

# Pre-service English language teachers' emotional needs during practicum

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## **Abstract**

This article presents the results of a case study that aimed to develop an understanding of the emotional needs expressed by pre-service ELT teachers in their accounts of their teaching practicum. Data was collected from the teachers' accounts of their practicum and interviews. The results show that pre-service teachers' low self-concept, low proficiency level, and lack of vocation were unmasked by the negative emotions they experienced during their practicum period. The need for language teaching programs to include emotional support strategies for pre-service teachers during practicum is also revealed. It is paramount to help pre-service teachers develop and shape their teaching identity through reflection. Providing an opportunity for pre-service teachers to reflect on their emotions and unmask their emotional needs can help supervisors provide them with appropriate emotional support.

## **Keywords**

English language teaching, pre-service teachers, emotions

## Necesidades emocionales de futuros profesores de inglés durante su práctica docente

## **Resumen**

Este artículo presenta los resultados de un estudio de caso cuyo objetivo fue conocer las necesidades emocionales reveladas por futuros profesores de lenguas durante su práctica docente. La recolección de datos fue realizada a través de bitácoras de enseñanza y entrevistas. Los resultados revelaron que un bajo autoconcepto, un nivel bajo de inglés y la falta de vocación para la enseñanza fueron evidenciados a través de las emociones negativas expresadas por los participantes durante su práctica docente. Estos resultados revelan la necesidad de que los programas de licenciatura incluyan estrategias emocionales de apoyo para los profesores en formación. Es primordial ayudar a los futuros profesores a desarrollar y moldear su identidad docente a través de la reflexión. Brindar una oportunidad para que los profesores en formación reflexionen sobre sus emociones y desenmascaren sus necesidades emocionales puede ayudar a los supervisores a brindarles el apoyo emocional adecuado.

## **Palabras clave**

Emociones, enseñanza del inglés, profesores en formación

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## Introduction

Teaching is a profession requiring a high level of emotional commitment that evokes an array of emotions not only in teachers but also in learners (Dewaele, 2011). Various studies have reported the variety of positive and negative emotions undergone by teachers in the exercise of their profession (Cowie 2011, Méndez López, 2016).

Quality teacher education has been a perennial issue in the field of English language teaching (ELT). Teaching a foreign language entails *interaction with* a diverse set of people: students; colleagues; parents; and, the corresponding authorities. A variety of emotions emerge from these educational interactions, which are social constructions individually experienced by those involved in a particular context (Hargreaves, 2001; Meyer & Turner, 2006; Zembylas, 2005). As suggested by Linnenbrink-García & Pekrun (2011), emotions may affect cognitive performance, motivation and achievement and are, thus, an important factor in the language classroom because of their effects on language learning and teaching.

When learning a foreign language, learners across different contexts have reported feeling anxiety, fear, embarrassment, frustration, and low self-esteem, among other emotions (Garret & Young, 2009; Méndez López, 2011). Similarly, language teachers express feeling stress, frustration, anxiety, and fear, emotions which, in some cases, can lead to negative effects such as burn out or depression (Chang, 2013; Cowie 2011; Méndez López, 2017). Teaching involves an emotional duty not only to deal with our own emotions but also to manage the emotions of our learners. Thus, if teachers are not emotionally competent, their performance may affect their classroom environment and, consequently, lower the quality of the education they provide. As asserted by Gkonou and Miller (2017), "...managing the emotional texture of a classroom requires teachers to undertake intentional, strategic, and persistent emotional work" (p. 11).

The diverse range of emotions experienced by teachers has been explored in numerous studies (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Cowie 2011). It has been found that negative emotions might help teachers focus on specific aspects they need to improve, while positive emotions evoked by interactions with students help teachers remain motivated (Méndez López, 2020). Cowie (2011) found, in research conducted in a Japanese context, that intense negative emotions experienced in relationships with non-supportive colleagues could cause frustration and resentment, a conclusion also found in a study conducted with Mexican teachers by Méndez López (2016). Conversely, Gkonou and Miller (2017) reported that support and the exchange

of ideas among colleagues can “represent an important source of strength and positivity for their own professional well-being” (p.19).

Although studies on teachers’ emotions have focused on experienced educators, a growing body of research is developing which focuses on the emotions pre-service teachers experience during training (Timostutsuk & Ugaste, 2012; Nguyen 2014; Martínez Agudo & Azzaro, 2018). Arizmendi Tejeda, Scholes Gillings & López Martínez (2016), Ocampo Martínez (2017), and Méndez López (2020) have undertaken research in this area in the Mexican context.

The present article aims to contribute to this growing body of research by presenting the results of a case study that aimed to identify the emotional needs expressed by pre-service English language teachers in their accounts of their teaching experience during practicum. As asserted by Nguyen (2014), “[t]here need to be more studies in this area conducted in different settings so that the field’s research base is enriched and findings across contexts can be compared and aggregated” (p. 64).

## 2.0 Pre-service teachers’ emotions

Practicum is an “intrinsically highly emotional, complicated and contradictory” period for pre-service teachers since it affects their personal and professional development (Timostutsuk & Ugaste, 2012, p. 2). Various studies have reported that pre-service teachers experience both positive (enthusiasm, enjoyment, and satisfaction) and negative (disappointment, frustration, and anxiety) emotions while performing the different academic activities required by the teaching practicum process (Nguyen, 2014, 2018; Martínez Agudo & Azzaro, 2018; Méndez López, 2020; Timostutsuk & Ugaste, 2012).

Pre-service English language teachers are exposed, in their first teaching experiences, to real-life scenarios that may evoke both positive and negative emotions. At this stage, pre-service teachers are usually concerned with applying the knowledge learnt in previous years; however, the diverse demands on them can be daunting for most, which explains the diversity of emotions revealed in studies undertaken across educational contexts.

In most studies, the positive emotions reported by pre-service teachers emerge through their interactions with students. The display, by students, of a positive attitude in class correlates to interest in both classroom activities and academic progress (Martínez Agudo & Azzaro, 2018). Moreover, other sources of positive emotions come from pre-service teachers’ development of a good relationship with students or instances when students show respect and trust in them (Ocampo Martínez, 2017).

Negative emotions during practicum have been reported to originate in the demands of the teaching profession, such as administrative duties and compliance with the norms of a school environment (Numrich, 1996). Furthermore, negative emotions have been reported to be aroused by the following: the perceived incongruence between theory and practice (Caires, Almeida & Martins, 2010); the contradictions confronted by pre-service teachers in some practicum settings (Nguyen, 2014); the feelings of a lack of proficiency for teaching (Keller *et al.*, 2014); the high expectations they have placed on their practicum experience and the shock of facing reality (Timostuk & Ugaste, 2012); feelings of disappointment in supervisors or mentors (Martinez Agudo & Azzaro, 2018); and, a feel of lack of teachers' vocation, in specific contexts (Méndez López, 2020).

In most studies reviewed for the purposes of the present study, pre-service teachers reported experiencing more negative than positive emotions during their practicum, due to some of the issues mentioned above. However, a study conducted in Finland found that pre-service teachers reported more positive than negative emotions, which may be due to the particular context, as the study was conducted in a country that values teachers highly and the participants were enrolled on a master's program in science education and had, thus, already completed an undergraduate degree. In contrast, practicum is usually carried out in the last year of an undergraduate degree in most contexts in countries where the teaching profession is not as highly valued, with pre-service teachers often enrolled in other courses and under great financial pressure while trying to finish their studies. On the other hand, Finnish pre-service teachers do not experience similar financial constraints, as they are funded by the state. Given that most pre-service teachers in contexts outside Finland are studying under such financial pressure, it is understandable that they would be prone to encounter more negative than positive emotions when faced with a real classroom for the first time.

The high number of negative experiences reported by pre-service teachers may be explained by their lack of confidence in their teaching competencies (Britzman, 2007). Another reason for the greater number of reported negative experiences may be the idealism manifested by pre-service teachers in the first stage of their teaching career (Furlong & Maynard, 1995), an idealism which often includes an ideal image of themselves, which can be frustrating if reality does not match their ideal. In addition, the wide-ranging demands of the profession can be difficult to face when also trying to put into practice theories, methods or strategies learnt in previous years, as teaching is not simply a question of implementing a learning theory, creating tasks and designing lesson plans.

For the reasons described above, pre-service teachers may be more susceptible to negative emotions that affect their teaching practice and, consequently, hinder their professional practice. In addition, facing new responsibilities, such as "heavy workload, stress and physical and anxiety symptoms" (Caires, Almeida & Martins, 2010, p. 17), may not only cause negative emotions but also unmask some of the pre-service teachers' emotional needs. As Soslau (2015) states, "the learning context for preservice teachers is inherently stressful, and therefore student-teachers will necessarily try to manage and satisfy a variety of emotional needs" (p. 6).

### *Previous studies in Mexico*

Very few studies have addressed the emotions experienced by Mexican pre-service teachers during the final year of their degree, in which they have to complete a practicum period teaching students at different levels. Arizmendi Tejeda, Scholes Gillings and López Martínez (2016) studied the use of regulation strategies by novice teachers when faced with negative emotions during their practicum. Via the use of observations and semi-structured interviews, the above-named scholars found that the novice teachers participating in their study used preventative and responsive emotional regulation strategies, such as selecting situations and modifying their emotional expression. Their results show that a lack of security and self-confidence led to the use of strategies to help them avoid feeling challenged or threatened. Moreover, participants in the above cited study made use of only two strategies to regulate their negative emotions, from which investigators concluded that teaching experience and training is necessary for teachers to be able to apply other strategies, such as emotional understanding or hiding emotions.

Ocampo Martínez (2017) identified both the emotions experienced by first-year English teachers and their causes, with the data collected via three semi-structured interviews conducted at different stages over a period of six months. Participants reported that their emotions originated in their interactions with students, administrative duties, and their lack of classroom management skills. The participants' accounts indicate that feelings of anger, frustration, and nervousness were due to interaction with students and administrative duties; however, their accounts also show that these same aspects made them feel joy, confidence, and motivation. Although novice teachers revealed that they experienced negative emotions because of their lack of classroom management skills, they evaluated these negative experiences positively, as they forced them to use strategies to overcome difficult situations or seek advice over a particular

classroom management issue. In addition, negative emotions felt in response to a specific event provoked reflection and a change in the teacher's attitudes, which had a beneficial effect on their teaching motivation.

Méndez López (2020) explored the factors to which pre-service teachers attributed the negative emotions they experienced during practicum. Her study aim was to understand pre-service teachers' emotions and their effects on their teaching practice. The study data was collected from classroom observations, reflection journals and semi-structured interviews. Participants in her study revealed that they had encountered both positive and negative emotions due to their students' behaviour and attitudes, their undeveloped teaching skills, and their beliefs about teaching and learning. The researcher concluded that, to support pre-service teachers' needs, an emotional component should be included during practicum to equip them better in the future.

Individual differences play a central role in the emotions experienced by pre-service teachers. Among those differences we can find personal values, previous learning experiences, cognitive appraisals of one's ability and beliefs (Pekrun, 2014). Self-beliefs, beliefs about oneself, are paramount to students' self-concepts. Pajares & Schunk (2005) define self-concept as a "self-description judgement that includes an evaluation of competence and the feelings of self-worth associated with the judgement in question" (p. 105). Thus, this self-evaluation about one's capacities or abilities is a paramount determinant of the emotions any student is going to experience since how students see themselves may affect their teaching practice. A study conducted in Japan provided evidence of the strong connection between novice teachers motivation to teach and their self-concept (Kumazawa, 2013). Kumazawa's study also revealed that teachers' self-concepts shifted during the study period which allowed them to be motivated to teach. Thus, this is an important finding that can inform supervisors to help pre-service teachers face negative emotions and difficult incidents during practicum to modify their self-evaluations as teachers, and consequently their teaching practice.

As revealed by the studies reviewed above, it is important to provide pre-service teachers with the appropriate assistance during the practicum stage in order to minimise the effects of negative emotions on their teaching practice. As has been suggested, the establishment of positive interpersonal relationships is regarded as beneficial for teachers' emotional well-being (Mercer, Oberdorfer & Saleem, 2016). This article presents the results of a case study examining the emotional needs revealed by pre-service teachers in the form of the negative emotions they reported experiencing during practicum.

The following research questions were explored:

1. What emotional needs do pre-service English language teachers express during their teaching practicum?
2. What situations or events generated these emotional needs?

### 3. Study design

Case study is a field study with no intervention from the researcher (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Thus, a case study design was selected to explore the emotional needs expressed by pre-service language teachers during practicum. This qualitative approach was deemed the most suitable for the purpose of this research, as it was important to be able to identify and understand the needs student teachers expressed during their practicum. A central issue in case study is data gathering since researchers have to present a detailed description of a case (Fidel, 1984). Another important aspect is the selection of cases, I wanted to obtain an in-depth understanding of students' teachers emotional needs during practicum. As emotions are, most of the time, hidden due to cultural values, it was essential that those students expressing emotional needs were selected in order to understand the origin of such needs. Therefore, the three participants were selected based on their teaching accounts narratives to document the emotional needs of student teachers in this ELT programme (Patton, 1990).

#### 3.0 Setting

The present study was conducted with students at an ELT programme in a public university located in the southeast of Mexico. Students accepted to the programme have to complete ten semesters in order to graduate. In the final year of the programme, student teachers are required to complete two practicum units, which aimed to prepare them to teach at different levels. This public university is located in a small capital city of a very touristic region. Students from different nearby rural towns and cities come to the capital city to study for the ELT programme. The programme is popular because most students consider it as one that can help them find a job in the Mayan Riviera.

The final three years of the programme emphasise student teaching skills development because of the programme focus. In order to provide students with spaces that resemble real life scenarios, those directing the programme have signed agreements with different institutions in which students undertake teaching

practice in these two semesters. Students are first given the opportunity to observe classes at different levels (preschool, primary, secondary, and high school) to familiarise themselves with the school environment, and are then required to give a class to a group under the supervision of its practicum teacher, who is tasked with evaluating the pre-service teachers' performance in different aspects, such as classroom management, discipline, language skills and materials used. This same class is observed by one of the pre-service teacher's peers in order to provide qualitative and quantitative feedback about her/his teaching performance. This stage is completed in the first four weeks of the semester in order to accustom the pre-service teachers to both observe and to being observed. After this initial process, they are immersed in their practicum for 12 weeks per unit, with each practicum unit involving teaching children, adolescents, or adults, in state educational institutions. These periods provide the pre-service teachers experience of teaching different ages and levels, which is beneficial for their future teaching careers.

### ***3.1 Participants***

Data presented in this study was collected during the second practicum unit of a group of fifteen pre-service teachers, eight female and seven male, aged between 20 and 23, who have already completed the first practicum unit previously. The present study was carried out with three participants: Ximena, Bruno and Adriana (all pseudonyms), data was collected during the second practicum unit, which lasted 12 weeks. The three participants were required to teach in elementary schools for the first time during this second practicum unit. Participants agreed to participate in the case study and showed willingness to share their emotional experiences of the second practicum unit in depth, with the data presented in this article taken from these pre-service teachers' accounts of their teaching practicum.

### ***3.2 Data elicitation procedures***

The present study is based on data collected from pre-service teachers' teaching accounts and semi-structured interviews with them. In order to explore their emotional needs, the pre-service teachers were asked to write accounts of both their teaching experience and the emotions they experienced during their practicum, and reflect on them in depth and in writing in order to understand their feelings and the reasons behind them. As Loughran (2002) states, reflection is a tool that can help teachers better understand the teaching profession, as it enables them to identify how to improve their performance.

The participants submitted their teaching accounts every Friday for the 12 weeks of the second practicum unit. Students were asked to write their personal narratives following two ethical procedures: to be honest about the experiences described, and to protect the identity of students or teachers involved in those narratives. The accounts were analyzed in order to identify explicit and implicit calls for help or validation, with 40-50 minute interviews then conducted with those participants that had expressed such emotional needs. These interviews were carried out in Spanish to allow participants to freely discuss their experiences. By means of these interviews, which were recorded, transcribed and later analyzed, I was able to question the participants further about the feelings and needs they expressed in their teaching practicum accounts. (See Appendix)

### 3.3 Data analysis

By the end of the study, 136 emotional teaching accounts had been collected and three interviews conducted. In the first stage of the analysis, I read the journal entries, identified the emotions expressed in the teaching accounts, and coded them with the heuristic proposed by Golombok and Doran (2014) for identifying emotional content. This first analytical stage was undertaken during the 12-week unit in which participants were teaching elementary school children. The pre-service teachers' accounts of their emotions provided examples of seven of Golombok and Doran's nine categories for identifying emotional content, as seen in the table presented below.

•Table 1.0 Heuristic references

Heuristic (Golombok and Doran, 2014)	Sample	References
1. Affectively charged lexis indicating stance, sometimes with hedges or intensifiers	<i>"I have never taught at this level and to be honest it is really frightening"</i>	60
2. Epistemic adjectives that convey emotion, sometimes with a hedging or intensifying adverb + that clause	<i>"I was terrified that my students would not understand"</i>	41
3. Stative verbs that convey emotion or attitude about the proposition contained in the main sentence element:	<i>"I felt really nervous"</i>	65
4. Juxtapositions of negative appraisals with positive appraisals, either implicit or explicit	<i>"I felt pretty good and excited but I feel like my explanations should be clearer for the kids"</i>	24

Heuristic (Golombok and Doran, 2014)	Sample	References
5. Expressions of idealized beliefs and goals, sometimes juxtaposed with a polar opposite, or mismatches between the ideal and the real:	<i>"Being so permissive may imply that the teacher loses control of the class"</i>	25
6. Explicit calls for validation/help through questions	<i>"Should I change my tone of voice?"</i>	5
7. Explicit calls for validation or help from others (students, teacher educator)		0
8. Implicit calls for help/validation from others	<i>"I am trying to include Megan as much as I can in the activities but I am not sure how to go about this..."</i>	42
9. Metaphors (representing conceptual understandings)		0

As seen in the number of references above, while participants expressed a low number of explicit calls for validation (5), a much higher portion of implicit calls for help were expressed (42). Having identified the specific emotional content in the teaching accounts, I reviewed the journals again in order to identify the specific participants expressing said explicit and implicit calls for validation or help. In the second stage of analysis, I interviewed those participants (3) and asked them to elaborate on the emotional content identified. The participants' retelling of the situation that evoked these emotions provided further evidence of the emotional needs expressed and the reasons behind them. The analysis conducted in this second stage is presented below.

## 4. Results

As explained above, the pre-service teachers participating in the present study had already taught the first unit of their teaching practicum. However, as the second practicum unit involved teaching young children for the first time, a new experience for the participants, issues were revealed in their teaching accounts. The interpretation of the analysis conducted through the lens of their emotional needs and the reasons behind them is presented below, with pseudonyms used in the participant portraits to protect their identity.

### 4.1 Being an elementary school teacher (Ximena's dream)

In her first teaching accounts, Ximena indicated that, although she enjoyed working with children, doing so in English was not easy for her, where she was always hesitant about her pronunciation or use of a specific grammatical structure. She was so cons-

cious about this that she questioned every step she took in the classroom, which hindered her use of her teaching skills, as seen in the following extracts from her teaching accounts:

"Well...as I have written before my dream of teaching children has come true. However, my English proficiency is not good and this has spoilt the magic because I am always really concerned about my pronunciation or grammar... [XIMENA\_TEACHING ACCOUNT 1]

"It is really stressful because I am like doing two things at the same time... applying material or activities but also very concerned about not making mistakes or using a structure incorrectly." [XIMENA\_TEACHING ACCOUNT 3]

Ximena was a responsible student who had been able to fulfil her dream of teaching young children and was very conscious of the need to be a good model of English language use for her students, which added to her stress and concerns during her practicum. Her sense of responsibility was helpful, in that, by being aware of the areas on which she needed to concentrate to guide her students adequately through their learning process, she sought to control and review her language use in order to minimize her margin of error with pronunciation and grammar. This determination to perform increased her confidence and, consequently, improved her self-perception as a teacher as the weeks passed, as seen in the following excerpts from her teaching account:

"This teaching session made me feel very proud. I was able to control the children...I think we have developed a good relationship. Now, children listen to me when I ask them to be quiet or stop playing." [XIMENA\_TEACHING ACCOUNT 6]

"I have been making less mistakes. I think that little by little, I am going to be more proficient in the language and after some years I can be the teacher I have always dreamt of being." [XIMENA\_TEACHING ACCOUNT 7]

Ximena was 22 years old at the time of her teaching practicum and, since childhood, had wanted to be a Spanish elementary school teacher. However, financial issues prevented her from moving to study in another city and her parents pressured her to stay in her home city and enroll on a degree program at the local university. While the ELT degree program was the best option for fulfilling her dream of teaching young children, she found learning English difficult. Although she was in the final year of her degree by the time the present study was conducted, she felt

insecure about her language proficiency, which affected her teaching performance and made her insecure and doubtful about her performance as an English language teacher.

In response to Ximena's emotional needs, she was encouraged to introduce English language content to students in manageable chunks and to try and focus on building a good relationship with them. Although she wanted to control everything, she was advised to be flexible and relaxed, as she may have been transmitting her apprehension to her students, thus obstructing her teaching. As Gkonou and Miller (2017) describe, when teachers are not emotionally competent, their classroom environment may be negatively affected.

At the end of the practicum period, Ximena described feeling more secure and confident that, with experience and dedication, she would become a good English teacher. As she had always wanted to work with young children, she realized that her English language level was sufficient to work with kindergarten or elementary school students. The strategic selection of teaching space or level was one of the pre-service teachers' strategies in the research undertaken by Arizmendi Tejeda, Scholes Gillings and López Martínez (2016). It seems that novice teachers use this strategy to protect their teaching self-perception, as they do not feel confident enough to face a group of students of an intermediate or advanced level. Ximena felt that, after some years of teaching experience, she may be able to teach at other English levels and revealed, in her final interview, that meticulous planning had helped her to overcome her insecurity and increased her confidence.

#### *4.2 A proficient English language teacher (Bruno's ideal self-perception)*

Although Bruno's language proficiency was not as he would have wished, his sense of vocation for ELT helped keep him resilient in the face of negative experiences with the English language. As he tended to compare his proficiency with peers or teachers on his degree program, he was obstructing the development of his concept as a teacher, as seen in the following extracts:

"I had the opportunity to observe Pablo in the first teaching unit last term. He has a good command of the language and students liked him. He is funny and it seems students enjoyed his classes. I try to imitate good teaching models but I think I lack certain skills"… [BRUNO\_ TEACHING ACCOUNT 1]

"I enjoy creating material because as we are working with children, it has to be colorful and attractive for them. I know this is not as important as being liked by students. I have to present new topics in a fun way so they do not get

bored. I wonder if I can someday be like Pablo or María...”. [BRUNO\_ TEACHING ACCOUNT 2]

Although Bruno enjoyed designing materials and the challenge of presenting a new topic, the lack of personal attributes that he considered paramount for English language teaching made him doubtful and limited his teaching self-concept.

“I can work on my management classroom skills but how can I be a fun person? I am stressed and worried at the same time. I am constantly wondering...What I am going to do if I am not able to be the kind of teacher I dreamt of becoming?” [BRUNO\_ TEACHING ACCOUNT 2]

It seems that Bruno was more concerned about being an entertainer than a teacher, highlighting student-teachers' need to be reassured that their personal attributes enrich their teaching and that they do not need to be someone else to be a good teacher. Fortunately, some of his positive experiences during practicum helped him to be resilient, committed, and positive about both the practicum experience and his development as an English teacher. As the weeks passed, Bruno became more confident, as expressed in the following extract from his teaching account:

“I realized children really enjoyed the activity and when reviewing it at the end of class I could see that they remembered the pronunciation. I know it is very basic stuff but it is a great achievement for me. I could see that they really liked it. It is good because I spend time looking for attractive material for them. I feel more confident now. [BRUNO\_ TEACHING ACCOUNT 5]

“I was worried about students not understanding because my presentation was not as fun as I wanted but they understood! They did it! It feels great! This made my day... ”. [BRUNO\_ TEACHING ACCOUNT 7]

Bruno developed an interest in becoming an English language teacher during his secondary education, when he was taught by someone he considered a good teacher. Although he experienced some difficulties learning English at secondary school, he felt that completing an ELT undergraduate degree would give him a good English language level and enable him to teach at different educational levels. Although a student with regular performance levels, he experienced some difficulties during the degree program and had to repeat some courses. As his language level was not as expected, this affected his teaching self-concept (Keller *et al*, 2014).

Bruno's sense of motivation kept him committed to developing his teaching skills. He was always asking questions and looking for guidance when designing a particular activity related to a topic he was presenting. His sense of vocation and commitment helped him develop his teaching skills little by little. As Ocampo Martínez (2017) found, negative emotions trigger problem-solving skills that are beneficial for pre-service teachers' teaching practice. Commitment is one of the attributes that teachers need in order to maintain their energy and motivation levels (Gu & Day, 2007). Bruno's motivation and sense of vocation as a teacher, namely his commitment, made him resilient when negative emotions arose. Thus, it is paramount that those designing and teaching courses provide appropriate support to pre-service teachers to help them to deal with the diverse situations they will face and continue to develop their teaching skills during practicum.

#### ***4.3 Lack of vocation for teaching (Adriana's nightmare)***

Adriana, who was 21 years old at the time of doing her practicum, had wanted to study marketing in Mexico City, but a lack of financial resources led to her parents suggesting that she opt for a degree at the university in her hometown. She explained to me that she decided to study to be an English teacher because none of the other degrees interested her and she assumed that learning English would facilitate marketing-related work later in her career. She had not realised that, in order to graduate, she would have to teach at some point. Although she had developed some level of motivation for learning English during her degree course, she described not really wanting to teach. Thus, her lack of a sense of vocation for teaching contributed to her failure to develop teaching skills and affected her confidence, as it also meant that she did not develop some of the social skills needed to face the demands of teaching practicum. As a result, her practicum experience was difficult and filled with negative emotions, as shown in the following extract from her teaching account:

"I do not really want to teach...this practicum experience has reaffirm this. I find difficult to control children... Eduardo (one of his students) was talking the whole class, bothering his classmates and making a lot of noise. I did not know what to do...so I told him that I would place a padlock in his mouth...I draw one in the air, went towards him and mimicked to put one and close with a key. It did not work, he started laughing and the whole class followed him. I felt insecure because the next-door classroom teacher had my students calmed down. I felt stressed and useless... It was terrible". [ADRIANA\_TEACHING ACCOUNT 3]

While Adriana's language proficiency was good, wherein she had developed a good command of the language and was confident, she did not know how to manage a group of children, lacking classroom management skills due to her lack of a sense of vocation for teaching and her failure to develop basic teaching skills. These conditions caused her to experience constant negative emotions, as she felt anxious at having to face a group of active children every week. As reported by Méndez López (2020), a lack of a sense of vocation causes negative emotions in pre-service teachers during practicum. Adriana's main concern was about having to control these very active children's behavior during her practicum and reported negative emotions in all her teaching accounts. Rather than experimenting with different teaching strategies or designing attractive activities for her students, which were areas suggested for development during the entire teaching unit, she demonstrated a constant need to control children, as expressed in the following extract from her teaching account:

“To manage this kind of students (children) is stressful and difficult” [ADRIANA\_TEACHING ACCOUNT 1]

“I cannot bring rewards or prizes to every class to have children under control”  
[ADRIANA\_TEACHING ACCOUNT 2]

“This week sessions have been stressful. In terms of classroom management, the children got out of control with the masks...I had to yell at them to catch their attention and this made me feel so stressed” [ADRIANA\_TEACHING ACCOUNT 4]

Adriana kept focusing on keeping her students under control, which was bad for the development of her teaching skills. Her teaching accounts always included questions such as *should I change my tone of voice? or Punishment can be an option?* She was advised to concentrate on presenting language in an attractive and interesting way and was encouraged to spend time designing or creating engaging activities, as she was told that, engaged children would be interested and focused, meaning that she would not have to worry about controlling them. However, even when she tried to implement certain activities to make learning interesting for her students, this was obstructed by her lack of classroom management skills. The new responsibility of teaching was stressful for Adriana and caused her anxiety which, in turn, hindered the development of her teaching skills. As Caires, Almeida, and Martins (2010) state, facing new responsibilities may

unmask pre-service teachers' emotional needs. In Adriana's case, her lack of a sense of vocation emerged when faced with the prospect of teaching children, as she felt unable to do so, which hindered any progress she could have made.

## Conclusion

The present study explores the negative emotions expressed by a group of pre-service teachers during their practicum period in order to understand both the emotional needs behind these negative feelings and their effects on teaching practice. The participants in the study were teaching children for the first time, which was a challenge due to the pre-service teachers' particular personal characteristics. The teaching accounts presented here reveal that, beyond the shock of the reality of teaching for the first time, a mixture of personal contextual aspects complicates the process further. The pre-service teachers' emotional needs revealed a low English language level, a low teaching self-concept and lack of a sense of vocation for teaching that shaped their motivation, responsibility and commitment during their teaching practicum. In the pre-service teachers participating in the present study, these issues frequently caused negative emotions, as they were less motivated as teachers or less confident in their language or teaching skills and, thus, prone to express negative emotions more intensely, further affecting their classroom performance. Practicum supervisors for student teachers who describe not having a sense of vocation for teaching should apply supportive emotional strategies, as these student teachers may focus only on their negative experiences and not notice the positive ones. Moreover, supervisors should provide the emotional support these students need in order that their practicum period is helpful in developing their teaching skills. Facing new responsibilities, as pre-service teachers do during practicum, can cause stress and anxiety which, in turn, can lead some to leave the profession (Caires, Almeida & Martins, 2010). Thus, it is important to help pre-service language teachers to not only recognize their emotions but also regulate them, so that their teaching practice is not negatively affected (Ocampo Martínez, 2017).

Motivated pre-service teachers may feel overwhelmed when facing real classrooms, which has the potential to ruin their idealized images of being a teacher. The appropriate emotional support needs to be provided to these future teachers to prevent them feeling demoralised and help them understand the complexities of the teaching profession (Furlong & Maynard, 1995). As Méndez López (2020) reveals, some Mexican pre-service teachers go into the profession without a sense of vocation,

meaning that the provision of support and guidance to them is of paramount importance, as responsibility and commitment can be instilled in future teachers, as stated by Gu and Day (2007). Therefore, this type of student should be supervised more closely.

The pre-service teachers participating in the present study referred to personal characteristics as factors that shaped their first teaching experiences and caused most of the negative emotions they experienced during practicum. Emotional needs that require support were behind the negative emotions frequently expressed by pre-service teachers and, moreover, as the present study reveals, these same needs may be masked by the negative emotions they generate. It is important for supervisors to use negative emotions as a means to unmask their supervisees' needs in order that the appropriate support can be provided. However, both supervisors and teachers already in service may not be properly prepared to support these future teachers emotionally, meaning that training supervisors and in-service teachers to help future teachers create a robust teacher identity for themselves is also much needed. Although some pre-service teachers may not have a natural inclination for teaching, it is argued that commitment and responsibility can be instilled through reflection, with the development of a teacher identity an ongoing rather than fixed process (Gu & Day, 2007). This is an important consideration, as practicum is a period of personal change in which individuals adjust their beliefs, self-concept and professional identity (Caires, Almeida & Martins, 2010). Thus, it is of upmost importance that supervisors provide the relevant support to pre-service teachers so they can better understand their negative emotions and unmask their emotional needs in order to be better prepared to deal with the diverse situations they will face in the classroom. By providing the emotional support pre-service teachers need, resilience and commitment can be instilled in them, thus enabling them to maintain their levels of energy and motivation (Gu & Day, 2007).

The present research analysed pre-service English language teachers' negative emotions during practicum, revealing the emotional needs which are embedded in said emotions and influence pre-service teachers' self-concept, motivation, and identity. The present study revealed a definite need for language teachers and supervisors to analyse, with the help of pre-service teachers, the negative emotions experienced, to ensure that student teachers' emotional needs are unmasked in order to understand better the origins of those emotions, which may be obstructing the development of their teaching skills. However, it is necessary that emotional support training is provided for supervisors to enable them to help student teachers construct their teacher identity. In order to increase teaching quality, it is

important to pay attention to the emotional needs presented by pre-service teachers in order that they can be supported from their early teaching period, thus boosting their professional development.

Se declara que la obra que se presenta es original, no está en proceso de evaluación en ninguna otra publicación, así también que no existe conflicto de intereses respecto a la presente publicación.

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## Appendix 1

### Semi-structured interview guide

1. Tell me about your experience of studying the ELT programme?
2. Why did you decide to be an English teacher?
3. How do you describe this practicum experience?
4. Which emotions did you feel about teaching elementary school children?
5. You talk about (a specific incident) in your teaching account. Can you tell me more about the emotions this situation arose?
6. Why do you think you feel in that way?
7. Has this incident made you change your teaching practice? How? Why?
8. In one of your teaching accounts, you ask (*Implicit or explicit call for help/validation from others*). Why?
9. Can you recall a situation from a not teaching context that made you feel in the same way?
10. Can you tell me more about it?