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# **“In teacher work you must understand others and have empathy for them!” Brazilian and Finnish language teachers’ emotions and beliefs about teaching**

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*This study investigates the ways in which language teachers perceive the emotional aspects of language teaching and which beliefs they link with these emotions. The study contributes to previous research of language teacher emotions by providing a perspective to emotions and beliefs in two very different socio-political contexts, namely Brazil and Finland and by comparing the differences and similarities between emotions and beliefs in these two contexts. This can add to our understanding about the ways in which language teacher emotions are emerging in different social conditions. The study is based on a small qualitative data from the two countries collected in terms of visual narratives and written explanatory texts.*

*Keywords: teacher education, emotions, beliefs*

## **1 Introduction**

Back in 2013, Pavlenko stated that we were experiencing an “affective turn” in Applied Linguistics. It is interesting that at that time, there were very few studies on learner or teacher emotions (except for her work with Jean-Marc Dewaele on emotions by multilinguals – Pavlenko & Dewaele, 2004). In its beginnings, research on emotions started with a concern on affective variables (motivation, attitudes, among others. See Arnold, 1999). One of the first and most investigated emotions so far, has been language learners’ anxiety, which started in the mid-90s with Elaine Horwitz’s (1990) pioneering work. The renewed interest in research on anxiety resumed in the mid 2010’s with many studies investigating it, along other aspects such as enjoyment, for instance (Macintyre & Gregersen, 2012; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020). Other studies on learner emotions were also out about this time (Imai, 2010; Garrett & Young, 2009).

It was around the mid 2010’s that research on language teacher emotions, to our knowledge, began to appear in Applied Linguistics (see Cowie, 2011; Golombek & Doran, 2014). It seems to us that the emotional turn is happening

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now with so much literature, mainly on language teacher emotions, including two special journal issues on emotions (De Costa, 2018; Barcelos et al; 2022). More and more papers have been published recently focusing on different aspects of language teacher emotions, as we comment later (see, for example, recent studies by Dilek & Balçikanli, 2022; Farrell, 2022; McAlinden & Dobinson, 2022; Konstantinou & Miller, 2022; Sung, 2022; Her & De Costa, 2022; Yang et al., 2022, to cite just a few).

Although we have lots of studies now on language teacher emotions, we still know very little about how language teacher emotions compare in different social contexts or cultures. In other words, do language teachers in different contexts feel different emotions about teaching or are the emotions about language teaching somewhat universal? Much research about language teachers and, more specifically, language teacher emotions, has, until now, mainly focused on certain western educational countries, in addition to some studies that have also been conducted in the East Asian contexts. As Pennycook points out: “Mainstream (critical) applied linguistics has long been blind to contexts and ideas outside the Global North (Pennycook, 2022, p. 10)”. Instead of overgeneralizing results that we have got in one context to all language teaching, this could help us, as language teacher educators and researchers, to more thoroughly understand the emotionality involved in teaching in various contexts as well as the socio-politically embedded nature of language teaching. We believe that recognizing and better understanding emotions as socio-politically embedded phenomenon can also help us as teacher educators to promote more culturally sensitive teacher education and provide better support to our students’ identity development. Understanding emotions as sociopolitically connected to e.g., race, class, gender or ethnicity can further provide perspectives in developing social justice in language education.

It was thinking about these questions that we decided to conduct this study that focus on Brazilian and Finnish language teachers of foreign languages. Although Ruohotie-Lyhty, Aragão & Pitkänen-Huhta (2021) did investigate the emotions of Brazilian and Finnish students, their study focused on learners and on their future perspectives. Our study focuses on Finnish and Brazilian language teachers who are either already working or preparing to. Our focus here is on how these teachers feel about language teaching now (in the present) and how their emotions compare. We seek to gain more understanding of language teachers’ emotions and beliefs about teaching by looking at the visual narratives (VNs hereinafter) of a total of 15 language teachers in both Brazil and Finland. Our specific research questions are:

- 1) What are the emotions experienced by Brazilian and Finnish pre-service and in-service foreign language teachers?
- 2) How are these emotions connected to the beliefs they express?
- 3) What differences are there in the participants’ emotional experiences in these two contexts?

## 2 Literature Review

Language teacher emotions has been a topic in the field of Education longer than in Applied Linguistics (see Nias, 1996; Hargreaves, 1998). A review of 29 years of publications (Uitto et al., 2015) on teacher emotions, for instance, pointed out that

they are related to identities, educational reforms, student emotions, and emotion regulation.

As mentioned in the introduction, in Applied Linguistics, although still in its infancy (if compared to research on language teacher beliefs and identities), emotions have been investigated for quite a while now. Studies on language teacher emotions (Cowie, 2011; Golombek & Dorian, 2014; Ruohotie-Lyhty et al., 2016; Wolff & De Costa, 2017; Song, 2016) have focused on the important role emotions play in teachers' careers and development shaping what they do in class as well as their relationship with colleagues, students, and the profession itself. In this relationship, teachers feel a range of emotions that can be positively and negatively experienced, related to these different aspects, that may, at times, influence whether they stay or leave the profession. Emotions are, thus, essential to our understanding of teacher thinking, learning, and change.

Literature on language teacher emotions have increased in the past two years, with many publications. One quick search and look at recent journals for studies on language teacher emotions has revealed a vast diversity in the topics. Dilek and Balçikanlı (2021) examined the possible effects of the emotional experiences of student teachers of English in their professional self-adequacy. Farrel (2022) focused on ESL novice teachers' emotions in their first semester of teaching (most frequently expressed emotions were frustration, anger, and boredom). Other studies, as expected, have turned their attention to teachers', researchers' or students' emotions during the pandemics. McAlinden and Dobinson (2022), for instance, focused on their own emotional experiences as language teacher-researchers of the sudden switch from face-to-face to online teaching in the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia. Liu et al. (2021) conducted an autoethnographic study of an EFL instructor during COVID-19 in Wuhan. Konstantinou and Miller (2022) investigated emotional labor and compassion in the academy in an autoethnographic study during Covid-19. Still, other studies focus on the more political aspects of emotions such as ideologies or curriculum reform. Sung (2022) investigated student teachers' L2 learning experiences and the role of language ideologies (such as native-speakerism, World Englishes, and language as a tool for communication) on their emotions. Other studies focused on curriculum reform or language policies. Her & De Costa (2022) conducted a critical study which focused on teachers' emotional capital. They investigated how one community college instructor in California navigated a set of rules in the workplace, imposed by a new language policy, over time through power structures and daily interaction with students and faculty. Yang et al. (2022) looked at EFL teachers' emotions and engagement during curriculum implementation and how that influenced teachers' emotional capital. Yip et al. (2022) investigated university English teachers' identities and emotions during a curriculum reform in China.

## *2.1 Emotions as socio-culturally embedded*

Emotions can be defined as non-linear, self-organizing, dynamic constructs, a complex network of five main interwoven aspects: behavioral, physiological, phenomenological, cognitive, and social which color our perceptions and influence our actions. They are interactive, contextual, social, embodied (Benesch, 2012) and embedded in discursive and ideological practices (Zembylas, 2006), and closely

related to teacher identities and beliefs (Barcelos, 2015; Barcelos & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2018).

Emotions are embedded in discursive and ideological practices and related to structures of power, context, and cultures (Zembylas, 2005). In his study, Zembylas mentions two concepts that are important for our focus here in understanding language teacher emotions: emotional suffering and emotional freedom. Emotional suffering refers to “ways in which emotional rules within the school culture function to impose certain roles on [the teacher], and the ways in which such rules are internalized resulting in emotional suffering” (p. 473). Emotional freedom, according to (Zembylas, 2005: 477), “is at the core of a teacher’s capacity to act (or not to act) as one chooses or prefers, without being normalized by any external compulsion or restraint, although the existence of emotional rules or norms is clearly unavoidable”. As we will see in the discussion of the results, our data has shown that language teacher emotions are related to how the teachers internalize these roles and to their (lack of) autonomy. In order to consider the situatedness of language teacher emotions one must observe teachers’ contexts and emphasize the social, cultural, and political aspects that influence emotions as already pointed out by Zembylas (2005).

## *2.2 Emotions beliefs and identities as mutually constituted*

The study of language teachers’ beliefs can be traced back to the mid-70s, after the realization that teachers’ decision making was influenced by what they thought, knew, or believed about language teaching and learning. After more than 30 years of research, beliefs about language learning and teaching continue to intrigue researchers, teachers and language teacher educators doing justice to the alias of messy constructs, as Pajares (1992) described them more than 30 years ago. Yet, perhaps they have become less messy, or perhaps our understanding of beliefs has become less messy and clearer within the years, since recent literature on beliefs has acknowledged their complex nature.

There is a common understanding that beliefs are dynamic and emergent, socially constructed, contextually situated, potentially paradoxical and dialectical. As a complex dynamic system, they are interrelated, embedded, multidimensional and multilayered (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011; Mercer, 2011, Feryok, 2010). Their multidimensionality and interrelatedness are expressed (or more evident) in their interrelationship to emotions and identities, as we discuss below.

As Gill and Hardin (2014) pointed out, we cannot ignore the affective side of beliefs in order to understand teachers’ development, as both emotions and beliefs influence teachers’ experiences, their interpretations of events, and their professional lives. As we mentioned elsewhere (Barcelos & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2018), this interpretation process is both personal and social, drawing on personal history and available discursive resources of the environment (Meijers, 2002). To Nias (1996, p. 294), both emotions and cognition are embedded in the social and cultural forces “which help to form them and which are in turn shaped by them”.

According to Barcelos (2015), emotions and beliefs interact dynamically and reciprocally with emotions providing evidence for beliefs and guiding our attention toward relevant aspects to our goals (Winograd, 2003), and also shaping and altering beliefs (Frijda et al. 2000). In other words, cognitions influence emotions and vice versa (Clore and Gasper 2000; Frijda and Manstead 2000; Parkinson 1995). Studies such as Golombek and Doran (2014), Zembylas (2002),

and Song (2016) highlight this interactive relationship between emotions and beliefs in language teacher development, as pointed out by Barcelos and Ruohotie-Lyhty (2018). Song (2016) explored how negatively experienced emotions related to teachers' beliefs embedded in personal life-histories and contextual resources could affect teachers' critical consideration and transformation of their original beliefs and emotions (open vulnerability) (Lasky, 2005) or the strengthening of their beliefs and emotions (protective vulnerability) (Lasky, 2005).

Beliefs-emotions-identities are embedded in a cloud. They are experienced together and are mutually constituted. Identity is a pool of beliefs; they are resources that help one define themselves. As we discuss later, the participants' beliefs and emotions sometimes are enmeshed with their present or imagined teacher identities.

Several authors have already pointed out this interconnectedness between emotions, beliefs, and identities. To Winograd (2003), the expression of emotions can serve to defend social norms and beliefs. In addition, how we respond emotionally is tied to values and conditions that involve our identities. According to Zembylas (2003), emotions play a key role in the construction of identity. Zembylas (2005) argues that

“the place of emotion in teacher identity formation plays a central role in the circuits of power that constitute some teacher-selves while denying others. The critical understanding of these processes of discipline and domination in teaching is crucial, if we are to promote the possibility of creating new forms of teacher-selves.” (p. 936).

A recent study on teacher identity (Song & Park, 2021), which investigated two early childhood teachers of young English learners, pointed out how their emotional scaffolding practices were related to their teacher identities (as some teachers wanted to be recognized as the calm or the fun teacher). This is one aspect that, as we will discuss later, we could also notice in our data set in which some teachers clearly stated they wanted to “be there” for their students and, even suppressed their emotions to provide this emotional scaffolding for students.

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Context

Data set for this study came from a large federal university in the southeast of Brazil and a medium-sized Finnish university outside the capital region. The macro context of this research refers to the language teaching education in Brazil and Finland and the different contexts of language teaching in these countries. The contexts for this study are strikingly different when it comes to (language) teaching status.

Finland is a Scandinavian country, member of the EU, that shares borders with Russia, Sweden, and Norway. Its educational system is admired around the world especially for the high level of teacher education and teachers' autonomy. Teaching is a competitive job and highly respected in Finland. Brazil is the largest country in Latin America with a long history of social inequality, financial and political crisis. As pointed out by Ruohotie-Lyhty et al. (2021), in Brazil, teaching

is a “socially and financially undervalued profession with the prospect of a low salary, social devaluation, poor working conditions, distress and increasing suffering (Barcelos, 2016; Barcelos & Aragão, 2018; Sanches & Gama, 2016)” (p. 100)<sup>11</sup>. The authors go on to describe teaching in Brazil with heavy emotional demands and increasing verbal (and sometimes physical) violence against teachers in classrooms.

### *3.2 Participants*

The participants of this study were graduate students working on their Master’s in languages in each country, who took a course on language teachers’ emotions co-taught by the two authors of this article. The course took place online during the months of September through December of 2021. Some meetings were common to both groups (due to the difference in time and academic calendars, we could not have the same exact program and meet all days). We had two meetings together and assigned the same initial task to our students asking them for a visual narrative on their emotions about language teaching.

Brazilian participants were six female and one male. Their ages ranged between 23-36 years old. All of them were in-service teachers<sup>2</sup>; six were English teachers in private schools and private English language institutes in Brazil; one was a teacher of Portuguese as L1 in a public school. Six of them were in their first year of their master’s in a Graduate Program in Applied linguistics at a Federal university in Brazil. Most of them had majored in Languages (Portuguese-English/ Portuguese) in the previous year and two of them some years before. Finnish Participants were six female and three male students, all about 25 years old at the time of the data collection. The participants were completing their master studies, which, in Finland, is a requirement for teacher qualification. The teaching experience of the participants varied, but they all completed at least the teacher practicum, while some of them also had more experience of teaching. All the participants were studying to become foreign language teachers and the language included at least English, German, and Swedish.

We recognize that although our student participants were all currently completing their master’s studies, they differed in many ways due to the different educational systems in the two countries (e. g. qualification requirements, status of teacher profession, languages taught), which will naturally influence their emotional experiences and perspectives to emotions. However, since our goal was to look at the embeddedness of sociopolitical conditions and emotions, we do not consider these differences as a problem for conducting the study.

### *3.3 Data collection instruments*

The two professors, authors of this article, asked students to complete the following task in the beginning of their course:

Draw yourself as a language teacher: what emotions are related to the work of a language teacher? What emotions do you feel when you think of yourself as a teacher? Right below your picture, please write a short text describing your drawing and why you chose certain emotions instead of others.

This task did not count as a requirement for a grade in the course. It was optional and in the Brazilian class, only seven students (out of 11) contributed with their visual narrative. Written informed consent was secured from all participants. The visual narratives in the two contexts were produced differently and were also very different. The Brazilian participants completed their narrative at home and most (6 out of 7) drew it themselves, while only one used media software to represent her. The Brazilian set of data had seven visual narratives with their descriptive comments below it.

The Finnish set consisted of nine visual narratives that were produced as a course assignment in the first meeting of the course and the narratives were therefore all drawn by hand. Research consent was later asked from all participants to use their visualizations as data and all participants of this study gave their consent.

We did not give a word limit to the descriptions below in VN. In the Brazilian set, the shortest description was approximately 40 words; and the longest, 250 words. In the Finnish set, the shortest description only had four words in addition to the visual representation and the longest 117 words. We did not conduct an interview for this study as our purpose was only to use VNs and see what the drawings could tell us about their emotions and beliefs. We realize though that interviews could have provided important further information for the interpretation of the VNs and hope to do so in the future.

### *3.4. Data Analysis*

Analysis of visual narratives followed strategies suggested by Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huhta, (2017), Kalaja, Alanen and Dufva (2008), Kalaja, Dufva and Alanen (2013), Pitkänen-Huhta and Pietikäinen (2017, and Zanatta and Civera (2016). In our analysis we looked for relevant elements depicted in the drawings as well as in the descriptive texts. After mapping these elements related to language teaching, beliefs, and emotions in a content analysis we then discussed these findings in relation to the larger social contexts of both countries.

Data analysis was done in 2 phases. Phase 1 involved looking and sorting out the participants' drawings. This involved first, a general look at the VNs separating them into the kinds of drawings (self-portraits; with or without objects; with texts or not, etc.). We also described each drawing completing a table with what was included or not in the visual narratives. Each researcher analyzed their own set first, which was then revised by the other researcher. Several meetings were held to reach a conclusion about the main categories and themes.

Phase 2 involved reading the explanatory text of the VNs (either within the drawings or right below it) to infer their beliefs and emotions about teaching. Based on thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), we read the descriptive text to identify the emotions and beliefs and revised the themes continuously to reach a final categorization of the broad themes. Finally, the relationships between emotions and beliefs as well as differences between the two datasets were detected and reflected in relation to previous research.

### *3.5. Researchers' Positionality*

As researchers investigating the experiences of both in service and pre-service teachers of EFL and foreign languages, we held dual positions both as the participant teachers for one semester and thus, as ethnic insiders who were born and educated in our respective countries (Brazil and Finland) and who also have had some experiences living in each other's country. Moreover, we were also researching a reality of which we were also part

of (as former student-teachers or as student-teacher supervisors). As such, we share some of the linguistic and social background of each group, as related to learning and teaching languages. This knowledge of both of our cultural backgrounds helped us throughout the analysis data in trying to interpret what the drawings and cultural expressions meant in relation to EFL and foreign language learning and teaching in both contexts. At the same time, to avoid being biased or imposing our own background experiences, we strived to avoid imposing our own subjective perspectives on the data analysis, by trying to describe their emic perspectives from a neutral perspective.

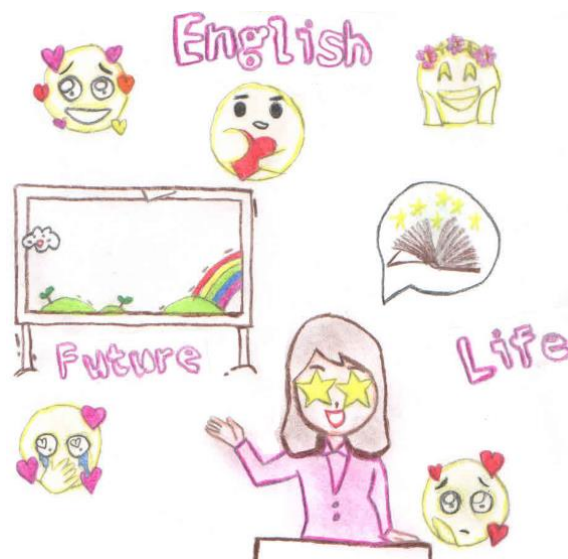
## 4 Results

Thematic analysis of data allowed the following themes that emerged from the data: emotional core of teaching, core beliefs interacting with emotions, and cultural differences in the expression of emotions. Below, we discuss each one of these.

### 4.1. Emotional core of teaching

The first theme of the emotional core of language teaching refers to common features of emotionality in teaching and to the most common emotions that were present in both Finnish teachers and Brazilian teacher visualizations and accompanying texts.

Both teacher groups agreed that teaching always included a mix of emotions, and the word “rollercoaster” was mentioned both in Finnish and Brazilian descriptions. The picture of Eloisa<sup>3</sup> (Br) depicts these emotions with the help of emojis and symbols.



**Figure 1.** Visual Narrative 1

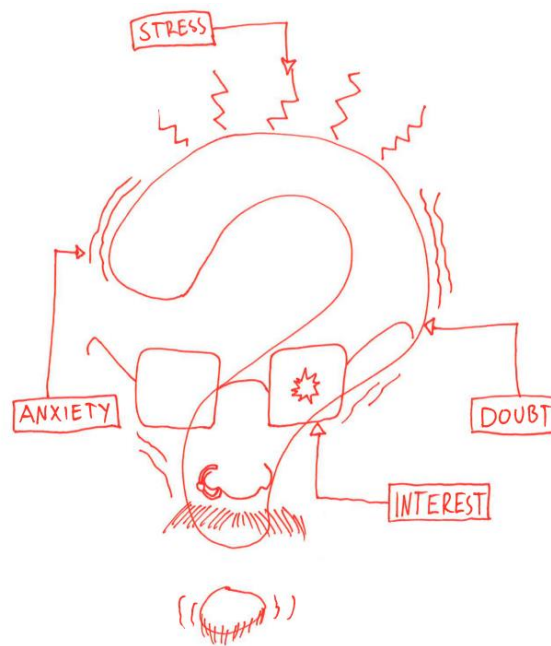
Typical of both Finnish and Brazilian pictures, this visualization (VN 1) presented a happy teacher in the middle with a repertoire of different emotions around them. In some cases, however, the teacher's drawing expressed rather a neutral or pensive facial expression that did not highlight this positive undertone of teaching. The picture from Pietari (Fin) (Visual narrative 2, below) provides an example of this kind of picture.

The most common positively experienced emotions were happiness and joy. Positively experienced emotions referred both in Finland and in Brazil to the possibilities that their work offered for creativity, meaningfulness, and encounters with the culture.

In Eloisa's drawing, these were represented by positively connoted words such as future and life and with pictures like the book, stars, rainbow and emojis. In the Finnish and Brazilian visual narratives, words such as joy, interest, passion, happy, excited, and content were used.

These strongly positive features of teaching also included the emotion of excitement that was mentioned both in Finnish and Brazilian pictures and connected with words like interest, curiosity and getting new ideas. Teachers felt excitement for being able to do something meaningful.

In addition to these positively experienced emotions, language teachers' work was also qualified by emotions of anxiety and worry and not being enough. Teachers expressed that they often felt they failed as was expected from them and they worried about their pupils and their own future as teachers. Pietari's (Fin) picture illustrates this uncertainty:



**Figure 2.** Visual Narrative 2

In their visual narrative, Pietari (Fin) illustrates the future as a teacher with a big question mark that forms part of their face. Words like anxiety, stress and doubts illustrate the questionable character of the future as a teacher and the fears that are connected to it. Typical of the pictures both in Brazil and in Finland was that the negatively experienced emotions centered around the idea of failure and not coping with the challenges of the job.

#### 4.2. Core beliefs interacting with emotions

This second theme focuses on the beliefs that were expressed in connection to emotions in the visualizations and describing texts. We focus here on the similarities that were present in both data sets.

A common belief expressed both in the Finnish and Brazilian pictures was the idea of an empathetic teacher that is responsive to the students' emotions. Sometimes this was also connected to the idea of calmness. Student teachers expected to be able to create a

safe and caring atmosphere and wanted to be there for the pupils. This requirement was sometimes expressed in terms of the verb *must*, as in Kukka's (Fin) descriptive text: "In teacher work you must understand others and have empathy for them! and also for yourself!" and "As a teacher I want to help and treat everybody equally." Also, the visualizations included these aspects of teaching by using emojis describing empathy and love as well as words such as compassion, calmness, supporting, and emotionally available.

Another expectation clearly expressed in both datasets was that of a teacher who makes learning fun and interesting. Aparecida's (Br) picture illustrates this by including two poles of teaching in her picture.



**Figure 3.** Visual Narrative 3

In Aparecida's picture, there are two tables that illustrate the two opposing poles of teaching. On one side she describes the kind of teacher she wants to be in thought bubbles. On this side, Aparecida reveals her desire and contentment in being a teacher who is creative and engages students (perhaps in speaking activities); she also sees possibilities, probably of positively experienced emotions. In other students' illustrations and descriptive texts, this expectation of being an interested and interesting teacher was present by the use of words such as interest, curious, and passion. Being this kind of teacher could be connected to ideas of creativity, finding new work methods, and investing on developing their practices.

On the other side of Aparecida's picture, we have factors that bring her frustration such as short time for class, formal tests, low status of English in schools (as is the case in Brazil), and textbooks. Aparecida's picture, in which these aspects that brought her

frustration were opposed to what brought her joy, suggests to us that she believes that textbook-centered teaching is not interesting to pupils nor the teacher.

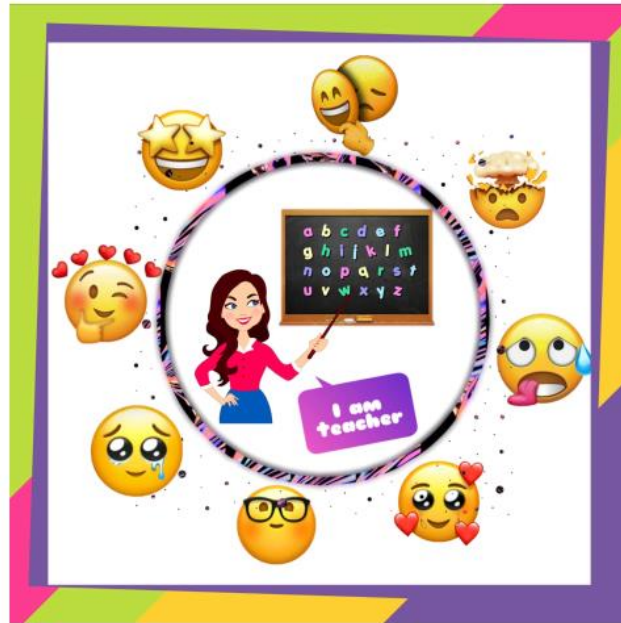
The high expectations of being an empathetic, calm, expert and interested teacher also was connected to these teachers' self-doubts of their abilities. Teachers' common belief that teachers should work hard to meet the standards was described in terms of stress, not being enough, exhaustion because of the amount of work and tiredness. Betânia (Br.) expresses her uncertainty in being a teacher that knows everything as follows: "It is common for me to feel a little nervous, because students expect us to know everything, and I feel the pressure of judgement when I have to admit I need to confirm or search for some information." Also, Veeti (Fin) expresses his beliefs about the ever-present possibility of failure as follows: "there is always doubt. Work is consuming and fear of failing is ever present". The master's degree students both in Finland and in Brazil set high expectations for teachers. In some cases, this even meant hiding their own emotions for the sake of teaching.

#### *4.3. Differences in the expression of emotions in the two contexts*

This theme focuses on the examination of the sociocultural embedded nature of emotions and emotional expression that was present in our datasets. We will illustrate the differences between the Finnish and Brazilian data. Although both datasets shared a lot of commonalities with each other, both related to core emotions related to teaching, some differences were also clearly visible.

One of the clearest emotional differences was the ways in which becoming and being a teacher was experienced and expressed in the student visualizations and accompanying texts. Most Finnish master's students (8 out of 9) connected a sense of accomplishment to them being language teachers. This sense of accomplishment was described in the pictures in terms of pride, proud of what I have accomplished, success. Helinä (Fin) also describes this in terms of "lucky to finally be able to work as a teacher" and teaching is also qualified as a dream job. Being a language teacher was expressed by them to be an appreciated position in their own eyes. This finding might also suggest that the teachers also felt that their position was also more largely appreciated in that society. In contrast to the Finnish master's student, only one of the Brazilian participants, Eloisa, mentioned these emotions in her description by writing "I'm a teacher and I'm so proud of it and so happy that I made this choice." Other Brazilian teachers did not link proudness, luck, or success to being a language teacher. This could be linked to the low societal status of being a teacher in Brazil, as we discussed before (Ruohotie-Lyhty et al. 2021).

Another clear difference in the two data sets was the use of affective vocabulary and symbols used in the different visualizations to indicate the emotional involvement with their pupils and work itself. The heart symbol is used totally 31 times in the Brazilian visualizations. Beatriz's (Br) image, as well as Eloísa's, provides an example of this use.



**Figure 4.** Visual Narrative 4

Beatriz uses hearts in two of the emojis she has included in her computer created pictures. In her picture, hearts seem to symbolize both love for the subject and love for her pupils. In her accompanying text, she states: “I realized that the love I feel for the profession helped me to act better and helped me to be a better citizen as well.” In other Brazilian pictures and texts, love was expressed by words and expressions such as affection, conducted by love and affectionate, words that were not mentioned in any of the Finnish participants’ descriptive texts or visual narratives. In the Finnish pictures, the heart symbol was only visible three times. To express their emotional engagement for their pupils’ well-being, Finnish teachers used different vocabulary. In most pictures and texts, words that described concrete actions were used such as “helping”, supporting, caring, understanding, friendly to teenagers and responsibility were used. In some cases, also emotional words were used. These were, however, different from the words used by the Brazilian participants and included only “compassion” and “empathy”.

We will now move to reflect these findings in the light of our research questions and the previous literature of language teacher emotions.

## 5 Discussion

The emotional core of teaching portrays it as a rollercoaster of emotions related to different aspects of this profession and arousing different emotions in teachers – both positively and negatively experienced. On the one hand these positively experienced emotions were related to teachers’ creativity, freedom, and autonomy in creating the classes they want and believe is true for their students and doing meaningful work. When teachers can do that, they experience emotional freedom and emotions such as joy, love, pride, and happiness (Zembylas, 2005). On the other hand, the negatively experienced emotions, represented by anxiety and frustration, came from two sources: (1) the set of external rules they had to follow; and (2) their own beliefs and emotions as well as their internalizations of these external rules. The latter made them feel they were not enough and could not make mistakes nor fail students, thus bringing emotional

suffering to themselves. Teaching is thus pictured by two poles, as represented in Aparecida's drawing, which relates to their identities: on the one hand, the teacher I want to be: fun, creative, versus the teacher I must be (doing boring work, having to give tests, and participate in ineffective projects). This causes emotional suffering for teachers and aligns with the results obtained in previous studies about the embedded nature of sociopolitical structures, community beliefs, and teacher emotions (Yang et al., 2022, Sung, 2022).

The second theme shows us the interrelationship between emotions and beliefs. Most teachers believe they are responsible for students' emotions or for how they feel in class (and this brings some emotional labor for teachers). They also believe that they must be this emotional safe harbor or should be this "calmness" for students. This also brings some emotional labor for them which was expressed in the drawings that contained both positively and negatively experienced emotions. The external rules they have to follow as well as their own set of beliefs about their own role and their students' roles generate a complex picture of teaching as populated by diverse emotions. Typical of some of the teacher beliefs was also that controlling their own emotions was not only a hope that they had, but it was presented as an outside requirement for them as teachers. These beliefs also made them vulnerable to outside judgement. They were afraid that they would fail the demanding task that they believed they needed to adopt or that they would be judged insufficient by others. These beliefs could be interpreted in terms of protective vulnerability, introduced by (Zembylas, 2002 Song 2016) in which beliefs about self-sufficiency and teachers knowing all increase emotional suffering of teachers. Although these beliefs were constructed by individual teachers both in Finland and in Brazil they are, however, inevitably connected to larger societal beliefs and discourses about teaching that seemed to suggest an emotionally demanding picture of being a language teacher. As teacher educators we believe that revealing and addressing these connections between beliefs and emotions in teacher education can help us to support our students in achieving more emotional freedom that Zembylas (2005: 477) describes being "at the core of a teacher's capacity to act as one chooses or prefers".

The socio-culturally embedded nature of language teacher emotionality was also visible in some of the differences in the student pictures and accompanying texts. The third theme highlighted some of the differences in how language teaching was possibly constructed in the contexts of Finland and Brazil. To Finnish teachers, becoming a language teacher was explicitly mentioned as a source for pride and success and sometimes regarded as a dream job, emotions and beliefs that did not appear in the Brazilian data. There could be several reasons for this. The first one may be related to different backgrounds of the participant teachers: in-service teachers in the Brazilian group and pre-service teachers in the Finnish group. It could be that Brazilian teachers had already experience in teaching and thus, a more practical view of teaching based on a harsher reality, whereas the pre-service Finnish teachers, not having started to teach, regarded teaching still as a dream job. A second reason could be linked to lower societal status of teaching in Brazil.

In addition, the ways in which teachers qualified the emotional involvement with pupils differed radically in the two contexts. Whereas Brazilian teachers expressed their involvement with pupils with emotion words and symbols, Finnish participants tended to resort to more practical and professionally neutral vocabulary that was deprived of the affectionate register. This could be connected to different socially shared beliefs about the role of the teacher and related emotional expressions in this profession both by teachers and students. In their study, Yoon and Rönnlund (2020) state that Finnish teachers tended to define their identity more as teaching experts in comparison to

Korean teachers who described themselves more as care workers. The results of this study seem to point in the same direction as the Finnish teachers highlighted more the practical professional side of the teacher student relationship. An interesting question, however, remains about the importance of these beliefs to the actual emotional experience of teaching. Although culturally different beliefs about teaching have long been an important field of study (e. g. Fang & Gopinathan, 2009), less is known about the importance of these beliefs to emotional expression and experiences. However, based on this qualitative study, it is impossible to draw conclusions about the differences in actual emotions of teacher teaching in different socio-political contexts, the result highlights the need for this kind of study in the future.

## 6. Final considerations

This study was based on small-scale data collected in two different courses with both in-service and pre-service teachers. We are aware that these differences in the participants' profiles and how each group decided to draw their VNs may have influenced the kinds of results we got. Despite these limitations, we believe that the study has helped us to shed some light on the kinds of factors that affect teacher emotions about teaching according to their cultural backgrounds. It is, however, important to critically consider some of the features of this study. In the following we will reflect on the choices made and the learning experiences this study provided to us as language educators. This can also help to highlight its possible significance to other researchers and teachers.

Firstly, our study highlights the complexity of researching emotional expression and experience in different socio-political contexts and the role of language in this research. Although our study did not purely rely on English language as a lingua franca for expression, but also used visual narratives to provide access to the participants' emotional experiences, we noticed that this was not enough to make interpretations about the source of differences in the data and why certain elements of language teaching were differently constructed in the two datasets. Future international comparative studies aiming at this should also add other means of data collection. We would suggest stimulated interviews based on the pictures to address the emotional experience.

Secondly, our study aimed at providing our participants a possibility for reflecting their emotions. As discussed elsewhere (see Barcelos & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2018), we suggested the creation of spaces for (student) teachers to address their difficult emotions, such as uncertainty, fear, or irritation. We believe that using VNs as a research method and as a pedagogical tool can help with this purpose. However, because of this study, we also suggest enough time should be given for a critical analysis and reflection of these pictures. Teachers can look at their VNs, discuss them in class (something we regret not having done with our participants in the course) and critically reflect on them and on the socially-politically nature of emotions and hopefully find ways to better deal with them in teaching. We believe that based on the analysis of the pictures it is possible to raise previously implicit beliefs about emotionality, such as fear of failure and question them together with other members of the teaching group. This could lead to open vulnerability instead of protective vulnerability. According to Song (2022) and Zembylas (2005), open vulnerability can be defined as teachers' awareness of their difficult emotions and their ability to address the beliefs that are behind these emotions. In a larger scale, this awareness of emotions and their socio-politically embedded nature is connected to promoting equity and social justice through education. Master's teacher students of our study recognized their role as providers of emotional support to different

pupils but were often unsure about their ability to do so. Through addressing emotionality in language teacher education, we hope we can help our students to feel more ready to address these issues also in work life.

Finally, based on this study, we would like to suggest that more research should still address the language teacher emotionality in different socio-political contexts. By addressing these issues in international research, we can, as researchers and language teacher educators, better understand the complex interplay of beliefs and emotions in teacher practice in different contexts and address these issues in educational practices. With the emotional turn, it is crucial for us to better understand the intertwined nature of the social, cognitive, and emotional. This can also help us to better support language teachers in their work.

## Endnote/s

<sup>1</sup> A recent news article (August 18th, 2022) reports on how Brazilian public school teachers (in general) are getting sick and how they are devalued, making it an undesirable profession, with shortage of teachers everywhere. In addition, they have been suffering moral harassment, especially now with the extreme right politics: [https://cultura.uol.com.br/noticias/dw/62839588\\_doente-e-desvalorizado-sobre-ser-professor-na-rede-publica-brasileira.html](https://cultura.uol.com.br/noticias/dw/62839588_doente-e-desvalorizado-sobre-ser-professor-na-rede-publica-brasileira.html)

<sup>2</sup> Differently from Finland, in Brazil, in order to become school teachers, Brazilians have to take a 4-year licentiate course. Master's is not a requirement to become school teachers in Brazil. So, these participants had all majored in languages (Portuguese-English) and were already teaching.

<sup>3</sup> All participants were given pseudonyms and their nationality will be expressed in parentheses (Br -Brazilian; or Fin - Finnish).

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