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The emotional rollercoaster ride of foreign language learners and teachers: Sources and interactions of classroom emotions¹

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Abstract

The present contribution presents an overview of recent developments in research on emotions within the emerging field of the psychology of foreign language learning and teaching. It shows that the long neglect of emotions in the field of applied linguistics has come to an end. Emotions fuel the language learning and well as the language teaching process. These emotions emerge partly from the learners and teachers themselves (internal sources) but they interact with contextual variables. A particular emotion can arise in an interaction with a specific interlocutor (micro-level), or within a classroom context (meso-level) which is situated within a more general political and historical context (macro-level). Emotions can thus fluctuate over different time windows. Moreover, emotions play a crucial role in learners' and teachers' wellbeing. It is therefore crucial for teachers to be able to regulate their own emotions and those of their learners in the classroom.

Keywords: foreign language learning, foreign language teaching, emotions, emotion regulation

Introduction

Foreign and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research has long been dominated by a cognitive perspective that views language learning and teaching as resulting from an interaction of learner-internal variables such as aptitude, working memory, musical ability, and teaching strategies (focus on form, recasts, communicative approach). The cognitive approach assumes that physiology plays a central role in SLA (Hulstijn, 2007; Sharwood Smith, 2017) and it leaves little place to the role of emotions, and their unpredictable effects. It is thus no surprise that Gass and Selinker's (1994) *Introduction to Second Language Acquisition* had only a single chapter devoted to motivation and that in its fifth edition, Gass, Behney and Plonsky (2020), *Second Language Acquisition. An Introductory Course*, there still is only a single chapter (out of 17) entitled *Learner-internal Influences* covering various aspects such as motivation, affect, personality and learner strategies. It fits with the authors' view, expressed in the previous edition of the book, that the "cognitive view [...] is the prevailing view in current SLA research" (Gass, Behney & Plonsky, 2013, p. 128).

It could be argued that the focus on the non-emotional aspects of SL learning and teaching such as the history of the field, language universals, meaning, cognitive and processing approaches, the social environment of SLA, reflects a desire of SLA researchers to engage in proper "scientific" research. By looking at how learners' linguistic systems develop and function, researchers can adopt a positivist perspective

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and assume that all relevant factors can be measured and controlled. It is based on the ontological position that “reality is found in a theory that helps to explain behavior among a large number of people” (Creswell, 2015, p. 16). Epistemologically, it assumes that only etic analyses and interpretations, using the carefully defined and relatively stable concepts from the analytic language of the social sciences allow proper research. Methodologically, it prefers quantitative methods that allow hypothesis-testing, falsifiability and generalization. These positivist researchers believe in their own impartiality and in their ability to unearth cause–effect relationships between the variables in a world of real objects (Farhady, 2013).

There is of course nothing wrong with the positivist approach except that it ignores the elephant in the room (Dewaele, 2005, 2011, 2019a; Prior, 2019), namely the emotions that learners experience in the process of acquiring and using a foreign language (FL). Acknowledging the elephant brings in an inevitable degree of messiness to the research. This messiness is embraced by postmodernist researchers who delve into learners’ subjectivity, affectivity and unique perceptions. Kramersch (2009) refers to her own earlier research into foreign language learners’ metaphors for their FL learning journey, which included a rollercoaster and a kiss. She adds that FL learners face anxiety arising from ontological dilemmas once they notice discrepancies between familiar L1 world views and FL views which offer tantalizing opportunities to adopt a new symbolic self. Postmodernist researchers have also argued for a change in emphasis, moving away from trying to define what emotions are and looking instead at what emotions do (Benesch, 2017).

What has held back research into emotion in mainstream SLA research? I will highlight four possible main reasons, while acknowledging that there are many more. Firstly, because emotions cannot be measured directly, they are harder to capture and describe in an unequivocal way. Secondly, because emotions differ in valence and interact in complex and dynamic ways with other dimensions such as personality traits, motivation, engagement, agency and identity, it is hard to disentangle their unique contribution to the development and use of a FL. Thirdly, because self-perceptions of emotions can cover very different time windows, ranging from very short periods (seconds) to slightly longer periods (minutes up to an hour) and much longer periods (weeks to months), the question arises what time windows are most appropriate to investigate the dynamic process of FL acquisition and use, a journey that typically takes many years. Fourthly, if we agree that FL learners and teachers go through an emotional rollercoaster ride, it raises the question whether researchers should focus on the peaks and lows or just on the averages. In other words, do peaks have more effect on FL learning than a gentle journey through the emotional middle ground? Might this differ according to individuals? After all, some people enjoy rollercoaster rides, while others avoid them at all cost.

Bringing in emotion in SLA research thus implies an “ontological, epistemological and methodological challenge to the relatively homogeneous dominant perspective” (Dewaele, 2019a, p. 534).

In the present contribution, I will consider a new wave of research that fits within the emotional turn in applied linguistics and TESOL (White, 2018). I will organize them by their primary focus, namely learner emotions and teacher emotions, while acknowledging that the emotions of learners are connected to those of teachers and vice versa.

Learner emotions

Interest in variation in learner emotions has expanded exponentially in the last couple of years. Dewaele (2019) reported that the number of publications including the word “emotion” increased threefold in the *Modern Language Journal* in the past 8 years. The increased interest in emotion has been accompanied by a widening of the range of emotions, evolving from a narrow focus on negative emotions (anxiety) to the inclusion of positive emotions (Dewaele & Li, 2018, 2020a). This could be partly attributed to the emergence of Positive Psychology and its promotion of a more holistic perspective on life (Dewaele, Chen, Padilla & Lake, 2019; Dewaele & Li, 2020a; MacIntyre, Mercer & Gregersen, 2019).

Foreign language enjoyment and anxiety

The first study to propose a more holistic approach to the study of emotions in FL learning was Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014). The authors argued that the traditional study of *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA)* needs to be complemented by the simultaneous study of positive emotions. They developed a *FL Enjoyment (FLE)* scale consisting of 21 items reflecting positive emotions towards the learning experience, peers and teacher. The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from 1740 FL learners from all over the world revealed that the two emotions do not have a strict seesaw relationship, but operate as two separate but related dimensions. Higher levels of FLE and lower levels of FLCA were found to be linked with age, multilingualism, level in the FL, relative standing among the peers in the FL class, and being in university rather than in secondary school settings (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Female participants were found to experience both more FLE and more FLCA (Dewaele, MacIntyre, Boudreau, & Dewaele, 2016). The authors speculated that the female participants’ heightened emotionality might be beneficial for the acquisition and use of the FL. In a closer analysis of the same dataset, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) used a factor analysis that showed two sub-dimensions of FLE: firstly, social FLE, reflected in shared legends, classroom laughter, and pleasant relationships with teachers and peers, and secondly private FLE, reflected in internal feelings such as pride, having fun, and a sense of accomplishment. The two dimensions of enjoyment are inter-correlated. Analysis of participants’ descriptions of highly enjoyable episodes in their FL classroom revealed how anxiety and enjoyment often co-existed. One participant described an activity with dolls and toy cars in class: This was really effective because it was active and got us involved in something fun which mitigated some of the stress sometimes associated with plane verb conjugation. I made a lot of mistakes and that did make me a bit anxious (...), but it was still fun and there was a lot of laughter at the juvenileness of the dolls. (XX, female, 24) (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, p. 264).

Piniel and Albert (2018) used a qualitative research design to explore the types of emotions (pride, contentment, comfort, relaxation, enjoyment, anxiety) that 166 Hungarian students experienced in their use of English L2 inside and outside the classroom. An analysis of the written descriptions of how they felt revealed that enjoyment and anxiety were the most frequently experienced emotions.

Flow

In a further study on a subset of the same database, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2020) focused on the phenomenon of *flow*, a psychological state when learners work in an

optimally challenging situation, using their skills to full effect, feeling completely immersed in what they are doing, and losing track of time and place. They found support for the argument that anxiety and enjoyment co-exist in flow (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). There was wide inter-individual variation in the frequency of class time in a state of flow. Participants who had reached an advanced level in the FL experienced significantly more flow than beginners and participants with a higher relative standing in the group of learners also experienced more time in flow. A multiple regression analysis revealed that FLE (and not FLCA) was a significant predictor of frequency of flow experience.

The findings are illustrated by participants' observations of flow states in the FL which often happened when having to present something in the FL to the rest of the group and the teacher. Student Mari describes such an event where she managed to control her anxiety and reached a state of flow. She describes the fairly positive reactions she received from peers and teachers immediately after the performance and hints at the positive longer-term effect on her motivation: "As a final task for our oral communication for teachers course, we had to hold a small "teaching" session to our fellow students. (...) I was extremely nervous (...) Anyway, I practiced A LOT and the session went very well and I was extremely pleased with myself. I got fairly positive feedback from my peers and the teacher. (...) I just felt extremely proud. I'm usually terribly negative about myself and my performance in different tasks but this time, I felt really good and was actually buzzing afterwards. The feeling of succeeding in something is just something else and the motivation you get from it is absolutely thrilling. (Mari, female, age 21)".

Dewaele and MacIntyre (2020) argued that being in a state of flow may momentarily lift social restrictions on classroom behavior which can contribute to a sense of exhilaration. Analysis of the participants' observations showed that flow experiences are self-centered, infrequent and short-lived among beginners, especially when their perceived social standing in the group is low. Flow experiences become more social, more frequent, stronger and more sustained as learners reach an intermediate to advanced level in their FL. The authors conclude that flow does not emerge at random in the FL classroom. The teacher has to set the scene, typically by allowing learners a certain degree of autonomy and some time for preparation of the activity (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). The authors conclude that flow experiences are motivating and memorable and that teachers should strive to introduce language tasks in the classroom that increase the probability of flow among learners.

Love

Considering the range of emotions that four Romanian EFL high school students experienced, Pavelescu and Petric (2018) used different types of qualitative methods over a school semester, including a written task, semi-structured interviews with the learners and their teachers, lesson observations and English-related events out of school. The intensity and stability of the emotions was very different between the participants. While two participants experienced strong and stable love towards English, the other two participants did experience enjoyment in their English language learning without building a strong emotional bond with English. The authors concluded that "love was the driving force in the learning process, creating effective coping mechanisms when there was a lack of enjoyment in certain classroom situations and

motivating learners to invest greater effort into language learning in and out of the classroom” (p. 73). A follow-up qualitative study on two participants by Dewaele and Pavelescu (2019) revealed that the nature of the love and enjoyment for English was quite different for both participants and that sharp fluctuations in these positive emotions, caused by casual comments of peers or teacher, a disliked teacher, lack of interest in a film or conversation topic or even seating arrangements, were linked to a willingness to communicate or to stay silent in the English class.

Shame

Galmiche (2017) focused on the role of shame in FL learning in a French educational setting. Many of her 30 participants reported how shame undermined their linguistic confidence and their sense of identity, self-worth and self-esteem. The resulting anxiety silenced them in the classroom, pushed them to ruminate over their failure and could lead to a withdrawing from L2 learning. Some participants had developed strategies of resilience that allowed to counter the toxic effect of shame.

Trait Emotional Intelligence

Li (2020) focused on the effect of a lower-order personality trait, Trait Emotional Intelligence¹, on 1307 Chinese EFL students' FLE. She found that learners with higher Trait Emotional Intelligence were inclined to experience more enjoyment in L2 learning. She also found that the effects of Trait Emotional Intelligence on students' self-perceived and actual English achievement were partially mediated by FLE and by FLCA. In other words, “Students would exploit their emotional competence to reduce their anxiety and generate more enjoyment during L2 learning” (p. 13). Li and Xu (2019) revisited the question about the effect of Trait Emotional Intelligence on FLE and FLCA of 1718 Chinese EFL high school students. They also included a six-week Positive Psychology intervention on 56 students. They found the expected medium correlations between students' Trait Emotional Intelligence, FLE and FLA and established that the intervention had boosted FLE and alleviated the effects of FLCA.

The role of teachers in learner emotions

One consistent finding in the growing literature on FLE and FLCA is that teachers play a crucial role in positive emotions and only a marginal role in negative emotions. Dewaele, Witney, Saito and Dewaele (2018) investigated FLE and FLCA from 189 secondary school pupils (aged 12 to 18) in two schools in London. FLE was strongly predicted by positive attitudes toward the FL, positive attitudes toward the teacher, frequent use of the FL by the teacher, more time spent on speaking during classes, a higher relative standing in the peer group and being more advanced in the FL. In contrast, FLCA was linked to negative attitudes towards the FL, lower relative standing in the peer group, being less advanced in the FL but was not linked in any way to the teacher or teacher behavior. In a follow-up study on age differences in the same dataset, Dewaele and Dewaele (2017) used a pseudo-longitudinal design to observe change in FLE and FLCA across three age groups. FLCA remained stable but, after a dip in the middle group, FLE increased slightly over time. The most important finding was that different independent variables predicted FLE and FLCA in the three age groups. FLE was predicted by peers in the first two age groups and by the teacher in the oldest group. In contrast, FLCA was predicted by the self in the two younger groups, and by peers in

the oldest group. The limited variation in mean scores of FLE and FLCA thus hid dynamic interactions between various psychological and sociobiographical variables in shaping learners' FLE and FLCA.

Focusing on the question whether FL learners experience similar levels of FLE and FLCA in the same language when facing two different teachers, Dewaele and Dewaele (to appear) selected 40 secondary school students from their database who were studying a FL with one Main Teacher and one Second Teacher. Statistical analysis revealed that FLCA was constant with both teachers but that FLE was significantly higher with the Main Teacher. Analysis of the predictors of FLE identified in Dewaele et al. (2018) revealed that the Main Teacher scored significantly higher on attitudes towards the teacher, the teacher's frequency of use of the FL in class and unpredictability. Item-level analysis of the FLE scale revealed that the teacher-specific items contributed to the higher FLE score. The authors conclude that the findings offer further proof that FLE is more teacher-dependent than FLCA, which is more stable across teachers.

The strong effect of teachers on learners' FLE was also confirmed in Dewaele, Franco Magdalena and Saito's (2019) study of 210 Spanish EFL learners. Teacher's friendliness and strength of teacher's foreign accent were strong (positive and negative) predictors of FLE – explaining a fifth of variance –, but teacher strictness and frequency of FL use were only weak predictors of FLCA – explaining only 8% of the variance. The crucial impact of teachers on their students' FLE rather than their FLCA was further confirmed in Dewaele and MacIntyre (2019). They analyzed quantitative and qualitative feedback from 750 FL learners around the world. Personality traits were found to predict over 30% of the variance in FLCA (mostly Emotional Stability and Social Initiative) but only 10% in FLE (Cultural Empathy and Social Initiative). FLE was predicted by attitude towards the teacher, FL test results, friendliness of the teacher, attitude towards the FL, joking by the teacher, and relative standing in the group. In contrast, FLCA was predicted by relative standing in the group, number of languages known, FL level, and attitude towards the teacher. The stronger effect of the teacher on FLE than on FLCA was confirmed in the analysis of participants' descriptions of enjoyable and anxiety-provoking FL experiences. The teacher was mentioned as the cause of the FLE experience in 46% of the cases compared to only 27% of the cases for the FLCA experience. In contrast, the "self" was mentioned as cause of FLCA in 38% of cases compared to only 23% for FLE episodes.

In order to find out to what extent the mood of teachers affects the emotions of their students, Moskowitz and Dewaele (2019) collected data from 129 adult EFL students across the world. They were asked about their perception of various aspects of their *teachers' happiness*, and about their own attitudes and motivation to learn English. Correlations and multiple regression analyses revealed that student perception of teacher happiness was significantly (and positively) linked with students' attitude towards English and motivation to study the language, as well as their attitude towards the teacher. The authors argue that a happy teacher can trigger a process of positive emotional contagion that extends to their students.

Following this line of research, Dewaele and Li (2020) adopted a mixed-method approach to look at the effect of *teacher enthusiasm* on classroom emotions (FLE and

boredom) and learning engagement of 2002 EFL university students in China. Quantitative analyses showed that learners who perceived their English teachers as being more enthusiastic in teaching were likely to experience stronger positive emotions (interest and FLE) and fewer negative emotions (e.g., FLCA and boredom). This positive emotional contagion confirms the findings of Moskowitz and Dewaele (2019). Qualitative interviews with nine students suggested that perceptions of teacher enthusiasm also influence students' evaluation of teacher effectiveness and instructional quality. One participant, student 9, loved her English teacher: "Enthusiastic teachers like him with variations in class help to make students not that sleepy. Besides, this enthusiasm is contagious and can be transmitted to students, making them more emotionally engaged in learning English" (p. 17). In contrast, discussing the lack of enthusiasm of his teacher, one participant, student 7, explained that it had left him feeling disengaged: "it has multiple effects (...). I feel not agentially engaged in learning, and not interested in this subject. No special feelings, neither liking nor disliking" (p. 17).

Teacher emotions

There has been a recent surge in interest in FL teacher psychology (De Costa, Rawal & Li, 2019; Martínez Agudo, 2018; Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018), teacher wellbeing (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020) going beyond well motivation (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). This interest was partly linked to new developments in general education research that considered teaching as an emotion-laden process, and looked at teachers' satisfaction or frustration and anger, the interaction of student and teacher emotions, and emotions linked to power and educational policy (see e.g. Benesch, 2012, 2017; Schutz & Zembylas, 2010). Gkonou, Dewaele & King (2020) found that teachers can experience negative emotions because of factors that fall broadly within and outside of their control. Lack of confidence in teaching skills, insufficient proficiency in the FL, inability to live up to their own expectations fall within the first category, difficult relations with colleagues and leadership, unbearable workload, poor pay fall within the second category. The resulting stress and unhappiness can create a negative spiral, as students, colleagues and school leaders will pick up the teacher's emotional state, which could lead to burnout and a change of career. Of course, language teachers can also experience 'positive' emotions and thrive as a result. This positive emotional state is often the result of emotional self-regulation strategies.

King, Dewaele & Gkonou (2020) point out that research on teacher emotions is difficult because emotions are simultaneously intra- and inter-personal (occurring subjectively within the individual's mind) and inter-personal (see King & Ng, 2018). This difficulty requires innovative inter-disciplinary approaches, combining various methodologies.

Love and religion

There are many *potential sources* that teachers draw from to maintain their emotional balance. For one Nepali teacher of English it was love toward the profession, understanding and support from students in the classroom that stopped him from being dragged down by work-related sociopolitical factors (Li & Rawal, 2018). Religious faith also served as a buoy for the emotional experiences and identity development of a veteran English lecturer in China (Ding & De Costa, 2018).

Personality

Teachers' personality also plays a major role in 47 EFL teachers' levels of wellbeing and perceptions of stress (MacIntyre, Ross, Talbot, Mercer, Gregersen & Banga, 2019). The PERMA wellbeing score was significantly positively correlated with the personality traits of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Intellect. Sources of stress included heavy workload, low salary and long hours.

Emotional labor

Teachers' emotional labor- defined as the pretending, hiding or making an effort to generate particular emotions whilst teaching- has attracted particular attention as an important source of teacher emotions. Acheson and Nelson (2020) investigated emotional labor of 83 North American FL high school teachers using a quantitative approach and found that they reported moderate to high levels of emotional labor in their daily professional lives. Job dissatisfaction was linked to increased *emotional labor* which could lead to emotional burnout.

Adopting a case study approach to emotional labor, Kostoulas and Lämmerer (2020) interviewed two pre-service teachers to explore their resilience through the management of negative emotional states and the development of emotion regulation strategies. Resilience was found to have both an adaptive and a maladaptive influence on the teachers' professional performance.

A similar approach was adopted in Humphries (2020) who used a single case study to show how changes to the English language had negative emotional consequences for one teacher who struggled to adapt. The teacher's frustration about his students' poor performance and lack of enthusiasm was visible in class (i.e. he did not engage in emotional labor). Interviews revealed that the teacher also regretted his own lack of professional development and needed psychological and professional support.

Oxford (2020) also focused on emotional labor as part of five teachers and teacher educators' emotional wellbeing. She found it to be linked to dynamic and interacting emotions combined with personality traits such as empathy and emotional intelligence, and a combination of emotion regulation and emotional labor. She points out that difficult episodes can lead to wisdom and that teachers should use the 'compass of emotion' (p. 249), which comprises both positive and negative emotions, to grow as a teacher.

Two studies have considered emotional labor from a critically-orientated perspective in which emotions are defined as sociocultural constructs mediated by power relationships. Benesch (2020) investigated how power and emotions are interconnected in English language teaching, arguing that teachers' emotions can reveal unreasonable or unfair demands. She conducted interviews about written feedback on student essays with 13 English language instructors in New York. Giving meaningful feedback to students without spending unreasonable amounts of time on marking turned out to be a difficult balancing act. Many of the instructors reported engaging in stressful emotion labor which leads the author to conclude: "By bringing power into the picture, these tools can provoke questions about teachers' emotions that are left out of cognitive research in which emotions are considered as intrapsychic phenomena" (p. 68). Her wider purpose is to promote greater teacher agency in curricular and pedagogical

matters in order to create better teaching and learning conditions. The second study to use a critically-orientated perspective was De Costa, Li and Rawal (2020) who explored the emotional experiences of teachers working in Nepalese public schools that had introduced English as medium of instruction. They found that teachers experienced pressure and frustration in their teaching which lead to a more general sense of loss of agency, powerlessness and emotional and physical exhaustion.

Stress and anxiety

Gregersen, MacIntyre and MacMillan (2020) used a week-long positive psychology intervention on a single participant, a teacher of English as a foreign language in West Africa. They used a cognitive reappraisal strategy to mitigate the negative effects of stress. Unfortunately, the stressors experienced by the participant could only be alleviated temporarily and did not lead to a long-lasting change.

Fighting anxiety was harder than expected for the participants in Ikeda, Takeuchi and Imai's (2020) study on an unsuccessful intervention program aimed at alleviating anxiety when teaching English in elementary schools. The 42 Japanese teachers' anxiety levels fluctuated between 3 and 6 on a 6-point Likert scale and peaked during an observed lesson open to other teachers, school administrators and members of local boards of education). The fluctuation of English teaching anxiety "was roughly in inverse proportion to that of their satisfaction level with the in-service training program" (p. 200).

Gkonou and Miller adopted a multiple case study approach to investigate the role of critical incidents in the career of 13 teachers. From the interviews, it emerged that these negative incidents, such as dealing with challenging students, were often portrayed as turning points and treated as formative experiences which led to later emotional rewards.

Wellbeing and emotion regulation

Hofstadler, Talbot, Mercer and Lämmerer (2020) considered the factors that contributed to and detracted six secondary school teachers' professional subjective wellbeing in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) schools in Austria. In-depth, semi-structured interviews with teachers revealed the 'thrills' and 'ills' of CLIL. On the one hand, participants had positive attitudes towards CLIL and how it had contributed to their professional development. They felt confident about their teaching skills. On the other hand, they expressed concerns about workload, pay, work-life balance and appreciation by the ministry and the society at large.

Morris and King (2020) focused on emotion regulation behavior of seven experienced teachers of English as a foreign language working at a Japanese university. Semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and stimulated recall sessions revealed that the teachers deployed a range of strategies to control their own and their students' emotions, especially the negative ones: "situational strategies in proactive attempts to maintain control over the positivity of their emotional experiences, attention deployment strategies to afford immediate, though short-sighted emotional gratification in correspondence with the quality of the student-teacher relationship, cognitive

reappraisal in diverse temporal time-scales to adapt to classroom stressors, and response modulation to support their teaching goals and relationships” (p. 224).

Motivation

Dewaele (2020) focused on the motivation of 513 English foreign language (EFL) teachers from around the world. The study is a continuation of the work on the relations between EFL teacher emotions and their self-reported classroom behavior (Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele & Mercer, 2018). Statistical analyses revealed that a high level of Trait emotional intelligence was linked to stronger motivation. English L1 teachers were less motivated than English L2 teachers and, in the latter group, high proficiency in English was linked to stronger motivation. Female teachers were more motivated than their male peers. More experienced teachers were not more motivated than less experienced colleagues.

The dynamic nature of emotion

There is no doubt that teaching is an emotional rollercoaster, with brief euphoric highs and soul-crushing lows, which can occur within a very short time-span. The causes can originate at various levels: at the micro-level, a particularly challenging student, at the meso-level, a group of difficult students and at the macro-level issues to do with the national or regional organization of teaching, including teacher training and support from their institution. What is clear is that while an isolated negative emotional event is unlikely to do any permanent harm, a repetition of such events may endanger the wellbeing of the teacher. For a teacher who is struggling, a trivial trigger could set off an avalanche. Head teachers and teachers thus need to be constantly involved in regulating their own and their students’ emotions. Emotional resilience is really essential to avoid burnout and stress. King et al. (2020) argue that teachers should be encouraged to take up courses in mindfulness and/or martial arts as its practice: “instils physical and spiritual skills which allow practitioners to be confident in their ability to face challenges, to defend themselves if needed, and to remain humble about their skills and achievements. It means that in combat they will not feel anger because it would mean that they cannot control their emotions. The aim of training in potentially deadly fighting techniques is to cultivate a strong character that prevents any attack in the first place. Experienced teachers are linguistic artists that share some of the skill set of black belts. They need the knowledge about language and culture, the skills to teach it, the confidence about their abilities, the emotional thermostat to sense what their students are feeling while simultaneously keeping their own emotions in check. They will be in the rollercoaster but at least they will not be blindfolded. Their ability to see ahead will allow them to tense their core when it is necessary and deflect or absorb strikes without buckling” (p. 293).

Conclusion

I noted in the introduction that Gass et al. (2013) left very little space to non-cognitive approaches to SLA. Considering the explosion in emotion-related research on FL learners and teachers, I hope that the authors will acknowledge this in future editions of their book. The present chapter showed how some of the sources of emotions in learners also play a role in the emotions of teachers, and how the emotions of both learners and teachers interact in dynamic ways. In other words, how teachers feel has an effect on learners, and how learners feel affects the emotional state of the teacher.

Emotional contagion works in both directions. This is fine when the emotions are positive, it can be problematic when they are negative. As professionals, I argued that teachers need to be able to regulate their emotions, and to occasionally engage in emotional labor, in order to create a positive emotional environment in the classroom where learners can enjoy themselves, flourish and develop their skills in the FL.

Considering the importance of emotions in FL learning and teaching, more research is needed to inform pedagogical practice. Dewaele and Li (2020a) argued that research designs could include a wider range of emotions, including cross-sectional and longitudinal, exploratory and experimental designs. It is also necessary to increase the types of triangulation (of data, investigator, theory and methodology) in order to control bias in measurement, sampling and procedure. The time has come to explore emotion interaction patterns between teacher and students in more detail in various contexts.

Attention for emotion also needs to be included in teacher training (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020; Oxford, 2017). Teachers need the skills to regulate their own emotions and to help students boost their positive emotions, manage their anxiety, and thus allow them to achieve greater well-being and become more effective learners. Intervention studies are crucial in this respect.

Finally, emotion research also needs to feed into educational policy making. As Benesch (2017, 2020) pointed out, how teachers feel is of crucial importance to themselves, their students, their institution and, by extension, the society in which they live. In order to be happy (and thus more effective), teachers need to be treated fairly, have manageable workloads, a decent salary, regular training, agency in curricular and pedagogical matters, and support from school, regional and national authorities.

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¹ It is defined as a constellation of emotional perceptions located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies and concerns people's self-perceptions of their emotional abilities (Petrides, 2017).