

Role of Expectations and Emotions in Pre-service Teacher Identity Construction

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Abstract

The construct of Language Teacher Identity has garnered tremendous research interest over the past two decades with teacher affect – the relationship between emotional factors and teacher identity construction – as one of the areas of focus. Pre-service teachers (PSTs) enter the teacher education program (TEP) with expectations of becoming ‘good’ teachers. These are negotiated and mediated through the practicum experience that entails enormous emotional investment on the part of the PSTs as they experiment with their developing skills and knowledge to transact learning. This paper explores the role of expectations and emotions in the emerging identities of PSTs. It examines: a) PSTs’ beliefs about ‘good’ teachers which translate into expectations, b) teaching events involving pleasant and unpleasant emotions for PSTs influencing the construction of a positive and negative sense of identity as teachers and c) ways in which PSTs negotiate and adjust their emerging identities as language teachers vis-à-vis their expectations and emotions. Five PSTs enrolled in a TEP at a Central University in India are the participants of the study. Reflective journals, classroom observation, and oral narratives are used as tools to collect data which is analyzed qualitatively. The findings reveal that PSTs use several coping strategies to combat unpleasant emotions that erode their fragile emerging identities while exercising agency all through to develop positive identities with the help of pleasant emotions.

Keywords: *emotions, language teacher identity, pre-service teachers, imagined identities*

Introduction

Language Teacher Identity has merited research attention in the past decade or two (Varghese et al., 2005; Olsen, 2011; Barkhuizen 2016; Yazan & Lindhal, 2020). De Costa and Norton (2017) discuss three theoretical developments in LTI research: a) the ecological turn, b) teacher socialization and investment, and c) teacher affect. Not surprisingly, LTI research has focused, among other things, on the impact of teacher

emotions on their identity construction (Yazan & Peercy, 2018; Cheng, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). In fact, teacher efficacy is inextricably linked to the sense of self-worth as teachers’ experience. A teacher with a strong and positive professional identity will be self-directed to acquire knowledge and skills necessary for teaching throughout their life. In other words, a teacher’s professional identity is always a work in progress; it is dynamic and ongoing.

In the case of pre-service teachers (PSTs), learning to teach during a teaching practicum has often been described as an emotionally charged experience wherein PSTs learn to recognize and accept their inadequacies while also identifying their strengths. They experience a host of positive as well as negative emotions that influence and contribute to their emerging sense of identity as teachers. The construct of language teacher identity thus provides a framework to analyze and theorize the complex ways in which PSTs learn to become teachers.

Language Teacher Identity (LTI)

Within teacher education, the concept of professional identity is regarded as elusive and perplexing. Language teacher identity (LTI) is “hard to articulate, easily misunderstood, and open to interpretation” (Olsen, 2008, p. 4). While no ‘unified definition’ exists, (Ivanovaa & Skara-Mincane, 2016, p. 530), it can be understood that professional identity is an ongoing process of integration of the ‘personal’ and the ‘professional’ sides of becoming and being a teacher (Beijaard et al., 2004). Professional identity is thus dynamic, multifaceted, negotiated, and co-constructed (Edwards & Burns, 2016). While defining beginning teacher identity Danielewicz (2001) remarks, “...every person is composed of multiple, often conflicting, identities, which exist in volatile states of construction or reconstruction, reformation or erosion, addition, or expansion” (p.10). LTI reflects teachers’ professional lives which impact teaching quality, job motivation, commitment, resilience, and career decision-making (Day & Hong, 2016). De Costa and Norton (2017) argue that resourceful language teachers “navigate complex identities in classrooms, schools, and communities, with a view to enhancing language learning and teaching” (p. 11).

Identity is context-bound and is constructed within social, cultural, institutional, and political settings (Duff & Uchida, 1997). This underlines the connection between assigned identity—the identity imposed on one by others—and claimed identity, the identity or identities one acknowledges or claims for oneself (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002). There can be multiple identities of the same person (Gee, 2000): a) natural identity one is born with; this cannot be changed, b) institutional identity accorded by the workplace based on the person’s accomplishments; the institution has the power to control this c) discourse identity developed through talk or interaction; this is subjective), and d) affinity identity determined by one’s practices within different communities/groups; allegiance, access, and participation are important here (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Varghese et al. (2016) posit that LTI provides the analytical lens for reconceptualizing language teachers’ knowledge base and investigating teachers, teaching, and teacher education. Wang et al. (2021) hold that LTI is crucial in language education since it plays an important role in an individual’s teaching not only in terms of how they teach but also in how they present themselves and the materials for teaching and learning. The overall aim of a teacher education program is best conceived as the development of professional identity (Van Huizen et al., 2005). The development of language teacher identity has been viewed as a central process in teacher learning practices (Johnson & Golombek, 2020). Teacher agency and initiatives toward continuing professional development result in concurrent changes in their identity; in fact, at the heart of teacher learning is the development of teacher identity (Freeman, 2016).

Schutz and Lee (2014) hold the view that teachers' emotional experiences and the emotional labour invested therein are inextricably linked to their emerging sense of self as teachers. They further argue that social, emotional, and contextual factors have a great impact on teachers' identity development to the extent that they can even influence the decision of staying on or leaving the profession. Lemarchand-Chauvin and Tardieu (2018) state that the impact of emotions on professional identity development in the field of second-language teacher education has been gaining research attention only recently. They hold that in many teacher-training contexts, the construction of a "mainly linguistic and didactic professional identity has long been thought relevant, emotions being considered as a nuisance" (p. 2). They further contend that "pre-service teachers have for a long time looked for support to address the emotional aspects of their work without really being heard by the educational authorities. What to do with the fear of entering the classroom, the anger that may arise due to a disruptive class situation, the happiness of a successful moment or the sadness one may feel when confronted with one's own limits?" (p. 2).

Review of Research

This section presents some seminal research conducted on LTI. Kanno and Stuart (2011) conducted a year-long study of how two pre-service teachers in the US learned to teach and how their sense of themselves as professional language teachers emerged, through interviews, teaching journals, stimulated recalls, classroom observations, and video recording. The findings revealed that the identity transition from pre-service teachers to practising teachers was not automatic. Continued practice played a significant contribution to their emerging identities as

evolved identities marked clear changes in their teaching practice in the classroom. Demonstrating the link between identity and practice, this study helped to theorize the teacher identity formation process. In a nine-year longitudinal study in New Zealand, Barkhuizen (2016) investigated how the imagined identities of a pre-service English teacher, Sela, are constructed. He examined her lived stories built from conversations, interviews, written narratives, and multimodal digital stories as they unfold across personal, institutional, and ideological contexts. An in-depth thematic analysis of the content and the context of the stories revealed how she invested in practices and identities that permit both agency and resistance.

Deng et al. (2018) used emotion and dilemmas as a lens to reveal six Chinese student teachers' professional identity construction in the context of practicum through the five stages: beginning, immediately after the beginning, the middle, toward the end, and after the practicum. The findings revealed that participants experienced several dilemmas during their teaching practicum – ethical, political, and pedagogical. Their professional identity construction was a continuous and contextual process that is intertwined with their feelings and emotions and the interpretations of these experiences as they solve dilemmas for themselves. Nilpriom et al. (2019) examined teacher identity development in two student teachers during teaching practicum through classroom observations and life story interviews to explore whether the participants wanted to choose teaching as a profession after the practicum. The findings demonstrate that teacher identity construction depended on "emotions, and resulted from socio-cultural factors and the differences in social construction in the school settings" (p. 209).

Prabjandee (2019) used interviews and shadowing observations to examine teacher identity construction of two Thai English major student teachers enrolled in a one-year teaching practicum. The findings revealed that “practicum contributed to teacher identity development in three ways: (1) emotional responses to the practicum-shaped identity (2) practice-shaped identity and (3) symbolic entity as a reminder of being a teacher-shaped identity” (p.1277). Yang et al. (2022) investigated the relationships between teaching assistants’ (TAs) emotions and their attitudes toward inclusive education. They used a 24-item teacher emotion inventory (TEI) as a tool to collect data among 204 TAs from 122 secondary schools with inclusive education in Hong Kong. The findings revealed statistically significant correlations between positive emotions (joy and love) and TAs’ attitudes toward inclusive education while negative emotions (anxiety, anger, and stress) correlated negatively with their attitude toward inclusive education. Chen and Chen (2022) undertook a massive review of research on the evolving intellectual structure of teacher emotion over 35 years starting from 1985 until 2019. They identified 812 articles and using a descriptive quantitative analysis approach found that the overall volume of research is relatively low. They conclude that knowledge production in teacher emotion research is either at a late first stage or an emerging second stage.

The present study not only draws from the earlier research presented above but contributes to furthering the research in LTI. To elaborate, while the longitudinal study by Kanno and Stuart (2011) reveals how their teaching practice over two years shaped the identity of pre-service teachers, the current study demonstrates how identity is constructed through negotiating emotions in the practicum. Similarly, two other studies, Deng et al. (2018)

and Nilpriom et al. (2019) have guided the present study in terms of the high premium placed on emotions in the construction of LTI. Further, Chen and Chen (2022) highlight the paucity of knowledge construction vis-à-vis teacher affect. The present research is an attempt in that direction.

Context of the Study

The study emerged from my experience of being a mentor for the teaching events organized as part of a course entitled Practicum for the third-semester MA students specializing in English language teaching (ELT). While observing the PSTs through their peer teaching and practice teaching, I noticed that they were going through a turbulent period of coping with a host of emotions that their teaching experience triggered in them and how they were struggling to negotiate their imagined identities as teachers. In addition to the pedagogic support in planning their lessons, they also needed psychological scaffolding to help them make sense of the plethora of emotions that were messing up with their emerging sense of self as teachers. In the post-observation conferences, they narrated how, through consistent self-reflection and appropriate mentor support, they were able to manipulate their emotions.

Aim and Rationale

The study aims to investigate the role of emotions and expectations in the identity construction of pre-service teachers. It further explores how the beliefs and assumptions of PSTs convert into their expectations of themselves as prospective teachers. It argues that teaching events in the practicum can trigger positive as well as negative emotions in the PSTs. These emotions, in turn, can

influence their emerging sense of identity as language teachers. Therefore, it is important to examine how the affect (emotions and feelings) contributes to the sense of becoming teachers among pre-service teachers.

Research Questions

The following questions are addressed in the study:

1. What beliefs do PSTs hold about ‘good’ teachers that translate into expectations?
2. What teaching events trigger pleasant and unpleasant emotions for PSTs influencing the construction of a positive and negative sense of identity as teachers?
3. How do PSTs negotiate and adjust their emerging identities as language teachers vis-à-vis their expectations and emotions?

Methodology

Five PSTs – three female and two male – enrolled in a teacher training program at a Central University in India are the participants of the study. The PSTs had no prior teaching experience. Questionnaires, informal interviews, reflective journals maintained by the PSTs, and field notes made by the researcher are used as tools to collect data which are analyzed qualitatively. The questionnaire gathered information regarding PSTs’ beliefs and perceptions about what makes a good teacher. They were encouraged to mention the qualities of good teachers in terms of subject matter knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, and personality factors.

They were asked to share their ideas on how they wish to become good teachers – their apprehensions and challenges and the measures they would take to cope with them. The reflective journal documented the teaching events in the practicum that triggered positive and negative emotions in the PSTs and how these emotions affected their sense of becoming teachers. The data gathered from the reflective journals is enriched and confirmed during the informal interviews wherein PSTs shared specific incidents that contributed to their emerging identity as teachers. The researcher observed the teaching events conducted by the PSTs – two rounds of peer teaching and one round of practice teaching. A total of fifteen events (three per participant) were observed. Extensive field notes were made about classroom episodes and post-observation conference vignettes that had affective value in contributing to the formation of language teacher identity among PSTs.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

The data collected for the study are presented and analyzed in the following sections. The first section presents PSTs’ beliefs about ‘good’ teachers and the conceptions of their imagined identities. The second section details the teaching events that triggered pleasant and unpleasant emotions for PSTs influencing their emerging sense of identity as teachers. The third section discusses how PSTs negotiate and adjust their imagined identities as language teachers vis-à-vis their expectations and emotions.

Section 1: Beliefs about ‘Good’ Teachers and Imagined Identities of PSTs

The beliefs of the PSTs regarding what makes a good teacher span several domains of knowledge and skills such as subject matter knowledge (SMK), pedagogic content knowledge (PCK), and personality factors. According to them, good teachers can tweak the materials and the tasks to suit student needs, levels, and interests. They can make informed decisions and this decision-making ability is of significance since it “influences the way students react towards the target language, and, therefore, their success in learning it.” Teachers should be creative and engage learners in meaningful activities. One of the PSTs remarks, “Teaching is more than simply opening a book, doing exercises, and following an outline written by someone else. Teachers should use problem-solving activities, games, songs, etc. to help learners utilize the skills they have already learned.”

Good teachers are sensitive to the emotional pulse of the class. They change pace; and add humour and fun which reduces students’ inhibitions to participate in class. One of the PSTs affirms, “Teachers should encourage students; they should not give up on their students but should have high expectations from all of them.” According to the PSTs, good teachers are genuine, honest, and realistic; they dare to admit that they do not know something and will update their knowledge. PSTs consider fairness and unbiased nature as two important qualities of good teachers. Teachers should be democratic and provide a level ground where all learners are treated alike and provided equal opportunity for class participation. Another quality that merits mention is the ability of good teachers to leave

their emotional baggage at the doorstep of the classroom. This is mentioned eloquently by one of the PSTs: “The classroom is a stage and, to be effective, the teacher must be, in some cases, an actor. As a student, I cannot concentrate if I worry about what might be bothering my teacher. At the same time, I do not want a teacher who uses ridicule and sarcasm to sustain the class blocking any learning that might take place.” These various beliefs about good teachers form a part of the imagined identities of the PSTs as future teachers.

Section 2: Teaching Events and Emotions and, the Emerging Identity of PSTs

This section narrates the teaching events that triggered negative and positive emotions in the PSTs and how these impacted their emerging sense of identity as language teachers.

A) Teaching Events and Emotions

A total of twenty teaching events – four teaching events for each PST, two that triggered negative emotions and two that triggered positive emotions – are documented in the following sections.

Teaching Events Triggering Negative Emotions

PST 1: In her very first twenty-minute lesson on writing as part of team teaching, PST1 contributed to the lesson design enthusiastically. The lesson plan had all the teacher activities and learner activities described in detail. However, to her surprise and dismay, the objectives of her part of the lesson were not included in the team’s lesson

plan. She had to hand-write them before giving them to the supervisor. This 'caused anxiety' since she did not want the supervisor to think that she was not a good planner. PST1 remarks, "I am usually meticulous in planning and this was quite a shock for me. I had to cope with this sense of disappointment." In another thirty-minute lesson on grammar, PST1 aimed to teach meaning, form, and use of first conditionals and help learners practice the topic through the integration of skills. Although the lesson went well, she could not manage time properly and could not do the production task: "I feel that I couldn't achieve one of my objectives and so I wasn't personally satisfied with the lesson. I feel maybe I planned a lot many things for a 30-minute lesson. I could have had a simpler activity for the preparation stage."

PST 2: PST 2 felt that her use of technology was rather limited; she could have enhanced the interest quotient of her lesson with "more technology." There was another aspect of the lesson that caused her dissatisfaction. She invested efforts to make the class inclusive but there were one or two students who neither participated nor were called out in class. They remained outside of the teacher's action zone. Further, she noticed that there were some "more dominating students who tended to speak more than the other students" hijacking class time and teacher attention. This inability to manage the class well "disturbed" PST2. PST 2 experienced tremendous performance pressure in one of the teaching events since it was for the final assessment. This caused "an increase in anxiety and nervousness". She was also "not ready with a plan B" if things did not go as planned. She expressed her desperation, "I needed photocopies, the facility on campus was not open on time ...I had to rush to the Basti to get printouts, where again there were technical problems. The biggest challenge

was to still conduct class despite the tension. This led to a stiffening of the body."

PST 3 considers proper delivery of instructions as a key to successful task completion and yet he was not able to give instructions clearly in one of the lessons. He remarks, "From the feedback I got from my peers in the post-observation conference, I realize that some of the instructions were not clear and that giving instructions while students are already doing the task is not helpful. I also have to learn to be clear and slow in my speech. I did not offer praise or give positive reinforcement to encourage the learners' participation. I have a long way to go before I put my act as a teacher together." PST 3 chose to use technology in one of the lessons but he was not able to anticipate the problems and hence could not devise an alternative plan if things did not work out in class. He expresses his dissatisfaction: "One problem that I faced was that I couldn't play the video due to a power outage. I realize that things may not go as planned and as a teacher, I need to be ready for alternative options."

PST 4: PST 4 narrates how she struggled to teach in her "first-ever lesson." She could not follow her lesson plan and this caused stress: "I missed out some of the things that I had written in my lesson plan. I was nervous. I did not do the warm-up activity. I forgot to give my learners a follow-up activity. As it was my first experience, I panicked a lot and felt like crying ... I have a long way to go before I become a teacher." PST 2 was worried about how to manage her talk in the classroom: "I think the class got boring due to too much teacher-talk time. There was a lot of explaining. I couldn't manage the time and the lesson didn't go too well. The practice stage was a disaster! Teaching is indeed a big deal!"

PST 5: PST 5 had various concerns. While setting up the tasks, she “failed to grasp the attention of the learners.” She was confused and was not able to deliver the instructions clearly. The warm-up used to introduce the topic was not carried out as planned: “I should have chosen the activity that was doable and in the classroom. I showed some pictures related to the topic to elicit information from the learners such as structures, rules, and some examples but it did not work. I did not know what to do. I was at a loss!” The problems persisted in another teaching event: “I felt nervous throughout the lesson as it was not going well. In the production stage, I used a video and asked the learners to write passive structures for the actions shown in the video, but it gave very little scope for the learners to use the passive structures. Instead of the video, I could have chosen some other materials. I hope to learn how to select materials that are relevant and interesting since this is something that is expected of a ‘good’ teacher.”

Teaching Events Triggering Positive Emotions

PST 1: PST1 felt happy about her classroom management skills: “My instructions were clear, however, I spoke very fast. My voice was loud and audible, even at the back, learners could hear my instructions. There was a smooth transition throughout my lesson. This gave me a sense of satisfaction and enhanced my confidence that I could become a good teacher. My organisational skills will stand by me.” In another teaching event, PST 1 was able to draw up the aims and objectives of the lesson neatly in the lesson plan. She had to sacrifice one of the tasks while teaching the lesson but she was content that “the learners did understand the meaning, form, and use of first conditionals, it’s just that they couldn’t do one task. I am happy that they understood

the topic that I brought to the class and will hopefully retain it for a longer duration of time.”

PST 2: while teaching writing, PST2 felt a “sense of achievement at the end of the class” since her students produced descriptive paragraphs modelled after the sample she provided them. She voices her satisfaction, “I felt more relaxed and in control in this lesson. Though I was initially holding something in my hand, (which I do when I’m nervous), I put it on the table in a few minutes. I felt calmer and more confident in this class. I still need to work on my body language but I felt this was the class I enjoyed the most as a teacher.” PST 2 was able to handle the reading lesson well, too. Her students demonstrated an understanding of the texts through the tasks set for comprehension: “One of my main objectives in this lesson was to enable the learners to relate the text to their contexts and thereby respond to the text. I was happy, that this objective was met. The class was actively discussing during the last activity, and the responses to the text and this gave me a sense of satisfaction.”

PST 3 narrates how he was able to introduce the teaching item, idioms, well and how “he was motivated by the learners’ enthusiasm from the word *go*.” Both the presentation and the practice stages went well as the learners could give the right answers to all the questions. A lesson well taught can trigger positive emotions and instil confidence in the teachers: “The production activity, which is a group work to compose a poem using the idioms taught, also went well as the learners could come up with a beautiful piece correctly using the idioms taught. I believe that learning has happened and I achieved my objectives. This boosted my confidence. I have the potential to become a good teacher!” In another teaching

event, PST 3 was able to include shy and quiet students in classroom interactions. They were provided with the opportunity to speak as he particularly asked them questions to which he knew they had the answers. His thoughts about his emerging sense of identity as a teacher are articulated in his comments: “The students sitting at the right side of the class are a bit dominant in answering. So sometimes I give a chance to the students seated at the left side of the class. I can see that there was a good learning atmosphere in the class and that I have a good command of the class. I can see myself improving in the way I give feedback to my learners by appreciating them more.”

PST 4: PST 4 was able to design tasks that accommodated the various learning styles of the learners. She tried to incorporate different interaction patterns in the lessons. She highlights the strengths of her lessons: “For the less responsive students, I made sure that I asked them individual questions to ensure that they were also involved in the lesson. In taking care of the social development of the learners in the class, I made sure to acknowledge all of their responses and duly provide positive feedback and gentle error correction whenever necessary.” PST 4 felt happy that “the lesson was executed as planned for the most. The transition from one stage to the other was smooth. Timing for each stage and activity was appropriate ensuring adequate participation from every learner. I can confidently say that I completed the lesson within the allotted duration. I’m learning being a teacher.”

PST 5: PST 5 involved students through “question and answer techniques” which created interest in the lesson. She made them work in pairs and groups which enhanced class rapport: “I was able to create a positive atmosphere in the classroom. All the students were encouraged to participate

in the classroom. I’m not a bad teacher!” PST 5 taught passive voice in other lessons. The lesson plan was organized well with the objectives and the stages of the lesson clearly stated. The anticipated problems such as the malfunction of a projector and power-related problems were mentioned. She also managed to select suitable materials. In the practice stage, she used authentic materials such as the description of the monument and an abstract of a research study, which had a lot of passive structures for the learners. She comments, “I figured out how relevant materials can motivate learners and authentic materials indeed enhance the learning in the classroom.”

B) Emerging Identity of PSTs

PST1 has a positive image of herself as a “meticulous planner” and yet, there were lacunae in the lesson plan/instances when the lessons did not go as planned. In the informal interview, PST1 shared that these initial glitches made her question her planning abilities and that in the later teaching events, she was extra careful. This highlights the fact that negative emotions (here, anxiety and disappointment), can unsettle PSTs’ sense of self-worth as teachers. However, with appropriate corrective measures, they can reaffirm their positive qualities which will contribute to confidence as classroom teachers. Thus, while there were teaching events that triggered negative emotions, there were also abilities and skills that were put to use in class which triggered positive emotions. For instance, PST 1 was able to organize group work efficiently without “chaos or confusion”. She was able to deliver instructions for tasks properly. She appreciated learner responses and motivated learners to be more participative which helped create a positive learning environment. She ensured that the

handouts and worksheets were sufficient and distributed them smoothly. Class well-conducted triggered positive emotions and subsequently contributed to the construction of a positive self-image as a prospective teacher who will be able to handle future challenges of classroom teaching.

PST 2 experienced negative emotions when she faced issues with providing equal opportunity for participation for all learners. She also failed to anticipate the problems that might arise in getting the materials ready for the class. However, her sense of self-worth as a teacher was enhanced when she managed to achieve the learning outcomes in the later lessons. PST3 was unhappy at her inability to deliver the instructions. She felt let down when her lesson did not go as planned because of a power outage. Nevertheless, the fact that she was able to involve the quieter learners in classroom interaction and was able to lead her lesson to a logical conclusion boosted her morale and reinforced her faith in herself. For PST 4, dealing with her anxiety and apprehensions was the toughest challenge and this came in the way of a smooth flow of the lesson for her. She felt that she could perhaps not become a 'good' teacher. However, she ensured that transitions from one stage of the lesson to the other were smooth in her later lessons and this made her not to give up hope. The inability to choose suitable teaching materials leads to ineffective teaching events for PST 5. This triggered self-doubt which was overcome in later lessons. The comments of PSTs demonstrate their ability to engage in critical reflection about their lessons and evaluate them with honesty and frankness. Such an exercise is part of the identity construction of teachers.

Section 3: Negotiation of Imagined Identities of PSTs

This section presents how PSTs negotiated their imagined identities throughout the practicum with teaching events that triggered positive and negative emotions as delineated in the earlier section. They have made cognitive, pedagogic, and affective investments in their journey toward becoming (good) teachers. Therefore, their imagined identities and their expectations for themselves in their future careers are discussed in terms of these three dimensions.

The cognitive dimension: PSTs would like to design lessons that would work well when executed in the class. Their lessons should have well-defined aims and objectives. The tasks should be engaging, and challenging and promote collaborative learning for their learners. They wish to explore the possibility of including authentic materials that make language learning relevant to real-life needs. They wish to plan in such a way that the lesson transitions across different stages are smooth and seamless. Reflecting on how she was not able to complete the production task in one of her lessons, the PST remarks, "From this lesson, I understood that we should not try to do everything in one lesson and devote quality time to teaching certain aspects- maybe take up a smaller chunk of a topic and execute it well." This marks the expansion of their cognitive schemas regarding the planning and execution of lessons. One of the PSTs sums up the cognitive gains achieved through the practicum and her future goals: "I have learned a lot of things throughout the three rounds of teaching such as organizing the lesson plan effectively, selecting relevant tasks and making the students interactive. By the end of the third round, I felt very confident. I hope to keep honing my skills and become a teacher that adds value to my students' learning."

Pedagogic dimension: PSTs realize that in addition to subject matter knowledge, a good teacher should also have pedagogic content knowledge, the ability to deliver the content well, and transact learning in the classroom: “I have learned to take planning more seriously as that was one area in which I fell short in. In many little ways, I have learned to modulate my voice to best suit the class. I have also learned to manage time judiciously. The different teaching styles of my peers have greatly expanded my knowledge of teaching in the field of ELT. The tasks, activities, and texts as well as the techniques used by my peers will be things I will incorporate in my future lesson planning. The greatest takeaway from this experience would be the tremendous growth in confidence level.” Another PST effectively summarizes the learning that accrued to him during the practicum and how that helped him set his future goals as a teacher: “I learned a lot. Teaching is not an easy job; it needs good planning and a lot of thinking. I was so nervous in the first round but then when the second round came, I have seen a lot of improvement in myself, and I can see that I have the potential to do the job. But I am disappointed in the final round, I still need to learn. I need to sharpen my skills and vocabulary in teaching. In the future, I will reflect on these days and find solutions to my problems.”

Affective dimension: An in-depth analysis of PSTs’ reflective journals demonstrated that the most significant gains have been achieved in the affective domain. Their growth graph as prospective teachers marks several points of achievement interspersed with disappointments. Some of the comments of the PSTs are presented below:

PST 1: “I got feedback that I was able to plan and present the lesson in a nuanced manner. I

am happy that I ended my Practicum course on a high note, with a good lesson in my kitty. I can think of my performance as something that started on a higher note, which later experienced a slight dip but then went to the heights again. I think this whole exercise of presenting lessons to my peers and authentic learners helped me gain practical knowledge about teaching adult ESL learners, it made me more confident and now I feel more prepared to plan a good skills lesson.”

PST 2: “The whole experience of teaching throughout this semester was stressful but rewarding. My body language is something that I have to work on. The pace of my speech increases when I’m nervous, so much so that sometimes the person listening can’t even understand what I’m saying. This is something I have to consciously work on. To think of the multiplicity of the skills and knowledge a teacher should have is scary but I’m learning.”

PST 3: “I can confidently say that I am a completely different person at the end of this practicum course in terms of learning and gaining knowledge of teaching as compared to who I was at the beginning of the course. The constructive criticisms and feedback from my tutors and peers were the main reasons for my improvement as seen by me and others as well.”

PST 4: “The second round of teaching is a remarkable experience for me. I left the podium with a sense that I had achieved something and that feeling was so wonderful. Even though I taught real students, I felt that I am more confident and self-contained than the previous teaching with my classmates. I can see the growth... I was not afraid to express myself and had confidence in my language use as compared to the previous round which helped me move smoothly.”

PST 5: “The practicum is truly unnerving. I realize now how many things I took for granted when I was a student. It is nerve-racking to plan and execute a lesson. My high moment was when I instinctively felt that my learners enjoyed my class and learned something. But there were several low moments when things did not go as planned. I guess I have learned to take things in my stride and will keep learning.”

The comments presented above underscore the ability of the PSTs to accept the flaws in their teaching with a proper perspective of improving their practice in the future. Despite the negative emotions triggered by some teaching events, the PSTs are able to hold their ground. They demonstrated that they have developed a positive identity of themselves as future teachers with a forward-looking mindset.

Discussion of Findings

The findings are presented in relation to the research questions addressed in the study.

What beliefs do PSTs hold about ‘good’ teachers that translate into expectations?

PSTs believe that good teachers possess both subject matter knowledge as well as pedagogic content knowledge. They organize lessons well, maximize classroom learning and create a psychologically safe and non-threatening classroom environment where equal opportunity is provided for participation for all learners. They are enablers who push their students to realize their fullest potential. They demonstrate psychological stability and can modify the lesson in consonance with the emotional pulse of the class. These beliefs have guided the practicum experience of the PSTs

wherein they have identified their strengths that can be further developed and areas that need improvement. This implies that, through supervisory support, teacher educators can help PSTs build a strong and positive identity as teachers who can make a difference to their students through teaching that reflects their beliefs of being good teachers.

What teaching events trigger pleasant and unpleasant emotions for PSTs influencing the construction of a positive and negative sense of identity as teachers?

The teaching events that triggered pleasant and unpleasant emotions in PSTs span several pedagogic skill areas such as planning lessons that focus on well-defined learning objectives, selecting suitable materials, being inclusive in providing learning opportunities, choosing task-appropriate interaction patterns, using technology, and a host of other issues. When lessons did not go as planned they experienced a sense of disappointment, self-doubt, and a nagging lack of self-confidence. Nevertheless, there were also several bright moments – being able to achieve the lesson goals, use authentic materials, and ensure learner comprehension of complex grammar items – when they experienced confidence and reaffirmed their faith in themselves as prospective teachers. Thus emotions triggered by lesson experiences impact the identity construction of PSTs. This is significant in that it necessitates two things: a) the PSTs accord suitable value to these emotions – neither overreact nor suppress – and b) the practicum supervisors help the PSTs develop appropriate coping mechanisms such that the emotions, even the negative ones, positively impact their identity construction.

How do PSTs negotiate and adjust their emerging identities as language teachers vis-à-vis their expectations and emotions?

PSTs were able to overcome the feelings of inadequacy with personal determination, grit, and support from their peers and practicum supervisors. In addition, they were engaged in critical reflection about the teaching events which made them realize what went well with the lesson and what did not go well. They were able to analyze the scenarios clinically and arrive at a clear understanding of their emerging identities as language teachers, which underscores the importance of providing opportunities for reflection and scaffolding PSTs' 'reflectivity' through appropriate tools. Since the pleasant/unpleasant emotions triggered by the teaching experiences of practicum have a directly proportionate relationship with the success or otherwise of PSTs as classroom teachers in the future, PSTs must negotiate these emotions towards building a positive and constructive identity as prospective language teachers.

Limitations

- As part of the practicum, the PSTs could do only three rounds of teaching. If they had the opportunity to teach more, they would have perhaps gained a deeper understanding of their teaching which subsequently would have added more dimensions to their identity as teachers. The study is thus constrained to some extent.
- The study focuses on PSTs' perceptions of the learning that they gained through the practicum and how it contributed to their emerging sense of identity as teachers. The perceptions and observations of the practicum supervisors are not considered.

- The PSTs are highly motivated, flexible, and open to criticism. They wanted to gain maximum benefit from the practicum; they were supportive of each other and learned a great deal from their peers. With a different set of participants, the study may not yield similar findings.

Further Research

- A study can investigate the measures that teacher educators take to trigger positive emotions among PSTs about their abilities as prospective teachers – how they can focus not only on building the knowledge and skills required for teaching but also on constructing a positive self-image among PSTs as future classroom teachers.
- Research can be carried out on the impact of the post-observation conference and how the teacher educators and the peers can help reinforce positive emotions and reduce the impact of negative emotions thus contributing to the construction of identity as competent teachers among PSTs.
- A longitudinal study can examine the classroom practice of PSTs when they begin real-time teaching and the ways they cope with emotions triggered by critical moments, for example, students displaying off-task behaviour or the 'best' tasks not working in the class.

Conclusion

Language teacher identity construction entails a huge emotional investment, especially for pre-service teachers as they struggle to cope with short-term and long-term tensions, conflicts, and dilemmas. Appropriate and timely scaffolding by their peers and practicum

supervisors enables them to devise suitable coping mechanisms to face these challenges as they negotiate their identity formation – the kind of teachers that they are shaping themselves into and the kind of teachers they aspire to be.

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