12 "Emotion Recollected in Tranquillity"

Blogging for Metacognition in Language Teacher Education

Linda Fisher

Introduction

Made familiar in relation to poetic endeavour by the great romantic poet William Wordsworth, the phrase "emotion recollected in tranquillity" refers to re-examining and making meaning from a phase of emotional engagement that has now passed. From recollecting in quieter times the tumult of feeling experienced in the past, the poet can step back from the emotion, and use such passion to create his art. Wordsworth develops his ideas in an appendix to his collected poems:

> For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects.
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> (1839, 498)

For Wordsworth thoughts are representations of past feelings, and by allowing them to surface and so revisiting them, we get to the crux of what is important for us. As Haukås (2018, this volume) points out, there are many and varied definitions of metacognition, including Flavell's (1976) "knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them" (232), which I draw on here. In this sense Wordsworth, while coming to the issue from a completely different paradigm, is referring to a form of metacognition, where emotion recollected can give rise to cognitions about the emotion. This is relevant for this chapter on teachers' metacognition in two ways: first, the link between emotion and thought (and the ways in which these connect to the conscious self) is increasingly understood (Damasio 2006); and second, it is recognised that becoming a teacher entails emotional engagement (see Johnson and Worden 2014; Nias 1996; Sutton and Wheatley 2003; Zembylas 2003).

In this chapter, I discuss how pre-service language teachers' metacognition, and potential benefits to their professional practice and wellbeing, may be developed through the use of a professional blog, which was introduced to the UK language teacher preparation programme under discussion. The blog was intended to operate as a thinking device that allowed the teachers to select experiences from their training programme and write freely about them in the form of an online journal, read only by me, the teacher educator. In the case studies reported here, participants blogged over a period of ten months, generally freely, but with some supporting open questions at the beginning, middle and end of the training. The premise for the activity arose from a Wordsworthian idea that encouraging pre-service teachers to allow salient moments or 'hot spots' to enter their thinking ("what is really important to men"), to examine and, potentially, derive meaning from those moments when no longer as emotionally engaged with them, might benefit professional action, and improve resilience and wellbeing in the future. This explicit examination of emotion in subsequent relative tranquillity might thus add to a teacher's cognitive consonance.

Literature Review

Learning to Be a Teacher and the Role of Emotion

Learning to be a languages teacher is a very complex and challenging process, associated with the need to develop:

- deep content knowledge (knowledge of the target language (TL), TL competence, analytic knowledge);
- pedagogical content knowledge (how to translate such content knowledge—including aspects of the TL that might be problematic—in ways that are accessible to students, understanding of progression);
- knowledge of child and adolescent development;
- knowledge of psychology (motivation, student self-efficacy etc.);
- general pedagogic knowledge (assessment and monitoring, use of aids, resources, technology, behaviour management);
- curricular knowledge (language syllabus, examinations);
- contextual knowledge (accountability systems, language learner histories, the school environment, local and national context);
- process knowledge (knowledge and skills in how to collaborate with peers and parents, organisational skills, self-awareness and self-reflection skills).

(Darling-Hammond 1998; Shulman 1987; Roberts 2016)

Perhaps most importantly, teachers need to know how to bring together this wide range of knowledge, skills and dispositions in ways that a) make sense

to them, that is, are coherent and congruent with their belief schemata (see Borg 2015) b) allow them to honestly and robustly analyse their current strengths and weaknesses, make adjustments and move forward to make their teaching better c) as a corollary, enhance their own wellbeing and resilience as teachers.

Engaging in a teacher education programme will, therefore, bring numerous challenges that are likely to be transformative of the self. Such transformative learning, a term commonly referenced in relation to Jack Mezirow's framework for adult learning (Mezirow 2000; 2003), involves identifying a disorienting dilemma and then applying critical self-reflection to transform problematic frames of reference such as fixed beliefs and assumptions. For Mezirow, some frames of reference are better than others because they are more likely to generate perspectives that, given the evidence available, are more accurate and can be used to guide action. This is not necessarily easy, as Mezirow points out: "Transformative learning . . . is often an intensely threatening experience in which we have to become aware of both the assumptions undergirding our ideas and our emotional responses to the need for change" (Mezirow 2000, 6–7).

Essentially, therefore, in order to learn successfully to become a teacher, one must develop aspects of metacognition, so that one can become aware, for example, of tacitly held beliefs and assumptions about the teaching and learning process, about roles, and about oneself in relation to the former and more generally. The premise, therefore, of the project described here is that by developing skills and practice in metacognition as developed through blogging, teachers' wellbeing is improved, as is their resilience in the face of the challenges they face as trainees,[1] and are likely to confront over the span of their careers.

Indeed, developing better teacher resilience, that is, the ability to recognise and face challenges and find ways to cope (Day and Gu 2014), might be important in order to tackle attrition from the teaching profession, especially in the early years of teaching. This is a recognised policy issue for many countries. Though the figures are often disputed, a reasonable estimate suggests that in the United States at least one in five teachers has dropped out of the profession within four years of starting (Gray and Taie 2015). In Australia, some figures have suggested it is as high as 50% in the first few years, with similar statistics in England and Canada (Clandinin et al. 2015). It is noted, too, that it is often the "brightest and best" who leave (Le Maistre and Paré 2010), unable to meet their own high expectations of themselves. Much of the literature on beginning teacher attrition concludes that the problems are mainly situated within the individual and can be grouped around four themes: burnout, resilience, demographic features, and family characteristics (Clandinin et al. 2015). Several of the four themes identified by Clandinin et al., such as demographics or family issues, sit beyond the scope of teacher education, but attention can be paid to the

issues of burnout and resilience by acknowledging explicitly that teaching and learning to teach are emotional endeavours.

The Role of Emotion in Learning to Be a Teacher

Teacher education programmes naturally encourage aspects of metacognition along the lines of Flavell's (1976) *strategic knowledge* (general strategies for learning that can go across all disciplines, e.g. memorisation strategies, problem solving), *knowledge about cognitive tasks* (how and when to use strategic knowledge, specific to a subject or context), and, to a degree, pay attention to *self-knowledge* (strengths and weaknesses, beliefs about self) in relation to these first two. In fact, "reflection", where people recall, consider and evaluate their experience, deepen their understanding of that experience and potentially improve their practice (Zeichner and Liston 1996), forms the backbone of many teacher education courses, in line with Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning framework. However, the emotional aspect of such learning is often disregarded (Johnson and Golombek 2013), which is surprising given that developing self-knowledge in relation to teaching is likely to bring with it particular challenges to one's identity (see Day and Leitch 2001; Johnson and Worden 2014; Nias 1996). In order, therefore, to help manage the turbulence that developing self-knowledge might bring, teacher education courses need to help beginning teachers to develop understanding of their own emotional temperature, for example, to recognise emotional triggers, how and when they get frustrated, how tensions might be resolved if they arise, and how to help them make evaluations of their progress that are non-threatening to their sense of self. This might be all the more important for languages teachers; languages learning has been shown to be "an emotional enterprise" and a "deeply social event" (Dörnyei 2001, 46). Williams and Burden (1997) add: "Language after all belongs to a person's whole social being: it is part of one's identity, and is used to convey this identity to other people" (115), and they point out how learning a language can be threatening to one's sense of self. If language classrooms are therefore places where learners experience a number of identity threats in the struggle for participation in another culture through another language (Norton 2013; Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000), then languages teachers may well be confronted with more learner emotions in their classrooms, making it even more difficult for teachers to manage their own.

Further justification for giving prominence to emotion in teacher education more generally is supported by recent shifts in cognitive science. The link between cognition and affect is not new; indeed, Piaget in his seminal work in the 1950s claimed that there was a structural correspondence between affect and intellect, and that "all objects are simultaneously cognitive and affective" (Piaget 1954, 32). However, only in the last two decades has renewed attention been paid to the relationship between the two in

the cognitive sciences. Researchers in the field of neuroscience, in particular Antonio Damasio (see for example 2006), who has written extensively about emotion, are increasingly interested in the interplay between emotion, cognition and education. Indeed, Immordino-Yang and Damasio (2007) draw attention to the centrality of emotion in almost all forms of thought, and claim that emotion underlies all aspects of the education process:

> Furthermore, the aspects of cognition that are recruited most heavily in education, including learning, attention, memory, decision making, motivation and social functioning, are both profoundly affected by emotion and in fact subsumed within the processes of emotion . . . These changes in the mind, involving focusing of attention, calling up of relevant memories and learning the associations between events and their outcomes, among other things, are the processes with which education is most concerned. Yes, rational thought and logical reasoning do exist, although hardly ever truly devoid of emotion, but they cannot be recruited appropriately and usefully in the real world without emotion.
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> (7–8)

The assumption that emotion is inherent in all learning and that, as Damasio has argued elsewhere, emotion regulation leads to adaptive functioning (2006), suggests that attention needs to be paid to affect. In short, we cannot avoid emotional engagement, even when we think we are being logical, and so, asking teachers to engage metacognitively, will entail an emotional component. The field of second language learning is only now starting to catch up (Pavlenko 2013; Swain 2013). Language teacher education courses, too, must consider how this might be allowed for in course structures and whether trainees can be helped to understand connections between emotions, thoughts and actions. Work by Golombek and Doran (2014) and Johnson and Golombek (2013) has shown that emotion is present in much novice teacher writing, whether teaching journals or practicum blogs, and that direct teacher educator mediation can help novices navigate some cognitive and emotional dissonance involved in becoming a teacher. Johnson and Worden (2014) identify, however, the challenge facing teacher education courses in understanding teachers' emotions and responding to them in ways that support further professional learning.

Current Study

Aims

Brought to prominence largely by Jerome Bruner (see 1991) in social psychology, the field of applied linguistics has recently been drawn towards narrative-based research activity (see Barkhuizen 2013; Benson 2014; Pavlenko 2007). In teacher education, keeping narrative journals has proved

fruitful for teacher development (Golombek and Johnson 2004), as has narrativising experiences in dialogic engagement with key tutors, or other professionals (Johnson and Worden 2014). In this study blogging served alongside the many other opportunities for writing and speaking offered on the course to see whether this opportunity for the narrativisation of experience provided a channel for emotional expression that did not find an easy outlet in other activities.

The research questions under investigation were:

> In which ways does emotion appear in pre-service teachers' blogs and which are the 'hot spots' (Wordsworth's "what is really important to men") that act as catalysts for their expression?
>
> How do beginning teachers derive meaning from reflecting on these moments when no longer as emotionally engaged with them, and how might this benefit professional action, resilience and cognitive consonance?

Context and Participants

The context for the cases reported below is a ten-month-long teacher training course in a university/school-based partnership for the training of postgraduate linguists. Approximately one third of the course is spent in the university and two thirds in two different secondary schools. As on many such courses, the trainee teachers have various opportunities for 'writing for learning'. These include around 18,000 words of formal writing, involving assignments reflecting on key issues in second language learning, such as grammar teaching, and a report about classroom based empirical research. In addition, there is written reflection on some videoed teaching, production of a 'learning journey' about personal targets and how these have been met, lesson planning and close self-evaluation of learning and teaching. Though in all this writing reflection on strengths and weaknesses and on personal learning is encouraged, in terms of Flavell's (1976), taxonomy, most of the writing pertains to reflection on *strategic knowledge* or *knowledge about cognitive tasks* in respect of becoming a languages teacher. Though, as discussed earlier, emotion is implicated in all reflection, none of the writing *explicitly* addresses the emotional aspects of learning to be a teacher. Perhaps because of the pass/fail nature of the assessment procedures and the cultural expectations that this is a university qualification, trainees' writing often tends to negate or dampen down any emotion and to keep the tone resolutely academic or scholarly.

One could argue, of course, that trainee teachers do not need to *write* in order to address emotional aspects of their learning; there are many opportunities for collaborative working within the cohort and in various other communities of practice, where trainees are able to discuss and explore challenging issues face-to-face. Weekly contact with a school based mentor and

bi-termly meetings with the university tutor support further reflection on progress. Indeed, Johnson and Worden (2014) found that they could do some strategic mediation in face-to-face meetings, something that depended on the skill of the teacher educator in recognising any crises or cognitive/ emotional dissonance that training might be throwing up. It seemed important here, however, to offer another possible outlet through writing for those trainees whose disquiet might not be picked up otherwise, or who might not have felt able to do this sort of face-to-face talk comfortably.

Procedures

Having experimented with journal writing, which was less successfully completed with previous cohorts, perhaps as it seemed too similar to the format of the other sorts of writing they were required to do, I decided to design a blogging activity. The idea was that this would provide a way of free writing, where attention could settle on whatever trainees chose it to. According to Wordsworth this would be on issues that were important psychologically, necessarily emotionally laden and needing to be resolved.

The course is largely made up of young postgraduates, who regularly read blogs or blog themselves, and so this more immediate way of writing seemed to appeal, as it was an evolving, quickly completed, easily stored and re-readable narrativisation of their thoughts. Direction as to content and prescription as to amount of writing was minimal; writing was compulsory at three points in the year only (the beginning, middle and end of the course), otherwise it was merely encouraged. The trainee teachers were free to write about anything they wished, but were asked to begin with a reflection on their language learning experiences and their expectations of teaching, and complete a mid-year and an end-of-year review, drawing on these earlier reflections.

Much of the blogging research in teacher education has been carried out on open platforms (Chu, Chan and Tiwari 2012; Deng and Yuen 2011). Here I decided to keep the blog private between trainee teacher and teacher educator. The blog was designed not as a sociocultural/social constructivist tool, but rather, based in a constructivist theory of learning, the blog functioned as the device that allowed the trainees to engage in "an iterative process of using current experiences to update one's previous understanding" (Selwyn 2011, 73). Unlike in Johnson and Golombek's (2013) study of novice teachers' practicum blogs, where the teacher educator effectively mediated their experiences, here tutor contribution to the reflection was minimal. The intention was that the blog itself should mediate the pre-service teachers' intramental development, by letting them focus on things that they wanted to write about, or 'hot spots' in their professional lives. I intervened only occasionally, therefore, particularly when I felt they were discouraged, to offer 'positive regard' no matter what was being discussed, and sometimes wrote a comment as a reminder that someone was reading. This is a key way the blog differed from diary-keeping or other

autobiographical writing, where, although the blog was primarily for private use, there was a reader, and the text was therefore more explicitly dialogic (Bakhtin 1986).

However, it brought with it a number of potential ethical concerns, for example, the trainee might feel uncomfortable disclosing too much about himself or herself to the tutor, and for this reason, the activity had to be optional and not some form of assessed task (Golombek and Doran 2014). Equally there was no wish that this should be a therapeutic relationship; if trainees disclosed anything either in the blog or in person that gave cause for concern as regards their health, mental or otherwise, I had a duty of care to pass this on to other professionals.

Selection of Cases

Below I describe two critical cases (Flyvbjerg and Sampson 2014), Nikhil and Daniela (pseudonyms), selected from a cohort of 19 pre-service teachers on the basis of the potential to learn from their cases. Data derived from the blog posts were analysed inductively, using qualitative data analysis software, employing stages of coding similar to open coding and axial coding. The themes arising most frequently were, in descending order: affect (e.g. despair; self-efficacy); managing work life balance; reflection on specific teaching activity (lesson planning; grammar; culture; assessment); behaviour management; reflection on the abilities of and potential for learning from other professionals; identity as a teacher (see Fisher and Kim 2013). Here I focus on the extracts from the blog posts that are emotionally laden, coding for emotion in the texts in the form of explicit emotion words (e.g. happy, enjoy, stress, worry, anger) or in the punctuation (e.g. exclamation marks) and emoticons. These emotions sit within what Wetherell (2012) has termed "affective practice", where affect is understood as "embodied meaning-making" (4). Therefore, the contexts in which the emotions arise are taken into account and, staying as close as possible to the teachers' own words in the blog posts, I offer explanation and contextualisation, though this is necessarily my own interpretation.

Results

Case 1: Nikhil

Nikhil was an intelligent, confident and popular member of the group, and at 23 years old had just graduated with a very good degree in French and Spanish from a UK university. Speaking five languages fluently, and with experience of teaching in different contexts, he fitted the description "the brightest and the best" of graduates who enter teaching, as judged by any metrics. Having kept his own blog in the past, he was one of the most prolific bloggers in the group, posting 30 times and writing nearly 14,000 words.

Self-Doubt and Confusion

Especially early on, and perhaps not surprisingly given the challenges of beginning teaching, Nikhil's blog has numerous instances of self-doubt, where he expresses his worries that he cannot get things right:

> I indeed had a bit of a meltdown about two weeks ago when it dawned upon me that I couldn't get perfect observation notes every single time and, being a perfectionist myself, it was a hard fact to swallow. Receiving negative lesson feedback is one thing; having to plan for lessons for the next day under such a vulnerable mental state is extremely stressful and emotionally draining because you start second-guessing everything that you thought you had understood.

Nikhil refers to the way in which he was troubled by feedback on his lessons from experienced languages teachers, where improvements and suggestions were offered. He recognises that his discomfort is arising from his own perfectionist qualities, and appears to be struggling to reconcile a previous identity as an excellent languages student, who was very successful in all he did, with that of a new teacher, who is developing his understanding about how to plan and teach good lessons and, naturally, is being directed by others towards ways in which he can improve. Building this into his frame of reference is challenging, as the range of new knowledge, skills and attributes he has to demonstrate in the classroom means he will inevitably be less successful than he was as a language student. He uses strong terms such as "extremely stressful" and "emotionally draining" to communicate how unsettling this is to him.

   His own identity as a successful, organised and hard-working student extends to a lack of understanding as to how the children he has to teach can be so different from the schoolboy he once was. Sometimes in his posts this is manifested as expressions of anger and frustration at the pupils and their parents, such as when he fumes about children coming to school without equipment: "What annoys me the most is how so many students come into school with 3 iPhones and NO PEN?!?!?! How can so many parents let their kids leave home without such basic equipment? Do they not care*?"*

   At times his identity as a good student challenges his very understanding of the nature of teaching and the nature of learners. He seems genuinely perplexed that students in his classes are so different to how he was, and it unsettles him so far as to lead him to question his commitment to teaching as a profession:

> I think I just didn't understand the sheer immensity of what teaching entails when I signed up for this. Having been in top sets myself throughout my education and having always been a model student,

> I couldn't understand why one might possibly not do their homework,
> or why one would want to behave badly.

In order to move forward he has to consider *why* he is feeling so confused.
It is possible that, with or without blogging about it, Nikhil might have
reflected on this issue and explicitly compared these learners' behaviour
with his own when he was a schoolboy. However, the fact that for their first
blog post at the beginning of the year trainees were asked to write about
their own experiences of language learning, may have led Nikhil to make
more explicit comparisons at this point. And although this initially leads to
frustration, in the end it helps him to consider difference and diversity more
overtly, and so to move on, without continuously bemoaning the fact that
not all learners are as he once was.

Throughout the blog posts Nikhil is honest in expressing his self-doubts,
especially in regard to the difficulties of enacting a teacher identity. Having
to choose on the spot what to say to promote better behaviour, he notes
that he gets tongue-tied and self-conscious: "I don't know what to say (i.e.
the exact words) when telling off a student. Silly I know. But sometimes
I'd rather avoid telling off a student rather than risk embarrassing myself
because I fear I'll say something stupid". Interestingly, Nikhil's are gener-
alised concerns about becoming a teacher, rather than about becoming a
languages teacher per se. It may be that because the trainees were addressing
language-specific planning and teaching issues in much of their other writ-
ing that it did not emerge strongly in the blogs. Or that there was strong self-
efficacy as regards subject content knowledge, but not where an overarching
teacher identity was concerned.

At times in the blog Nikhil expresses frustration at the amount of time
and effort he is putting in, as this is not reflected in his success in the class-
room, where the learners seem unappreciative of his efforts:

> I doubt most students are aware of what goes into planning a lesson,
> how much thought and time and internal debate and self-doubt on the
> part of the (trainee) teacher. Students just turn up and expect everything
> to be ready and waiting for them. "Sir, are we going to do something
> fun today?" they ask. Do you realise how long it took me to come up
> with that game on the present subjunctive in Spanish using bells and
> squeeze toys that we played last week?

He goes so far as to express some fundamental doubts about his choice of
teaching as a career: "But I can't for the life of me understand why I'm put-
ting myself through all of this . . . I definitely entertain the idea of quitting
at times. This is not what I want for the rest of my life, because I'm not
happy." More generally, Nikhil is not afraid to use emotive language in the
blog. His concerns generally involve identity, and, as can be seen in this last

quotation, worries that his future self, where he envisages himself as a successful language teacher, may not come to pass.

A Focus on the Positive

However, Nikhil also uses the blog as a way of chivvying himself along. Especially as the year progresses, after some writing where he describes his disappointment, frustration or anger, he shifts to something more positive, and expressly reminds himself that all is not so bleak. He says things like:

> Onto more positive things, have been getting really good feedback from other teachers including Tutor X who came and saw me this week! It happened to be a CLIL [Content and Language Integrated Learning] lesson and continued the unit of work I've been doing, merging Spanish with Food Technology. The lesson that she observed involved the imperative in Spanish (receptive skills only) so they followed a recipe for making guacamole. All the students really enjoyed themselves and I'm sure it will prove to be a very memorable lesson for them.

Here we can see how he pauses and resets the tone, deliberately drawing on positive evidence to balance out the negative. This metacognitive strategy, letting go of often negative emotion and following it with more balanced appraisal, seems effective for Nikhil, as can be seen in this example:

> I also need to remind myself that there are SO many things about teaching that I do enjoy. I love it when I'm marking homework and see that a kid's clearly absorbed everything I taught them in class, as I can see the same language (structures, vocabulary and ideas that I came up with whilst planning the lesson) showing up in their written work. I made that difference. Had another teacher taught them the same unit, their written work would've been quite different. This reminds me of the main reason why I came into teaching in the first place: to make a difference. I don't want to leave this planet knowing that my existence had no impact on anyone else's life, as if it needn't have happened in the first place. Clearly I have made an impact to these kids' lives, and for the right reasons.

Nikhil's emphasis in this post on a positive image of himself as an effective, professional teacher, an image that was fully justified by all the supporting evidence, suggests he has re-established a degree of emotional consonance. In contrast to some earlier posts, where he was questioning his very decision to enter teaching, and not managing to find supporting evidence of his efficacy, here he has situated a setback within an overarching identity framework, where he is a successful teacher whose everyday decisions have an impact on children's lives. Cognitive dissonance has been renegotiated

and he finds contentment, as he has much more confidence that his imagined future self is no longer jeopardised.

Similarly, this positive view of himself as a professional, who can make a difference to children's lives, leads him to record other times when his interventions have had an impact on learning, or on children's learning situation. For example, Nikhil writes at some length about a boy in one of his classes, who was behaving badly, was unresponsive to questions and reluctant to work. In recognising that the boy was finding the work too easy and as a result was listless and bored, Nikhil effected a change of group for him. This helped the boy settle and learn better and bolstered Nikhil's view of himself as a "real teacher" and someone who can enact decisions that make a difference: "I actually had a direct—albeit minute—impact on a student's life! :)". This desire to help children achieve their best encourages him to start organising a lunchtime language club for the students and, when he gets good feedback, this encourages him to continue:

> So I held my first club session last week, and although only 3 students came, it went really well I thought. I focussed on extending their sentences using opinions, reasons, intensifiers and connectives. . . . They all commented that they found it useful. :D Hopefully more students will come next Wednesday . . . (we'll be focussing on present, past and future tenses).

As he starts to inhabit the role of teacher, Nikhil becomes more at ease with what is happening in school. However, it should be noted that his blog does not record straightforward linear progress from self-doubt and worry to happiness and confidence. Certainly as the year progresses, Nikhil is more likely to re-couch setbacks more positively and to try to balance accounts of negative experiences and uncertainty with more positive counterexamples or positive thinking. At times however, there is some tentativeness or uncertainty in his writing. When Nikhil says things like "I hope I've gotten over this now . . . I feel like I have definitely become more resilient . . . so while I am still stressed at points, I'm certainly happier," it might sound almost as if he is trying to convince himself. Arguably, the fact that he recognises and accepts the realities of a life in teaching, namely that ups and downs are inevitable, has bolstered his resilience. Explicitly reflecting upon what lies behind the positive and negative emotions engendered by the 'hot spots' written up in the blog helped him to find equilibrium.

Case 2: Daniela

Intelligent, hardworking and genial, Daniela was another highly talented and promising pre-service teacher. A non-native English speaker, her undergraduate degree was awarded in her native Spain and her Masters in the UK. In terms of quantity, she could be described as an "average blogger",

producing around 6,000 words over the course of the year, but she posted often, 26 times in total.

Self-Doubt and Worry

Daniela's blogging early on also displays a propensity to worry and anxiety. While Nikhil's self-doubt is generated by overt critical feedback on lessons, which makes him question his identity as an effective professional teacher and occurs a few weeks into the course, Daniela's worries are present from the very beginning. Before having done any teaching or essay writing, Daniela is concerned that she will not cope with the course and, in particular, with the workload, calling the first few days "overwhelming". Two weeks later, having met with her university tutor and school-based mentor and received reassurances, she is still expressing her fears about not being successful, writing in the blog that: "I am still nervous and worried about the amount of information that we have been given in the last few days, and I also feel insecure about the observations and the work for the faculty and the readings."

Daniela also raises the issue of her non-native English speaker status, something that did not appear anywhere in Nikhil's blog. Despite having fluent, highly accurate English, Daniela worries about the fact that, as a Spanish national, her learning background was different. She describes how her anxiety is alleviated to some extent by talking to other non-native English speaking teachers in her placement school during the first few weeks of the course: "I have been able to speak to them about my concerns and they have tried to reassure me and calm me down. Observing their lessons has also reduced my anxiety a bit".

Note the use of "a bit," however. As did Nikhil, Daniela tries to deal with negative emotions by explicitly focusing on how things might improve, though not always convincingly. Daniela wants to look forward with confidence, but the number of qualifiers such as "probably", "hopefully" or "a bit" that appear in the blog suggests she may be struggling to achieve consonance: "Despite my doubts and insecurity, I feel confident that it is probably a matter of time to get used to the new routines, and once this happens I will have a more positive perspective." Her head tells her all should be manageable and she should be able to cope because of the levels of support, yet the anxiety is visible in her writing.

Unlike Nikhil, Daniela rarely refers back to her own experience of being taught languages. The only time she draws on her prior experiences and uses her native speaker status to some advantage is when trying to plan a practitioner research project:

> I remember that I used to love the accents when I attended private tuition lessons with native speakers and I felt fascinated by their pronunciation and the way they used to speak. That is how I realised that

I wanted to focus on the speaking skills of my pupils for the . . . project and that the TL was going to be the main theme.

The fact that she tends not to reflect on her own teachers and experience of being taught might suggest she has a less well-defined sense of the ideal teacher she would like to be. While for Nikhil having a distinct ideal teacher self brought difficulties when he felt he might not achieve it, for Daniela worries are more nebulous and she is more concerned with daily threats to survival as a teacher than with reflection on what it means to be a teacher.

Ups and Downs to the End, but Forward Momentum

Where Nikhil's trajectory, though not always smooth, showed a generally positive trend as the course progressed, in Daniela's case new worries tend to replace old ones. She uses the word "stress" (or stressed/stressful) 16 times, and "anxious," "worried" or "unsure" a further 15, and this continues almost right to the end. Though this shows some development insofar as she can leave some worries behind, for example, her early concerns about being a non-native English speaker, the point at which positive emotions start to outweigh negative ones comes much later. As did Nikhil, she tries throughout to find evidence that might counterbalance her negative emotions and this seems to be a helpful strategy: "I'm trying to focus on the positives to carry on. I am really enjoying the team teaching of my year 8 Spanish group. I've just started a research project with the class teacher and we are only using Spanish in class". She is likely, however, to follow up an instance when things went well, with a comment on how she still feels stressed in the round. Often this comes back to an underlying lack of self-belief as to whether she can even get through the course:

I am gradually getting more and more involved in the life of the school and I feel a lot more positive and on track with the pace. However, I don't think that I am really aware of the levels of stress that I am going through at the moment. I have so many things to do that writing lists does no longer work for me.

While Daniela's blogging tends to a description of her emotional turmoil, sometimes she intersperses this with a more dispassionate reflection about her views relating to language teaching and learning issues, a strategy that Nikhil employs less often. For example, she writes about the use of iPads in the classroom and about grammar teaching, where she discusses the mainly inductive approach to grammar teaching that she witnessed in her placement school:

I think that combining both teaching approaches [deductive and inductive] could be useful and overall more practical, as long as we ensure

that the inductive approach is exploited whenever it is possible. This is because, according to the experience of the lessons that I have observed, it is an engaging approach to grammar teaching and promotes independent thinking in the learner.

Although she is writing about this elsewhere in assignments and on observation notes, Daniela brings it up again here, perhaps because her confidence in her own content and pedagogical content knowledge provides ballast for the areas in which she feels more unsure and so more emotional.

Only later in the course does Daniela write overtly about being identified as a teacher, when she remarks that she understands the need for patience in allowing the learners time to accept her as their teacher and not a trainee. Another extract describes her feeling of elation when being identified as a good teacher: "One of my pupils from year 7 emailed my mentor to tell her that she was really enjoying my lessons and that I was a great teacher . . . I was almost in tears when I found out. She has made my week!" As she nears the end of the course, she allows herself to believe that she will make it as a teacher, and her writing reflects her relative calm in the expectation of a positive outcome: "I feel a lot more confident now and going through the week has given me a feeling of security. I also have a feeling of great progress in my teaching and roles that I am really proud of. It seems like I am getting there".

With only a few weeks of the course left to go, Daniela can finally reflect that she is a "real teacher", though note in the quotation below how she is still hedging on this point, something which is consistent with her narrativisation of her language teacher learning journey: "I am proud that I have managed all the work load and still survived it. I think that I can say that I am a real teacher now (or at least I have the feeling of being closer to it)".

Discussion

Writers in fields as diverse as poetry and neuroscience direct us to the connection between emotion and cognition and, as seen in these two cases, metacognition can help people process and find meaning in emotion. Particularly as both language learning and teaching have been shown to be emotional enterprises, it would seem important to address explicitly how trainee teachers find opportunities to engage with the affective dimension of becoming a teacher and the inherent identity threats that might be involved.

As we have seen, emotions are useful not only in helping us to understand our thinking, but also in directing our thinking to what is important. The similarities are striking between Immordino-Yang and Damasio's (2007) statement that "Emotions help to direct our reasoning into the sector of knowledge that is relevant to the current situation or problem" (7–8) and Wordsworth's (1839) claim that "as by contemplating the relation of these

general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men" (498). Both insist on the central role of emotion in making meaning. While in the context described here, the pre-service teachers had opportunities to relate face-to-face with their peers, with university tutors and school-based mentors and many others in their communities of practice, blogging provided a further outlet for reflecting in tranquillity, and intra-mentally, on any "really important" experiences that came to mind, and, as one might expect, this was often something that was emotionally charged.

In Nikhil's case, there is a strong affective dimension to the experiences recounted, in particular when: a.) it was challenging to his sense of identity b.) it would not fit into a current cognitive framework, e.g. his beliefs as to what is right for a teacher or a student to do or think c.) the future self he imagined for himself was not being realised (e.g. self-efficacy issues) d.) the future self he imagined *was* being realised (positivity). In Daniela's case, too, emotion permeates her blog and anxiety emerges as a main theme throughout. She attempts, as did Nikhil, to write about positive events to counterbalance the stress she is feeling, and in addition focuses on areas where she feels more secure, in particular on what Flavell (1976) might class as *knowledge of cognitive tasks* (for example grammar teaching techniques), as a strategy for managing her emotion. Daniela's writing focuses explicitly on her teacher identity only towards the end of the course, perhaps betraying her worries about ever becoming a teacher, never mind what sort. In general, Daniela uses the blog as an outlet for her fears, which she might not want to or feel able to share in a face-to-face dialogue with tutors, mentors or peers; there is some evidence to suggest that releasing her emotion in this way, helps her process it and move forward.

Here I do not argue that blogging is the only way of generating such writing. However, whether it was the immediacy of the technology, where all past blogs were accessible in one place, or the dialogic nature of the writing, where the reader was a known tutor, who displayed positive regard no matter what was written, the blog was properly reflective and a channel for metacognitive engagement, particularly with regard to aspects of self-knowledge. Though Nikhil and Daniela had discretion over the nature of their posts (and indeed whether to post or not), they used the blog as an outlet for emotions such as anxiety, joy and anger. Where emotions were negative, they sought evidence that things were not as bad as they seemed by directing their writing towards positive experiences and personal achievements. Indeed, whether blogging might have been more effective had the teacher educator had a greater mediational role in their writing, as in the works of Johnson and Golombek (2013) and Golombek and Doran (2014), is an interesting question. Certainly these pre-service teachers employed their own metacognitive strategies for engaging with the emotional content that the open-ended blogging yielded. Arguably, in doing so, they developed their resilience when likely to be confronted by similar emotions as novice teachers.

Conclusion

While there were ups and downs over the course of the year, Daniela and Nikhil used the blog as a mediational tool to construct an overarching narrative of progress in both teaching and in the development of professional identity. Research suggests that it is often the best teachers, who are leaving the profession in the early years of their careers (Le Maistre and Paré 2010), perhaps because these teachers find it the most difficult to develop resilience and to make sense of experiences that might be construed as threats to their identities. In addition, it could be that all beginning teachers are less competent and are likely therefore to experience more negative emotions as regards their own expertise (Sutton and Wheatley 2003). Blogging might have a role to play, therefore, for both pre-service and early years teachers, as here the focus on emotional 'hot spots' seemed to induce teachers to make meaning from them by bringing to mind evidence that might support an alternative framing. Thus, new meanings could be assimilated into belief schemata and so be properly transformative (Mezirow 2000). As with all case study of teachers, context is hugely important; trainee and more experienced teachers' experiences of blogging in a similar fashion in a wide range of cultural and institutional settings would, therefore, make for interesting comparative research.

Note

1 Both 'trainee' and 'pre-service teachers' are used for reasons of style, but in the understanding that this is a programme of teacher *education* rather than training.

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