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Teachers as Emotional Agents: Contributions of an Online Asynchronous Teacher Education Initiative

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Abstract

Motivated by the growing significance of research on language teacher emotion regulation, the present study investigated the contributions of an online asynchronous teacher education initiative to L2 teachers' emotion regulation. Drawing on Gross' (1998, 2015) model of emotion regulation, the data gathered from interviews with four teachers prior to and after the course, their reflective narratives, online discussions, and class observations were qualitatively analyzed. The analyses pointed to the microgenetic development of teachers in terms of the incremental learning and application of the course content (i.e., emotion regulation) to their instructional practice. In other words, the participants incrementally drew on the learned strategies to up/down-regulate their emotions as English teachers. Additionally, the participant teachers tended to articulate their thoughts via reflective narratives by adopting the professional discourse, further implying the participant teachers' access to their cognitions.

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1. Introduction

Teaching is an emotional undertaking (Sutton & Harper, 2009). The scholarship on teacher emotion in education in general, and language teacher education in particular (e.g., Barcelos, 2017; Benesch, 2018; Chang & Taxer, 2020; Golombek, 2015; Wolff & DeCosta, 2017; Yazan, 2017) points to the pivotal role of emotion in teachers' lives, instructional practices, professional identities and students' academic and social achievements (Day & Lee, 2011; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schutz & Pekrun, 2007; Schutz & Zembylas, 2009; Xu, 2018; Zembylas, 2005). The general conclusion in this line of research points to the superiority of teachers who regulate their emotions in their teaching performance (Oplatka, 2009) and a higher likelihood to succeed in the teaching profession (Olsen et al., 2019). Additionally, they are less challenged by threats such as depersonalization and a desire to leave the profession (Hughes, 2001; Olsen et al., 2019). In light of the relationship between teacher emotion regulation and teacher well-being (Wang et al., 2021, as cited in Derakhshan, 2022; Khammat, 2022), it can be concluded that teachers who regulate their emotions, enjoy a higher sense of well-being in their careers. Drawing on Maslach and Leiter's (2005) model of burnout, which consists of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, Ghanizadeh and Royaei (2015) establish the link between emotion regulation and burnout. Their findings indicate that teachers who use more emotion regulation strategies tend to suffer less from burnout compared with those who fail to regulate their emotions. They also contend that teachers who can manage their emotions make more appropriate classroom decisions, leading to improved performance and a heightened sense of self-efficacy.

Teacher professional development can be regarded as a result of the dialogic interplay between enactment and reflection, as stated by Philipsen et al. (2019). According to Schon (1987), teacher reflection revolves around educators' cognitive processes concerning their pedagogical endeavors, both prior to (reflection on action) and during the teaching practice (reflection in action). The pervasive integration of technology in education has engendered a proliferation of teacher education initiatives that are delivered through online or blended formats. This increasing adoption of technological tools has effectively facilitated teachers' reflective practice, thereby fostering opportunities for teacher learning (Dede et al., 2009; Philipsen et al., 2019; Prestridge, 2017).

As posited by Bullough (2009), teacher learning and professional development

can be achieved through various formal and informal activities, and an in-service program represents just one mode of professional development. According to Wilson and Berne (1999, p. 194) an effective in-service teacher education program is characterized by talking as it should afford participants ample opportunities to engage in the subject matter, the students, learning, and teaching. They further argue that an effective in-service teacher education program deals with communities of participant teachers who work to finetune their teaching practice, that "teacher learning ought not be bound and *delivered* but rather *activated"*.

According to Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) and Barcelos and Ruohotie-Lyhty (2018), teacher education has thus far mainly centered on expanding teachers' knowledge base and thus turning a blind eye to expanding their awareness about their emotions. In this regard, Nguyen (2018) holds that emotion management for L2 teachers has not been adequately investigated and calls on teacher education programs to incorporate discussions on emotion and emotion regulation. As Agudo (2018) posits, 'emotional education' should be the 'priority in L2 teacher education because of its tremendous educational impact' (6-7). Although emotion is considered as the 'driving factor' and the 'functional component' (Nguyen 2018, p. 244) in teacher professional development, surprisingly, the notion has often been overlooked in the applied linguistics research agenda (Agudo, 2018). Tsang and Jiang (2018) hope that L2 teacher education programs include teacher emotions and emotion regulation strategies in their agenda to tackle emotional demands of the profession in order to empower teachers, mainly non-native speaking practitioners, to enhance their professional performance. Since the emotional demands of teaching are greater than cognitive and intellectual challenges, teacher development programs should always include emotions (Golombek & Johnson, 2004). As asserted by Kalinowski et al. (2020), the efficacy of a professional development program can be evaluated based on various factors, such as the extent to which it brings about changes in the participant teachers' cognitions and classroom practices. Teacher cognition has shown to be a complex dimension of in-service teachers (Feryok, 2010). Since teachers' beliefs guide their thoughts and play a pivotal role in the choice of their instructional practices (Couper, 2019; Wei & Cao, 2020), gaining insights into teachers' cognitions seems in order.

Although a review of the related literature points to the advantages of raising

(L2) teachers' awareness of teacher emotions and emotion regulation strategies, to the best of the present researchers' knowledge and as a perfunctory look at the literature reveals, there is little evidence addressing this issue. Hence, the present qualitative study is an attempt to investigate the development of L2 teachers from an emotional perspective. In doing so, the study seeks to answer the following research question:

How does an online in-service teacher education program contribute to L2 teachers' cognitions and instructional practices from an emotional perspective?

2. Literature Review

Emotions can be conceptualized from different perspectives. Whether emotions are conceptualized from the perspective of appraisal (Lazarus, 1991), psychological construction (Barrett. 2009), or social construction (Mesquita, 2010), they are believed to be characterized by three significant features: they involve changes in the domains of subjective experience, behavior, and peripheral physiology; they unfold over time; and depending on the context, can be destructive or constructive (Gross, 2015). Generally put, emotions are conceptualized as processes which involve multiple components arising from experiential, behavioral, and physiological systems and emotion regulation deals with conscious and unconscious attempts to modify any of such processes (Oschner & Gross, 2004). Teachers are believed to exert some level of control over the emotions they experience, known as emotion regulation (Sutton, 2004; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). Gross (2015) differentiates between intrinsic and extrinsic types of emotion regulation; while the former is performed by the individual to regulate his own emotions, the latter addresses other individuals' emotion regulation. Emotions could be regulated in terms of their intensity, duration, and quality (Gross, 2015). He further draws a distinction between antecedent-focused and response-focused emotion regulation. As the names imply, antecedent-focused emotion regulation occurs prior to emotion generation and response-focused emotion regulation occurs after the emotional responses are triggered (Gross, 1998). In their review, Sutton and Harper (2009) elaborate on three models of emotion regulation namely; hot/cool systems, resource or strength model, and the process model. The process model – also the conceptual framework of this study – points to the 'modal' (Gross 2015, p. 4) aspect of

emotion regulation and defines emotions as complex processes unfolding over time (Sutton & Harper, 2009). According to Gross (2015), emotion regulation strategies can take place at five points in time. Four of these strategies are preventive or antecedent-focused, addressing what teachers can do prior to the emergence of the emotion and the fifth strategy is response-focused, involving the modulation of the experiential, behavioral, or physiological emotional response (Sutton & Harper, 2009). Antecedent-focused emotion regulation encompasses 'situation selection' which refers to approaching or avoiding certain people or situations to modify the emotional impact; 'situation modification', which involves directly changing a situation to regulate emotions; 'cognitive change', which refers to modifying one's appraisal of a situation to manipulate it for regulating the emotional impact; and 'attentional deployment', during which individuals focus attention on or divert their attention from the situation to alter the influence of the context on the emotion (Gross 1998, 2015). Finally, response modulation as the response-focused strategy is manifested in forms of 'suppression', or inhibiting the behavioral expression of a felt emotion (Gross, 2015); 'faking', or behavioral expression of an unfelt emotion (Grandey, 2000; Taxer & Gross, 2018); and 'masking', or the expression of a felt emotion while simultaneously faking the expression of an unfelt emotion (Ekman & Friesen, 2003; Taxer & Gross, 2018).

Although scholars call for the inclusion of teacher emotion regulation in teacher professional development programs, a review of the related literature indicates that emotion regulation has received scant investigative attention in teacher education programs. Teacher education initiatives such as the online in-service teacher education program in this study tend to provide the teachers with opportunities to 'think and act in different ways' (Freeman, 1993, 485) by familiarizing the teachers with the language to rename their teaching practices. As Freeman (1993) further explains, the process of articulating teaching experiences would improve teachers' conceptions of relevant classroom practices. Additionally, according to Kelchtermans (2004), continuing professional development as a learning process resulting from meaningful interaction with the context of time and place could further induce changes in teachers' practices and beliefs. To Johnson (2019), effective professional development is characterized by six features including coherence, active learning, communication and discussion, time and duration, content focus, and opportunities for modeling practice and feedback.

Additionally, Johnson (2019) subscribes to the view that to be effective, in-service teacher professional development programs need to be extended over multiple sessions, contain active learning so teachers can manipulate their ideas and improve the assimilation of information, and align the presented concepts with the current curriculum and goals. According to Powell (2019), online professional development programs are defined as courses, workshops, or other learning modules delivered in an online format for a range of purposes and may be asynchronous, synchronous, or blended. Online professional courses are characterized by three main features including relevancy, usefulness, and interaction and collaboration. Relevancy deals with addressing teachers' individual professional learning needs (Farris, 2015) to solve actual problems. Usefulness refers to the value of the program because of its potential to address teachers' needs or solve problems related to practice, instruction, or student learning (Powell, 2019). Finally, interaction and collaboration are crucial since they promote the social aspects of learning through engagement in learning communities (Powell, 2019).

To partly address the aforementioned dearth of research on teacher education initiatives with a focus on emotion regulation, this study is an attempt to investigate the possible impacts of an in-service online teacher education program on the participants' cognitions and instructional practices from an emotional perspective.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and Context of the Present Study

From the individuals who volunteered to take part in the study, four teachers were selected on the basis of not having experienced any courses on emotion regulation. Although three of the four participants came from non-English related majors, they had all spent pre-service and in-service teacher education courses in institutes where they taught. Three of them worked full-time in different branches of a semi-private language institute with many branches across Iran. The last one taught General English courses in a certain branch of Azad University. While all the participants lived and worked in Tehran, what brought them together was their lack of familiarity with teacher emotion regulation and their willingness to familiarize themselves with the concept and relevant strategies. The participants' characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
The participants' characteristics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Degree	Major	Years of teaching experience
Dina	34	Female	PhD	English language and literature	6
Tara	30	Female	MA	Media studies	8
Tina	33	Female	BA	Economic studies	10
Danial	33	Male	PhD	Electrical engineering	10

3.2. Procedure

The participating teachers enrolled in an online, asynchronous in-service teacher education program that spanned a duration of 18 weeks. This program was meticulously tailored to cater to the specific objectives of the present study. Topics of the course revolved around teacher emotions, when and why teachers should regulate the emotions, and the strategies proposed by Gross (2015) in the process model of emotion regulation drawing on the related literature (Chen, 2016; Gross, 2015; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Sutton & Harper, 2009; Taxer & Gross, 2018; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). The course – administered by the second researcher – was run interactively in a friendly atmosphere and the participants shared their experiences and narratives. When necessary, the participant teachers also sought advice on the most efficient emotional reaction for anticipated challenges. Informed by features of effective professional development initiatives emerging from the related literature, the course was designed. (Garet et al., 2001; Johnson, 2019; Van Veen et al., 2012). For instance, the course was intensive and sustainable, included weekly recurring activities and discussions, required collective participation of all teachers, and the participants were provided with feedback where needed. Considering the online, asynchronous nature of the course, the content of the first two educational sessions were uploaded in a virtual class in Edmodo.com (https://new.edmodo.com/groups/emotion-regulation-28640221). However, since the participants found a group in messaging applications more convenient, the course and the online discussions were resumed in a Telegram group.

Prior to the course, the participants took pre-course screening interviews centering around teacher emotion and emotion regulation so the researchers could ensure the participants had little knowledge of the course content and thus meet

the criteria for inclusion in the course. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in English, as per the preference of the interviewees. These interviews were audio-recorded, and prior consent was obtained from each interviewee to ensure adherence to ethical guidelines. Next, they were oriented to the procedure of the study. Each participant was required to submit at least 12 narratives throughout the course. Additionally, they were provided with the opportunity to share the emotional challenges they had encountered in their classes and seek their colleagues' recommendations. The researcher too offered feedback to resolve the participant teachers' uncertainties in the face of classroom emotional dilemmas.

Furthermore, three sessions of each teacher's classroom performance were observed by the second researcher to check for likely manifestations of teacher emotion and emotion regulation strategies (i.e., likely changes in teachers' instructional practice resulting from the course). Additionally, each observation was coupled with a brief interview immediately after the session. The three observed sessions followed a regular pattern and took place at the beginning, middle, and end of the in-service teacher education program to systematically monitor the likely learning of each participant.

Finally, the participants were interviewed at the end of the program to check for possible changes in their conceptualizations of teacher emotion (regulation), how they felt about the efficiency of the program and its contributions to their teaching practice. The incremental collection of the narratives and sequencing/timing of observed sessions for each teacher served the purpose of investigating the microgenetic development in each participant teacher.

3.3. Data Analysis

The dataset utilized in this study consisted of interview transcripts, narratives, observation notes, and discussion threads obtained from the participants and amounted to approximately twenty-five thousand words. As suggested by Cohen et al. (2007), organizing the data for analysis was conducted on a by-individual basis, since this strategy preserves the coherence and integrity of the individual's data and enables a whole picture of that person. In the context of this study, this method facilitated the microgenetic analysis of each individual in terms of teacher emotion mastery. The obtained dataset was further procured to MAXQDA for content analysis. More specifically, the narratives were analyzed in light of the

process model of emotion regulation put forward by Gross (1989). That is, the emotion regulation strategies explained by the participants in their narratives served as the cue for data analysis. In addition, the class observation notes were content analyzed for the possible matches between the responses given in narratives and the observed behavior in the classroom (Cohen et al., 2007). Finally, the interview data provided insight into the participants' development prior to and after the course.

4. Results

To reiterate an earlier point, the purpose of the study was to probe the development of L2 teachers from an emotional perspective. To this end, a summary of each participant's gathered data, including interviews, observation notes, and narratives are provided:

4.1. Dina

Prior to the course, Dina believed that what made the distinction between a teacher's emotions in and out of the class was managing and expressing them. 'In your life, you may feel excited and burst into laughter, but you may not be allowed to laugh in the class whenever you want to, because the students may get out of control.' As she stated, emotion regulation served the purpose of class management to Dina. In a part of a narrative she provided after the second session of the course – week four of data collection– she had written:

I felt frustrated and awkward all through my class yesterday for not having been able to use the technological devices. I had based my lesson plans on the TED talk I wanted to play to the students at the beginning of the class and I felt terrible because the computers and the loudspeakers broke. Although we worked on vocabulary and grammar instead, I felt awful, which I tried to hide. However, for next week, I will take my portable Bluetooth speaker to the class, just in case!

In week six, after the session addressing situation modification, she narrated how she utilized the strategy for the first time when she fell off the classroom stage and the class sank into deadly silence.

I remember talking about something and then I remember nothing. I know it is

typical of my students' age to laugh at something like this but they did not. I was embarrassed. I stood up, dropped my gaze, and tried to continue teaching. However, the silence was bothering me and I could not pretend as if nothing had happened. Drawing on 'situation modification', I said: 'Huh! Lucky me! I'm happy the stage was not higher than this or I might have broken a leg! You can laugh if you want!' Then, the class burst into laughter and I started feeling less embarrassed, too.

In week seven, she also narrated her experience of dealing with situation selection, as her first conscious effort, to manage anger:

I have a talkative student in the class who drives me crazy. Today, I asked him to sit on the closest chair to my desk. He could not whisper with his friends anymore. I know it might have been a bit embarrassing for him, but at least I did not leave the class with a splitting headache of frustration.

In a slightly similar experience she narrated in week eight, she wrote:

A late-comer who was making so much noise was moved to the front seat. However, she showed a rude gesture. I got angry because of her behavior, but I tried to stay calm, which was unsuccessful! I felt a cloud of negativity in the class. When the students were working on another task- in an attempt to modify the negative situation - I sat near that troublemaking student and tried to explain the reason I changed her seat. I felt better after I talked to her and she seemed to feel better too since she resumed participating in class activities.

In week eight, when observing the class, one of the researchers realized that some students were expressing their dissatisfaction regarding the load of their assignments. Moreover, the teacher was calmly explaining the importance of each assignment. In the brief interview after the observation, the teacher explained that she was feeling angry and at the same time desperate because they keep shirking responsibilities. But this time, the logical reasoning she employed for modifying the situation helped her overcome her negative emotions. 'They were gone by the time I had finished explaining!'

The narrative Dina provided in week ten and after her familiarity with cognitive change, empathy in particular, helped her in managing her anger:

The class was supposed to hand in an assignment. Only one student, in a shy and sad voice, but very politely, said: 'I have done the assignment, but I would

appreciate it if you exempt me from presenting it.' At first, I got a little angry. But I tried to empathize with him and this helped me feel less angry. He has a very poor speaking ability and his polite and shy tone made me do so.

In a narrative she provided in week thirteen; Dina explained how she drew on attentional deployment:

While the students are delivering presentations in the language lab, I usually sit among them. During the presentation today, I noticed that one of my students was playing games on his cellphone and his friend was also peeping into his cellphone instead of listening to the lecture. I was mad at them, but because I wanted to stay focused on the presentation, I changed my seat so I do not even see the naughty boys. Attentional deployment helped me enjoy the presentation instead.

In week fourteen, she referred to reappraisal as the strategy aiding her in building healthy rapport in the teachers' lounge:

We were sharing ideas about a problematic class we had. A colleague insisted that her methodology is more effective than mine, which I did not agree. However, instead of approving her comments, I complimented on her characteristics as a teacher and not her methodology. At the end of the recess, I was happy that I have not confirmed what I did not believe in just because she is more experienced. She is a nice person and I did not lie. I tried to see her from another perspective! :D Reappraisal works!

Additionally, in the narrative provided in week sixteen, she wrote about how sad she was because of a personal reason and how she masked her sadness with happiness to leave a good first impression on her students because it was the beginning of the term and her students did not know her well.

In the interview at the end of the course, she stated that she found the course practical since her current awareness of teacher emotions and the strategies helped her with emotional reactions, the ability she did not possess before the course. 'Sometimes I am a bit confused about my emotional actions in my classes. What I learned during the course somehow shook my understanding of emotions and techniques of managing them. Now, I think I am a more capable teacher'. She furthered that the asynchronous nature of the course provided her with more opportunities for reflection.

4.2. Tara

As Tara mentioned in the screening interview, she usually prefers to express her emotions as a teacher rather than regulating them. For instance, whenever she feels happy, she draws a happy face with curly hair in students' notebooks or on the board. When she is dissatisfied with a student's behavior too, she expresses it. To Tara, teacher emotion regulation equaled anger management. Although she has experienced other emotions as well, prior to the course, she thought teachers mostly experience anger and the rest of the emotions may not need regulation. Most of the narratives Tara provided prior to getting oriented to emotion regulation strategies addressed how she expressed her emotions, including anger, frustration, and disappointment with students. She even chose to punish a class for their misbehavior by not teaching a reading passage. Slight manifestations of expressing anger and frustration were also evident in the first observation. After the session, she told the researcher: 'I have explained this grammatical rule to students for like umpteen times! Will they learn anything at all?'

Early signs of emotion regulation were manifested in the narrative provided in week six after the module on situation selection and modification.

The DVD was not working. I was sick and aching all over. My students too had noticed that something was not okay and they were trying to help out, making me more frustrated. So, I said: 'You know what? I will *become* your DVD. I can do whatever the DVD can do.' The students laughed and I became less frustrated, too. The DVD was not working, but the class was not tense anymore. I could modify the situation. In fact, I unselected the situation I didn't like!

After the session on situation modification, she also reported on sharing her physical sickness with her students and how she asked her students to be more cooperative.

Situation modification worked great. The students were more helpful than ever and I did not have to put in too much energy for one class and feel drained for my other classes. I had three classes that day. If I wanted to use up all my energy in the first class, I knew I would sink into the feeling of shame and guilt for my other classes. I'm so happy that I shared how I felt with my students.

As the narratives indicate, After the instruction, Tara had found the strategy so helpful that she continued to implement the strategy even after the other strategies were introduced. Week nine is special for Tara because she realized that what she

sometimes does instinctively to regulate her emotions is titled cognitive change. She said she drew on self-talk to manage her emotions in and out of the class since she remembers but she did not know it was a strategy. Still, she does not use reappraisal as frequently because she finds it difficult to focus on a student's positive points when she does not approve the student for misconduct. During week ten Tara wrote:

There is a student who distracts the class when I am teaching by cracking a joke. I used to get angry at her because it always took me a lot of time and energy to reset the class to its attentive mood. I also got angry at myself for not being able to manage her. But after I learned about situation modification, I came up with a trick to handle this. I do not let her own the class by making fun of something in the class. Even if she starts, I finish it. Now, I see that student as a mood changer who can bring laughter and fun to the class, not a troublemaker.

In week ten, Tara shared with the group a reflective narrative of an emotional challenge, how she behaved and how she could have behaved. Upon facing a mischievous student with some insulting behavior she got so angry that she sent out the student when the class was still in progress and asked her to call her parents so she can talk to them immediately after the class. In her narrative, she had written: 'I could have easily used situation modification to handle the incident and prevent all the negative feelings; my guilt, the student's embarrassment, and other students' wonder'.

In week eleven too, she wrote about how she expressed her anger in her first class and how she suddenly got aware of the emotion and acted like a 'mature, emotion-regulation-aware' teacher, as she put it. In week twelve, she wrote about her nervousness about a personal problem and how she managed to overcome the anxiety when she was sitting quietly in the teachers' room shortly before the class. Two weeks after mentioning that she found it difficult to draw on reappraisal, Tara made mention of the fact that she has gotten used to asking 'why' questions to reappraise a phenomenon. I ask myself 'Is it worth it? Isn't there any other positive point in this situation/person to be happy about and not mad at?' Week thirteen is when Tara got to draw on attentional deployment, as she put it:

I'm teaching this elementary class of teenagers and it is important to me they learn all the punctuation rules. As I was walking in the class, I noticed that only a

couple of students have used 'full stops.' I was so frustrated as I have reminded them like twenty times that session and only a couple of students had picked up. I wanted to remind them, but I decided not to. Instead of focusing on those students who had forgotten to use full stops, I thanked the handful who had used them. The result was unbelievable. As I was walking, I noticed that those students who had forgotten the punctuation were quickly adding the full stops to receive my attention. I felt great, so did the students.

In her narrative, she also reported on how she drew on situation modification and response modulation (masking) to regulate her emotions:

The students were taking the test and I realized one of them is cheating by looking at some notes she had written on her palm. I decided not to react as it could distract other students. When the quiz finished, I asked that particular student to talk to me out of the class. The rest of the students were worried. I did not want to keep them in that mood, so I instantly modified the emotional atmosphere of the class: 'Do not worry, I wanna eat her!' The class laughed! Out of the class, I held her hand and gently told her: 'The mark you would earn yourself is way more important to me than this.' She dropped her gaze and apologized. Normally, I react to students' cheating in the exams immediately. However, today I was happy that first I suppressed and then regulated it. I think I taught that student a valuable lesson.

In the final interview, Tara stated that before the course, she used to draw on most of the strategies, unaware of the fact that they are actual psychological strategies. 'When I assign things to a name, it becomes a part of my conscious knowledge. I know that I will be using the strategies more and with a new kind of awareness'. Tara too found the asynchronous nature of the program beneficial since it provided her with more opportunities for self and peer reflection

4.3. Tina

Tina is characterized by her composure and serenity. Similar to her peers she made no distinction between her emotions as a teacher and as an ordinary individual. In the brief interview after the first observation, she mentioned that prior to getting angry at a student, she thinks and decides whether or not it is an important issue to be angry about. If identified as important, she may use facial expressions to express the emotion. If the emotional trigger occurs for a second

time, she will take some action to regulate it. As she continued, she goes through the same procedure to regulate other emotions she experiences as a teacher. Additionally, in an online discussion in week four, she stated that when she is angry but not for a serious reason, she pretends to be furious by a gesture of deep breathing. This action normally prevents the students from repeating the action triggering anger in her.

The narrative she provided in week seven was also compelling in terms of how she drew on situation modification to regulate her disappointment:

I have a class of adults which meets once a week for about five hours. Almost in the middle of the session today, one of the students was nodding off and this was bothering me. I kept teaching. But that sleepy student was on my nerve. I did not want to embarrass her though I wanted her to listen to me. So, I lowered my voice gradually as I was teaching, went towards her and acted as if I was whispering a lullaby to her. The students were shocked and some were giggling quietly. The sleepy student too noticed the change, opened her eyes and we all laughed. The class remained as energetic as I wanted till the end. I think I managed to change the situation to feel less pissed off by using situation modification strategy we had discussed in the group.

In week eight, Tina wrote about how she got angry at a student for having forgotten to hand in an important assignment and how she decided not to regulate her anger as she said: 'I do not think we teachers should always control or suppress our emotions in class as it sometimes serves a valuable purpose, even if neither I nor my students like it.'

After week ten's session which addressed cognitive change strategies, Tina narrated:

I usually draw on empathy, but I did not know that it is a strategy. I empathize so much with my students that I guess it sometimes backfires. Unfortunately, the situation seems to be getting worse because these days, parents do spoil their children and they expect teachers to do so. I sometimes feel I'm more of a babysitter than a teacher! :|

She further added she was not much comfortable utilizing reappraisal, because she also found it difficult to do. However, during week fourteen, she shared with us how she happened to draw on reappraisal:

I was flipping through their quiz papers and I started feeling frustrated and disappointed. The students had not taken any of my warnings seriously and their papers were full of careless mistakes. Instead of underlining their mistakes with a red pen, I decided to highlight their correct answers with my colorful highlighter markers and I also thanked those students who had handed in error-free papers. Till the end, the students tried to be more accurate to win my attention. I found the technique so helpful.

Finally, in week sixteen she shared with the class how she drew on suppression to manage her emotions and a disruptive student.

She wanted to drive me crazy. That is precisely what she wanted and I did not want to give it to her. First, she borrowed her friend's assignment to show me. Then, she kept disturbing her friends. I knew I might get mad at her for such behavior, which I got, but I decided not to express my anger today. I had disarmed her by my choice.

Throughout data collection, she did not happen to draw on attentional deployment to regulate her emotions. Furthermore, she stated that during and after the course, she used to compare her reactions with the past, thinking about how she might have reacted when she was not familiar with the strategies. She further added that suppression was her most frequently used strategy when she was not expressing her emotions. But now, she has a wide variety of strategies in her arsenal to choose from depending on the situation, emotional trigger, and her students.

4.4. Danial

In the introductory interview prior to the course, Danial stated that to him, teacher emotions might encompass happiness, anger, pride, regret, sadness, anxiety, and despair. However, he thought emotion regulation can be synonymous with anger management strategies, which he is familiar with, although he did not find them much practical. Analysis of the narratives provided by Danial indicated that he mainly drew on humor to modify the emotional situation and he preferred to express his emotions since he believed in the utility of such expressions. As evidenced in the narratives and class observations, he drew on humor to lighten the mood even after he has expressed a negative emotion. For instance, in week six's narrative, he has written:

There is an impolite boy in one of my classes. Today I asked him to read aloud something and he refused since 'he cannot see,' which of course was a lie. I flipped out because it was not the first time he was doing this, so I said: 'why don't you go to an eye doctor? Do not come to my class next time unless you have taken care of that.' I should confess that I felt awful after I said that and I had an eye on him till the end of the class to check how he felt. In that very session, I got so disappointed with my students, wondering if they were ever going to learn what I teach them, and I complained. I guess the class felt awkward too, so I tried to crack a joke and end the session on good terms. We laughed off the negativity when I used humor to manipulate the situation creating the feeling.

Additionally, the narrative he provided in week nine pointed to another instance of using humor as a situation modifying tool to down-regulate anxiety.

As I was distributing the quiz papers yesterday, I noticed that the students are creating some chaos. When I double-checked, I realized that the papers I had distributed do not match the students' level. I was kinda annoyed by the mistake and nervous because of the chaos. Some students had also panicked because they were not familiar with the questions. To prevent any further negative feeling, in a voice resembling Western movie characters, I said: 'Guys! I'm going downstairs to fight with office people and switch the papers. If I do not make it back, know that I loved you all along.' And the class burst into laughter. I guess I managed it well.

In week ten, Danial shared a story of how he drew on reappraisal by attributing his naughty students' behavior to their age and managing to control his emotions more skillfully. 'I used to be their age after all.'

During week fourteen, he also provided us with a narrative about a student who seemed to have a poor cognitive ability which made teaching him a more exacting activity. 'At first, I got disappointed, frustrated, and a bit angry. But I have learned to empathize with him. This situation is out of his control. He is a nice boy.'

In week sixteen, he also told us about a rude student who could easily drive him crazy. 'I asked to see his mother and everything changed! After observing his mother's behavior with me and her own son, it would be unfair to expect him a lot. He was a reflection of his impolite mother!'

In week seventeen too Danial narrated the story of an overpopulated class with so many naughty students and how he has forced himself to mask his emotions –

both positive and negative ones – since otherwise, the class could get out of control. Danial had written that he is not much comfortable with the recurrent suppressions and masking gestures in this class and he is doing this just because the students have not left him any other choice.

In the post-course interview, Danial stated that he has become more aware of his teacher emotions and their regulation. Additionally, he stated that the reason he drew more frequently on situation modification or masking is that he has found these two strategies more convenient. 'Although I am now familiar with the strategies, I suppose the choice of the strategy depends on our habits, the situation, and what matches the situation.' Danial too considered the reflective nature of the program and the contribution of groupmates helpful, though he sometimes got too busy to share the narratives.

5. Discussion

Drawing on a substantial dataset comprising of teacher narratives, semi-structured interviews, discussion threads and observation notes, this qualitative study illustrates the development of each participant teacher from an emotional perspective. As noted above, the teacher participants had limited knowledge of teacher emotions and emotion regulation strategies prior to the course. However, as indicated in the collected dataset, the participants came to utilize each strategy depending on the ambient emotional trigger. By the end of the course, they had learned to articulate their thoughts via the narratives implying teachers' access to their cognitions (Freeman, 1996). The analyses further illustrated how the course content was gradually included in the participants' instructional practice and how the participant teachers used professional discourse to rename their experience (Freeman, 1993), an instance of which was evident in Tara's comments.

As Fischer et al. (2018) state, knowledge and skills obtained from teachers' participation in professional development courses could be further associated with changes in instructional practices. As evidenced in the analyses above, the teachers' participation in this online in-service teacher education program provided them with the knowledge to make more appropriate decisions. Specific instances of this could be Tara's reflective narrative in week ten and Tina's comment in the post-course interview where she talked about how she currently compares her reaction in rather similar situations before and after the course.

The participants' learning of emotion regulation strategies is in line with the

conceptualization of professional learning defined as a process through which teachers are provided with opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills, reflect and adopt new practices (Durksen et al., 2017; Suchodoletz et al., 2018). As Durksen et al. (2017) point out, teacher education initiatives can positively contribute to teachers' efficacy even if they are not explicitly designed to do so. As Dina's comments indicated, she considered herself a more efficacious teacher after the course. Additionally, the online nature of the course, together with the online instruction, formed a knowledge base situated in the participants' everyday practice and was best understood via reflection with other participants sharing similar experiences (Vescio et al., 2008).

Reiterating Choi and Morrison's (2014) finding which had considered asynchronous online discussions as deeply reflective, the participants in this study also regarded the asynchronous online discussion as a positive contribution to their reflection and development. Echoing Lantz-Andersson et al.'s (2018), Romano (2008), and Unwin (2015), a participant of the present study – Danial – also appreciated the discourse community members, the fellow teachers, for providing them with varied views, suggestions, and classroom practices.

Although the participants were required to provide a minimum number of twelve narratives during the course, Dina and Tara provided twenty and twenty-four narratives respectively, while Tina and Danial only provided the required minimum number. However, as the analyses of the narratives and final interviews indicated, learning had happened for all the participants. This is also evident in Lantz-Andersson et al.'s (2018) review, where a number of studies had pointed to the prevalence of some core members in the community responsible for the knowledge and interaction patterns in the community. In a sense, Dina and Tara as the core members of the online community seemed to be responsible for knowledge sharing in the online group by providing more narratives. Tina and Danial as more passive participants in the community enjoyed others' contributions, still benefited from the learning. While this limited form of engagement can render the participants as 'authorized visitors' (Lantz-Andersson et al., 2018; p. 46), it can be meaningful for teachers even if the internalization of online information seems limited to other participants.

As the initial interviews indicated, to Danial and Tara, teacher emotion regulation was similar to anger management. However, throughout the course,

they managed to relate the course content to their experiences so that by the end of the course, emotion regulation strategies seemed to have been internalized. As Okukawa (2008) and Kostiainen et al. (2018) believe, what happened to the participants in this study resembled meaningful learning, which can be defined as an interpretation of new information and linking them with prior knowledge. According to Jarvis (1987, as cited in Kostiainen et al., 2018), meaningful learning takes place when new information does not fit into the previous structures of knowledge. As in the case of this study, the information provided on emotion regulation strategies instilled disequilibrium which further contributed to meaningful learning of the strategies.

Additionally, the course provided the participants with the appropriate interplay between theory and practice since the course content served as an immediate tool in their reflecting and understanding. Accordingly, the course content did not remain disconnected but became personalized which further contributed to meaningful learning (Kostiainen et al., 2018).

As emphasized in the existing literature, the primary outcomes resulting from teachers' active engagement in effective professional development initiatives encompass enhanced pedagogical knowledge and transformative changes in instructional practices. As evidenced in this study, the participants' engagement in the online course increased their knowledge of and awareness about teacher emotion regulation, which was manifested in the narratives, interviews, online discussions, and class observations.

As Borg et al. (2018) agree, teacher competence is acquired as a result of complex interactions among a plethora of behavioral, cognitive, metacognitive, interpersonal, attitudinal, and affective characteristics. Since the scope of this study was narrowed down to probe the affective dimension of teachers, the analyses illustrated that the administration of this course managed to enhance the affective dimension of teacher competence.

Furthermore, Gaines et al. (2019) argue that teachers' emotional experiences could contribute to their interaction with the professional development program and implementation of the course content. As evidenced in the final interviews, the participants announced their positive emotional experience while participating in the course which further contributed to the implementation of the emotion regulation strategies as indicated by the narratives and observations.

Finally, partly reiterating the discussions of meaningful learning, in light of the definition of teacher learning as a process wherein teachers attain learning outcomes in terms of changes in knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, via the use of cognitive, affective, regulative, and social learning activities (Vermunt et al., 2019), it can be concluded that teacher learning took place in this study with the cognitive, affective, and social learning activities being at work.

6. Conclusion

The present study was conducted to explore the development of a group of L2 teachers from an emotional perspective. In so doing, the participant teachers took part in an eighteen-week course that was developed specifically for the current study and delivered asynchronously. Analysis of the qualitative data obtained from various sources revealed how the teacher development program has influenced the cognitions and instructional practices of the four L2 teachers who participated in the study.

The scope of the current study was limited to four L2 teachers and the data were collected in an eighteen-week time-span. Still, due to the volatile nature of the emotional dimension of teaching and teachers, more longitudinal studies should be carried out to investigate how teachers' cognitions and instructional practices develop over time. Such research can focus on exploring the sustained impact of teacher education initiatives. Additionally, students and L2 teachers of the same class could receive the same instruction on emotions and emotion regulation strategies to explore the cognitions, teaching practices, and learning outcomes of an educational context where both the teacher and the learners are emotionally literate.

The Findings of the study have implications for teachers as essential stakeholders in the education industry as they raise awareness of L2 teachers' crucial roles in influencing the success or failure of students and the educational system, as acknowledged by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) and Derakhshan et al. (2020). Policymakers and teacher educators who prioritize the quality of teaching and learning and psychological wellbeing of teachers are also recommended to take into account the emotional dimension of teachers' learning. Given the societal and individual pressures, it appears necessary to attend to the emotional facet of teachers' lives as active emotional agents.

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