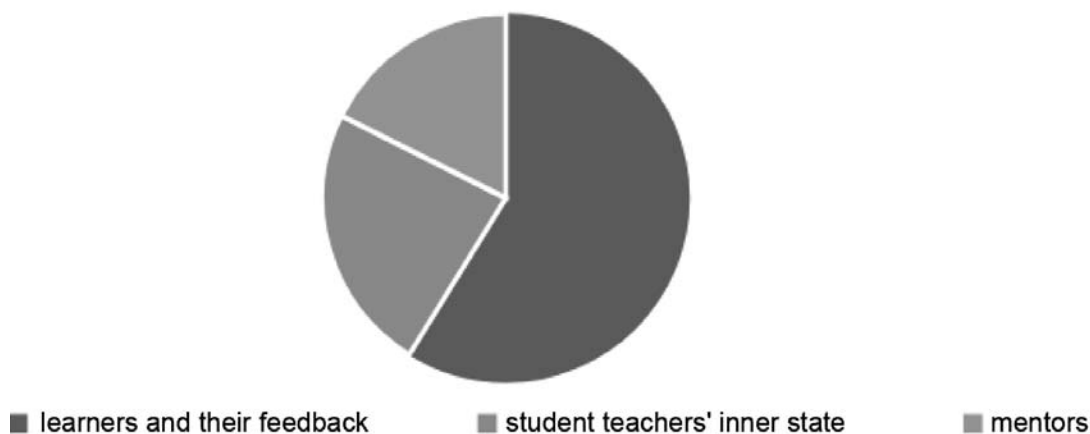
Though the reasons varied among the respondents, it is possible to outline three main areas:

- learners and their feedback (mentioned 10 times);
- student teachers’ inner state (4 times);
- mentors or colleagues (3 times).

Some respondents enumerated more than one reason out of the areas given above, so it is possible to state that they overlap and it is difficult to draw a strict border between them. The following graph sums up the proportion as distributed among the sources of positive emotions which are further described.

Figure 1

Sources of Positive Emotions



Source. Own research.

Sources related to social interaction and work with learners can be best pinpointed by the statements that follow:

- ST08: “I actually really liked the classes that I taught, especially the students in the classes, because they were very positive, they were working very well, they were trying their best, even if they didn’t know me before.”

- ST02: “...what I especially found positive was the feedback of students and maybe even some happiness they felt when they were successful in something or get better in something.”
- ST09: “...mostly when I was talking with the learners during my last lessons, when I asked them for their feedback, they were really nice. They had some things that I could do better, but they were really nice.”
- ST05: “I experienced many positive emotions thanks to my students, I think we were interconnected and I felt that they wanted to communicate with me, to talk with me. Even during the breaks, they were interested in me and in my lessons.”
- ST01: “overall the experience or the emotions I got, they’re mostly positive and it was really fun to work with the students.”

Another source of positive emotions is the student teachers’ growing awareness of progress (mentioned by three respondents when they see that their cognitive process and time investment while designing plans are realised successfully in classes, i.e. “... mostly positive emotions I felt were because of the learners and their progress.” One student teacher (ST03) mentioned “a noticeable feeling of pride after a job well done.” The following reaction provided by one student teacher supports this idea best of all: “I certainly experienced positive emotions during the practicum. Probably the most enjoyable one was like a joy of... Joy inside me. When the learners actually... When I could see the learners smile and laugh, that was very, ... heart warming” (ST13).

It is evident from the analysed data that student teachers’ positive emotions and sense of achievement are intertwined with their successful work in class and rapport with students whom they teach.

Another source of positive emotions mentioned by 3 student teachers was cooperation with the mentor and supportive atmosphere at school. For instance, ST03 stated that:

I was really excited about this practicum overall because my previous one, I didn’t really have a good mentor for [the name of the specific subject is deleted for ethical reasons]. So, for me now, it was a very positive experience overall. I really liked the school. I enjoyed it. I also had a very good experience with other people working at the school who really helped me.

To discern what lexical items attributed to positive emotions have been used by the respondents and how frequently, the authors analysed the data, received in reaction to question three of the interview, i.e. *Did you experience any positive emotions during Practicum? If yes, which ones?* For this purpose, a lexical survey with the help of a Voyant Tools software has been conducted.

For example, the word “joy” is attributed to positive emotions by both classifications used in this study (Parrott, 2001; Fredrickson, 2013). Processing and analysing the text of the interview as a whole it was revealed that the noun ‘joy’ and its derivatives (enjoy, enjoyable, joyous) are used 11 times by 4 respondents.

The verb “to like” is traced 5 times in the sample of 3 respondents and ‘to love’ occurs one time by another respondent. At the same time the adjective ‘happy’ and its derivative ‘happiness’ was mentioned 6 times while answering the questions about the positive emotions. Table 2 sums up the lexical items attributed to positive emotions, the number of the respondents that used them, and the number of occurrences in the interviews.

Table 2

Positive Emotions Mentioned

Positive emotions	Number of respondents	Number of occurrences
‘joy’ and its derivatives	4	11
to like, to love	4	6
‘happy’ and ‘happiness’	4	6
pride	1	1

Source. Own research.

As the authors of the study initially surmised a positive influence of the Practicum on student teachers’ progress, they were interested to know whether the respondents themselves can trace any improvement (or its lack) in their teaching competences. For this purpose, the concluding part of the interview was formulated as: *Have you noticed any change in your teaching identity? If yes, what was it?*

4 out of 13 student teachers preferred the word development to the word ‘change’. Only 1 student teacher gave a negative answer, while 8 respondents reacted positively. While summarising student teachers’ reactions, it is possible to state that they improved their teaching skills, including classroom management, became more creative in using a textbook, and learned how to take a decision on the spur of the moment, not following the lesson plan blindly. They also admitted gaining self-confidence, and becoming better aware of their strong sides. ST06 concluded that practicum: “was quite fun and really enriched me and gave me a good, better idea how I could improve myself.”

Generally, all the aspects of teachers’ competences reported by student teachers are in tune with the areas outlined in the EPOSTL (Newby, 2007, p. 6), i.e. context, methodology, resources, lesson planning, conducting a lesson, independent learning and assessment of learning, the areas which are further split into competences in terms of descriptors. From the very beginning of the courses in TEFL these descriptors, which embrace the core competences of language teachers, were used as stimuli for student-teachers’ self-reflection in class. The analyses of the data presented above make it evident that such reflection contributed to developing professional awareness of prospective teachers of English during Practicum.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Our analysis of pre-service teachers' concerns and emotions before and during teaching practice provides insights into the evolving dynamics of student teachers' identities. The main reasons of pre-practicum anxiety as found in this current study, i.e. establishing rapport with students, language proficiency, designing lessons interesting for learners, and working with a particular groups are partially in tune with the studies (Farrell, 2015; Cojorn & Sonsupap, 2022) which identified classroom management, lesson planning, and the looming responsibility of shaping the language proficiency of future learners as the main sources of pre-service EFL teachers' anxiety. It also proves Joanne D. Gorospe's (2022) idea about a possible source of anxiety as high expectations from cooperating teachers and students. The possible explanation of this can be rooted in the supposition that student teachers consider these aspects as mostly significant to them, while at the same time they are aware they need more practice to improve these aspects of their teaching competences.

Comparing student teachers' pre-practicum and in-practicum concerns the authors did not find them identical but still traced some similarities, especially in the area of designing and conducting a lesson. At the same time, the concern of rapport, which occurred in many respondents' answers about pre-practicum anxiety, was not identified as the main challenge by the student teachers during practicum. This makes us speculate that it was successfully established at the very beginning of practicum and further the focus of attention was shifted to everyday issues related to classroom management.

Still, anxiety was reported as the negative emotion mostly experienced before practicum. This could be attributed to the concerns about the quality of their teaching, relationship with the mentor, and the grade level placement – especially concerns about older learners, which is in line with a contemporary research (Cojorn & Sonsupap, 2022; Gorospe, 2022; Ji et al., 2022). Concerns about the learners' proficiency level of English were also reported. In line with Richard L. Sparks and Leonore Ganschow (1991), the respondents' anxiety might be interpreted as a concern about their insufficient or lower command in a FL – especially in comparison to their learners. However, neither the correlation nor the interdependence between FL anxiety and FL performance has been proved (Gosiewska-Turek, 2018). These concerns or anxieties, undoubtedly, can be overcome with more teaching practice. However, also extra training in a FL proves to be effective both in decreasing the anxiety as well as increasing their FL proficiency (Král'ová et al., 2017).

Undoubtedly, teaching is a demanding profession that involves a spectrum of both positive and negative emotions – from joy to anger (Frenzel, 2014). The findings also advance our views on the types of emotions experienced by pre-service teachers during practicum. Although students had particular concerns before it, all respondents unanimously reported positive emotions during this important phase of their education. As it became evident from the data analysis, student teachers' positive emotions were

sparked by the growing sense of progress, their successful work in class, and rapport with the students whom they teach.

The majority of positive emotions identified by respondents can be attributed to achievement emotions (Pekrun, 2014). Among achievement emotions reported, there are such emotions related to success as enjoyment and pride. In line with Pekrun (2014), the passing of positive emotions from learners to the student teacher was also reported several times – which emphasises their contagious nature and the presence of positive social emotions.

The presence of social emotions (Pekrun, 2014) was reported several times by respondents – especially the ones related to their concerns about the rapport with their learners and the feedback on their teaching (which, in the end, was very positive); designing the lessons that would be interesting for the learners; and the relationships with their mentor at the practicum school (which, again, was reported to be positive). The presence of these emotions emphasises the need to understand the dual identity of pre-service teachers – as they are both students as well as teachers. Despite the anxiety experienced, it is essential to emphasise that our participants were not afraid to ask their learners for feedback, moreover they were willing to learn the learners' feedback as the basis for self-reflection. This can be interpreted as a sign of their growing professionalism.

As evident from the respondents' reports, a shift from using a textbook from cover to cover to supplementing it in a creative way is apparent. According to the reports, although the textbook-based mode seems to be less time-consuming, the extra challenge of making the EFL classes more engaging with the use of modern and relevant materials that cannot always be found in the textbook was considered as rewarding for the student teachers. This is an important contribution to the discussion of emotional TEFL (Kamenická, 2021, 2022; Kanazawa, 2021, 2022; Kráľová et al., 2022). Future studies might want to gather more data in this area to have a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' emotions related to designing EFL classes that would implement targeted emotion-involved processing activities. Also, institutions educating teachers might want to consider this shift towards more emotionally oriented programmes in their future curriculum designs. It seems that courses on positive emotion education and negative emotion regulation would prove particularly useful, based on the reports in the present study.

As suggested by the author of Broaden and Build theory (Fredrickson, 2001, 2003), certain discrete positive emotions, such as joy, interest, contentment, and pride can help people build their personal resources. Hopefully, these positive emotions, experienced by student teachers on the onset of their teaching career can be a good stimulus for further development. As positive emotions can be contagious, it may be helpful to encourage senior student teachers to share their positive emotions among peers and with other pre-service teachers who are only preparing for their first practicum.

CONCLUSION

As novice EFL teachers embark on the initial stages of their teaching careers, they traverse an intricate emotional terrain. Notably, there is a scarcity of research investigating the emotional dimensions of pre-service teachers, particularly in contrasting the origins of pre-practicum anxiety with their actual experience during the practicum. Through focusing on thirteen student teachers of EFL, this case study aimed to address this gap and provide additional empirical support by examining and comparing the pre-service teachers' sources of anxiety before practicum with their actual experiences and subsequent in-practicum emotions, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the emotional challenges inherent in this pivotal phase of teacher development. Pursuing the first objective of this study has shown that the identified *pre-practicum* anxieties, encompassing rapport, language proficiency, lesson design, and group dynamics, align with existing research and support previous observations on heightened expectations from cooperating teachers and students. A noticeable shift from pre-practicum to during-practicum concerns, particularly regarding rapport, suggests a successful initial establishment and a subsequent focus on daily classroom management intricacies. We also aimed to investigate whether pre-service EFL teachers encountered positive emotions during their practicum and explore any potential influence on the development of their teaching identity. In reaction to this objective, the research has proved that within the emotionally charged landscape of teaching, a prevailing narrative of positive emotions emerges *during* practicum, driven by a sense of achievement, fruitful classroom interactions, and meaningful student connections, moderated by anxiety linked to teaching quality, mentor relationships, and grade-level placements. Encouraging experienced student teachers to share positive emotions with peers and newcomers, in line with Fredrickson's (2001, 2003) *Broaden and Build Theory*, may be used as a pivotal opportunity for fostering a supportive and growth-oriented learning environment within the ever-evolving landscape of the teaching profession. Notwithstanding the relatively limited sample of participants, it is hoped that this study illuminates the multifaceted dynamics of pre-service teachers' professional identities, examining their concerns and emotional trajectories before and during teaching practice. However, further research is necessary to gain a deeper insight into this important issue.

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