

Teachers' affective states: the diary of a novice English language teacher in her first year of teaching

Estados afetivos de professores: o diário de uma professora iniciante de língua inglesa em seu primeiro ano de ensino

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Abstract: *The field of research in the context of teaching and learning is not solely characterized by cognitive issues. For the last 30 years, mainly abroad, the affective domains have been the core of an array of inquiries, which highlight the importance of exploring such domains in a more systematic way in order to obtain a better understanding of the teaching and learning process. This article explores the affect of a student teacher in her first year of teaching in an initial teacher education program. Affective states such as calmness, happiness, anguish and embarrassment colored the student teacher's practice and showed themselves correlated to, for example, the methodologies used in class, and decision-making.*

Key words: *Affective states, teacher, initial teacher education, English Language*

Resumo: *O campo de pesquisa no contexto de ensino e aprendizagem não se caracteriza mais por aspectos cognitivos somente. No decorrer dos últimos 30 anos, os aspectos afetivos, sobretudo no âmbito internacional, vêm sendo o foco de investigação neste contexto e estudos têm salientado a relevância de explorá-los mais sistematicamente no intuito de melhor compreender o processo de ensinar e aprender. Este artigo explora a afetividade de uma aluna professora em seu primeiro ano de docência em um programa de extensão. Estados afetivos como tranquilidade, felicidade, angústia e constrangimento permearam a prática da professora e se mostraram, por exemplo, interligados com as metodologias usadas e suas tomadas de decisões.*

Palavras chave: *Estados afetivos, professor, formação inicial, língua inglesa.*

1 Introduction

One of the biggest drawbacks of the disciplines which approach emotion is the debate about its conceptualization. For many years, emotions have been emphasized in philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, and anthropology. However, no one can reach a consensus on its definition. Zembylas (2002a, p. 188) contends that “given the long history of debates about what counts as an emotion, it would be surprising indeed if there were a tidy definition” for it. About three decades ago, Fehr and Russel (1984, p. 464) pointed out that “everyone knows what an emotion is, until asked for a definition”. Scherer (2005) stated that the number of scientific definitions of emotion reviewed until 1981 were over a hundred. Therefore, the literature seems to present a broad scope and a thorny problem concerning issues of what counts as an emotion.

Although the term affect is also used by several scholars due to its broad meaning, which includes emotion, feeling, mood and other disparate constructs (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1989; Jackes

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and Vicari, 2005; Arnold and Brown, 1999; Bown and White, 2010). Bown and White (2010, p. 433) contend that, as it occurs to emotion, “research on affect has long been hampered by issues of definition”. Nonetheless, Araújo (2003, p. 156) affirms that affect is a “generic term which gives quality to what it is considered affective, which gives meaning to a great group of affective states that we feel in relation to ourselves, to others, to life, to the nature, etc”.

There is an array of studies in Education which have presented an outpouring debate about the role affect/emotions play in the context of teaching and learning, mostly about their effects on students’ and teachers’ lives (Ehrman *et. al.*, 2003; Dewaele, 2007; Imai, 2010; Bown and White, 2010). In this regard, Zembylas (2005, p. 466) points out that caring for and exploring teachers’ emotions is to work towards a “promising new direction in research on teaching”.

In this article, I highlight the importance of exploring teachers’ affective states in their first year of teaching through a case study of a novice Brazilian student teacher in her first semester as a teacher of English language. For this purpose I take into account the conceptualization of emotions employed by Zembylas (2002a, 2002b, 2005), as well as the concept of affect as a broader term (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1989; Arnold and Brown, 1999; Brown, 2005, among others). Firstly, I present the theoretical framework and also justify the employment of the two terminologies (emotion and affect). Secondly, the methodology used is described and a profile of the participant is presented. Third, I develop the data analysis based on the diary entries written by the student teacher. Finally, I conclude this work by pointing out some implications concerning the role of investigating novice teachers’ affect.

2 Theoretical Framework

In spite of the complexities which surround the concept of affect, studies on this phenomenon have greatly emerged abroad in the last thirty years and they have been linked to a wide range of constructs. In general, the investigations on affect attempt to emphasize the role it plays in moving, shaping, and coloring people’s lives (Hyson, 1996, Campbell, 1997; Hargreaves, 1998; Zembylas, 2002b.).

In educational contexts affect/emotions also play an important role. Zembylas (2002b. p. 80) argues that in this field emotion “is by no means a new terrain for researchers and educators”, but the author claims that the interests in studying this phenomenon seem to be renewed. Moreover, such interests should focus on the “emotions of teaching, the emotional politics of teacher development and education reform, and their implications for teacher education”. The author also emphasizes that emotions should not only be explored in their interpersonal aspects, but an intrapersonal investigation should occur since teachers are often managing and negotiating their emotions while they shape and influence teachers’ decisions towards their practices, and establish connections with power relations.

According to Sutton and Wheatley (2003), the context of Education did not provide much exploration of emotions until three decades ago. However, the authors claim that even with the growing body of research on emotions in the 80's, few of those focused on teachers. They affirm that researchers had little knowledge about (a) "the role of emotions in learning to teach", (b) "How teachers' emotional experiences relate to their teaching practices", (c) "how the sociocultural context of teaching interacts with teachers' emotions", (d) "how teachers regulate their emotions, the relationship between teachers' emotions and motivation", and (e) "how integral emotional experiences are in teacher development" (ibid., p. 328). Sutton and Wheatley state that those unknown territories on teachers' affect started to be more explored in the 90's, and currently Schultz and Zembylas (2009, p. 4) argue there is a considerable number of studies about this phenomenon. These studies highlight the notion that emotions are "inextricably linked to teachers' work, development, and identity, and how these emotions impact their lives". As a result, exploring teachers' affect became as crucial as any other aspects of investigation which value improvements in the context of teaching and learning once "emotions are at the heart" of this process (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 835).

The concept of emotion I employ in this study is the one which does not conceive emotion as something solely private, internal. On the contrary, emotions will be treated as a phenomenon that is also socially constructed. Based on Zembylas' works (2002a, 2002b, 2005), emotions should be explored in an attempt to construct what he names as genealogies of emotions. By genealogy, the author argues it is a method in which the discourses are explored, and mainly the role they play in our society and the changes they have. In addition, the author (2002b, p.83) affirms that this genealogy describes "events, objects, and persons and the relationships among them [...], and the ways in which these emotions are experienced in relation to the teacher-self (individual reality), the others (social interactions), and the social school culture in general (sociopolitical context)". In general, the aim of such genealogy is to lay emphasis on teaching as a process that goes beyond cognitive characterization.

As mentioned earlier in the introduction of this paper, it is a thorny problem to define what an emotion is, and to find a unique concept that precisely defines emotion seems to be an endless attempt (Scherer, 2005). Therefore, taking into account the disagreement among theorists on what counts as an emotion (Zembylas, 2002a, 2002b, 2005), in this article I also employ the concept of affect as a broader term. In this regard, Ortony *et. al.* (1987, p. 343) argue that affect and emotion are usually used synonymously in the literature, but the authors advocate the theory that affect has a wide range of constructs and call readers' attention to the fact that "all emotions are affective conditions, but not all affective conditions are emotions". Likewise, Magiolino (2004, p. 7) claims that the concept of emotion is usually "used to refer to a wide range of affective domains or, in a limited view, as an emotional reaction". For this reason, the author suggests that a great number of affective conditions may be mistakenly treated as an emotion. Similarly, Ochs and Schieffelin (1989, p. 7) argue that besides emotion, affect includes "feelings, moods, dispositions, and attitudes associated with persons

and/or situations”. Thus, affect covers a greater group of sentimental and emotional manifestations, personality traits, beliefs, motivation (Bown and White, 2010), among others. Lastly, Brown (2005, p. 153) also considers this premise about affect and contends that “the development of affective states [...] involves a variety of personality factors, feelings both about ourselves and about others with whom we come into contact”.

Due to the lack of consensus regarding emotion, and consequently the lack of studies that elucidate an explicit categorization that these or those phenomena can be labeled as an emotion, I do not consider pertinent to discuss about all affective states reported by the participant as if they were all emotions. When I employ Zembylas’ concept of emotions I am referring to the perspective of treating them as a social construct, mainly his genealogy of emotions, which was not approached in any of the works using the term affect used in this paper. On the other hand, I found relevant and adequate the broader meaning of affect and affective states. Hence, during the analysis I will be using the term affect or affective states once the latter, as pointed out by Jackes and Vicari (2005, p. 17), is a more adequate term since it includes “other affective states besides emotions”. I only use the term emotion or feeling when I respectfully refer to the findings of other authors’ studies. Next, I discuss about some inquiries which focus on teachers’ affect.

2.1 Teachers’ emotions and affect

Among a group of 32 teachers in Ontario, Canada; Hargreaves (1998, p. 838) focused on “one of the most significant emotional aspects of teaching; the emotional relationships teachers have with their students” to investigate teachers’ emotions by questioning about the nature of such relationships. His findings suggested that teachers (a) felt positive emotions by giving importance to the “emotional bonds and understandings they established with students”, (b) “teachers’ emotional commitments and connections to students energized and articulated everything these teachers did: including the way they taught, planned, and the structures in which they preferred to teach”, and (c) that some impositions on them by school rules or politics may damage some “fundamental aspect of what they do” (ibid. p. 850). Finally, the author also points out that teachers felt happiness, satisfaction and pleasure when their students’ learning progress was noticed, and mostly when they were responsive to most of the events in class. In another study, Hargreaves (2000) investigated 60 (elementary and secondary) teachers from Canada by exploring the perceptions these teachers had about their relationship with students. Positive emotions were experienced when teachers perceived that students showed some affection towards them (elementary teachers). In relation to Secondary teachers, positive emotions were felt when students returned to thank them for their efforts which contributed to maintain their satisfaction and motivation in teaching.

Almeida and Mahoney (2009) also reported the positive affective states experienced by professors at a university in Brazil. The authors argued they experienced joy and satisfaction when

students told them they learned the subject and when they effectively did different tasks in class. Hope and satisfaction were also felt at the end of the classes due to the students' interest and engagement in discussions, and when professors had their aims achieved and some problems solved as well. Lastly, Day and Qing (2009) argued teachers experienced the state of well-being and confidence every time they found support from co-workers and experienced teachers in the first years of teaching. In addition, their healthy and friendly relationship with students let them prone to frequently experiencing positive emotions.

On the other hand, negative affective states also shape teachers' daily life. Chaves (2009, p. 104) developed a study in which he investigated the feelings elementary teachers experienced towards students' misbehavior in class. Some of the unpleasant emotions reported by the participants were: "impotence, sadness, frustration, nervousness, anger, irritation, and indignation". According to the author, frustration, anger, sadness were all together because of students' disruptive behavior, but also related to macro issues such as impunity in law, and the lack of family support and engagement. In general, his findings suggest that teachers strongly showed the need of being supported by colleagues, coordinators and school principal. They also had the necessity of being listened, and having opportunities to enable reflections in order to achieve a good atmosphere at school to keep on working.

Hargreaves (2000), in turn, discusses that elementary teachers felt anger when they were defied by students, and when the latter did not recognize the efforts of the former. In what comes to secondary teachers, negative emotions were emerged when teachers realized they were not felt "known by their students either, as moral, emotional people" (Ibid., p. 820).

Veen, Slegers & Ven (2005, p. 927) found out that anxiety was experienced by David (the teacher investigated) once he felt the "decreased work pleasure related to his lack of time". The author argues the lack of time prevented David from performing his tasks "in a good manner according to his educational standards" and by perceiving that his co-workers had – in contrast to David - a part-time job in the school. Hence, the lack of support from his colleagues seemed to "form a threat for David, and it reinforced his emotions of anxiety" (ibid., p. 928). Almeida e Mahoney (2009) also pointed out some negative affective states in their study with college professors such as sadness, irritation and anger, which were experienced when students showed lack of respect among themselves and to the professors. Professors also experienced frustration when they were unable to solve different problems in class.

Lastly, Candido-Ribeiro (2012) argued some affective states such as anxiety and nervousness emerged when one student teacher had to teach grammar speaking in English due to her own perception towards her level of linguistic knowledge/competence in that language. Preoccupation was related to the managing of time to teach all the content required by the program. Anguish, sadness and nervousness were felt in situations of conflicts with students due to power relation issues since all students were much older than the teacher.

The findings mentioned illustrate some of a wide range of affective states a teacher experiences in his/her professional life. In addition to this, those affective states portray how teaching is surrounded, constructed and shaped by positive and negative affect. In this regard, Arnold and Brown (1999) state that seeking for a broader understanding of the affective dimension in language learning is to value for a more effective teaching learning process. Thus this article reports several affective states that surrounded the participant's first year of teaching and attempts to explore them to seek for a better understanding of what a teacher does or say in the classroom. Therefore, I believe that the more we broad our horizons towards affect in this context, the better will be our chances in understanding a wide range of aspects of teaching and learning process which can be, for many, considered as complex.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

The data this article is based comprised the first reports of a longitudinal study that started to take place in the second semester of 2011. The data instruments chosen to develop this study were diary entries, class observation² and interviews. Due to the lack of space, I bring to this paper the data collected from her diary since such instrument is able to provide a “power set of methods for studying various human phenomena, including personality processes (Bolger *et. al.*, 2003, p. 580). In addition to this, some authors have been elucidating several advantages in using diary as a research method, such as its capacity of helping the researcher access the interpretations people give to their own worlds (Nicholl, 2010), its capacity of offering more details of the experiences lived, and because a diary “serves primarily as a chronological of events and repository for emotional reflection” (Griffiee, 2005, p. 36). Lastly, it also allows to diagnose and examine “attitudes and beliefs about learning” and teaching languages (Lally and Velebra, 2000, p. 108).

3.2 Context and participant

This study was carried out in a public university in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil in the second semester of 2011. The Language Department in that institution has an initial teacher education program which provides undergraduate students the opportunity to teach English. The students enrolled in this program are supervised and monitored by experienced teachers during the process. Among over 30 student teachers engaged in this program, Clara (pseudonym chosen by the

² Even being one tool chosen to collect data, the class observation did not occurred in that first semester due to the agreement arranged between the student teacher and the researcher, who respectfully understood Clara's request.

participant) was about to start her first semester as an English teacher. At the moment this research began, Clara, 20 years old, was taking the sixth semester at the Languages Department (Double major: Portuguese/English) and had never had any teaching experiences. During an informal conversation we had, she reported to be very curious and excited to start teaching. Her first and only class was constituted of public employees (14 students) of the university who were beginners. Clara's extensive English course (two classes a week – Tuesdays and Thursdays) was scheduled to begin in August and would last until the beginning of December.

Before the classes begin I gave Clara a moleskin notebook that would be her diary and asked her to write as much as she could about everything that happened in the class. Moreover, she was told to include in her diary entries all feelings and emotions she felt in each class. Although Clara had her diary (moleskin notebook), I used to receive her entries by email every week. In the end of the semester there was a total of 18 entries³.

Next, I present and discuss the first reports obtained from her class diary by showing some of the positive and negative affective states she experienced in her first semester of teaching.

4 Data analysis

The experiences in Clara's first year of teaching were clearly characterized by issues of affect. However, the majority of those were negative ones. The student teacher reported several affective states throughout the first semester of teaching, and due to the lack of space I bring to discussion in this paper the following ones: feeling bad, preoccupation, embarrassment, anxiety, regret, anguish, lack of motivation, insecurity, and disappointment. On the other hand, Clara also felt the states of motivation, satisfaction, and happiness. These states are approached into two parts: (a) creating affective bonds with students, and (b) The classroom: a new terrain.

4.1 Creating affective bonds with students.

Almost all entries (18) of Clara's diary registered, both implicitly and explicitly, her wish in creating affective bonds with students. It seems that such wish appeared as a primary aspect she must have to maintain her willingness and motivation in giving classes. For this reason, Clara experienced positive affective states when noticing some occurrences in the classroom that were favorable to maintain her affective bonds. On the other hand, negative affective states were felt towards the circumstances which emerged as a threat to such maintenance. The excerpts summarize the positive affective states Clara felt in different situations.

³ There were some times that I sent back some entries to Clara with some questions of mine. Such questions aimed at clarifying or broadening some arguments she had written. However, this occurred more often in the beginning since we were having problems in finding time to schedule interviews due to our own works and other academic duties.

Excerpt 01:

I got too much happy in relation to what the students wrote about me in the questionnaire. [...] The sensation of making students feel well is very good. Sometimes I feel that teaching is not what I want as a profession, but when I perceived I was accepted by the students and that I was contributing to their learning I started to rethink more about the choice I made, I kind of feel motivated. (Diary: September, 20th 2011)

Excerpt 02:

Today was the written test. [...] I brought chocolates for them in order to help them feel relaxed while taking the test. They made jokes by telling me that they will give me a box of chocolates when I correct their tests and that it was them who were supposed to give away chocolates, not me. (Diary: October 04th 2011)

Excerpt 03:

Today I applied the oral test and something very sad happened because one student came to me and started to cry. [...] he explained that he has had severe personal problems and because of that he did not have emotional conditions to take the test and asked me if he could do it another day. I accepted without a second thought. [...] He apologized to me for crying and I got so moved with his condition. But in the end I felt satisfaction in relation to the attitude I had because I was able to calm him down. He even sent me an email to thank me due to the attention I gave him. (Diary: October, 06th 2011)

In excerpt 01 Clara clearly reports her happiness as a result of being well evaluated as a teacher in the questionnaire⁴ given to her students. In one of the informal conversations we had before the classes begin, Clara had already mentioned her insecurity about her profession and having to teach for the first time, and because of this it seems that the happiness she felt may have manifested as a unique and strong affective state so that it made her rethink about the choice she made in being a teacher. Therefore, students' positive feedback contributed to diminish her doubts about not being a teacher. This report is in line with some studies on teachers' satisfaction (e.g. Dinham and Scott, 1997; Nias, 1989 *apud* Hargreaves, 2000, p. 817) which suggested that "teachers' most important rewards are gained from students in the classroom". Moreover, Hargreaves (2000, p. 817) contends that the teachers investigated in Nias' research "feel rewarded when students show affection towards and regard for them and when students demonstrate that they are enjoying (or have enjoyed) their learning". In excerpt 02, the participant shows her preoccupation with students' well-being while taking the test by bringing chocolates. Such attitude seems to be a demonstration of the need in creating affective bonds with students. The excerpt 03 shows Clara's satisfaction for accepting her student's requirement and mainly for being able to make the student feel calmer. This way we can see that empathy can play an important role in providing students' and teacher's positive affective states, and such situation can create a pleasant environment for both. In general, these two last entries point out that Clara cares about providing a caring and safe environment for her students. Yet Clara's

⁴ In the extension course in which Clara works for every student teacher is evaluated twice, in the middle of the semester (midterm-questionnaire) and in the end (final questionnaire). Both questionnaires are provided by the initial education program. The reason in applying one in the middle of the semester is that the student teacher can seek for improvements among other aspects towards teaching through a reflexive conversation with the experienced teacher who monitors and supports him/her.

reports reinforce the scenario of the classroom as a place that is shaped and moved by affect, which highlight Hargreaves' words on this issue who contends that "emotions are at the heart of teaching" (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 835). Furthermore, they also reinforce that teachers "secure their psychic rewards⁵ by establishing close emotional bonds or emotional understanding with their students as a foundation for teaching and learning" (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 817).

On the other hand, negative affective states emerged when Clara experienced situations which threatened the maintenance of her acceptance by the students. The aforesaid situations are about the development of some activities in class that did not work to all students.

Excerpt 04:

The class was flowing well because students did the activity that I asked for and etc. I was explaining everything in English, but there was this student who suddenly said that she did not understand a word of what I was saying. And she did not speak in a polite way. I felt awful and disappointed with that [...]. There is a listening activity in the textbook that is very simple and almost everybody understands [...], but there is another student who frequently presents difficulties and he always complains he can't understand. However, he speaks in a way as if I were responsible for his failures in learning English and he ends up irritating with me.

In the excerpt 04 Clara experienced negative affective states due to the inappropriate treatment, in her point of view, of those two students. The lack of politeness when talking to her and the other student who made her feel responsible for his difficulties in learning emerged as a threat for her well-being and, mostly as an occurrence that may damage the process of being accepted by them. The teachers investigated in the study of Almeida and Mahoney (2009) as well in Chaves (2009) also experienced negative affective states such as sadness, irritation and anger when students showed lack of respect towards the teacher. Thus, it seems that any kind of hostile behavior in class may bring negative affective states which, and in turn, can have a stronger impact on novice teachers once they are in the beginning of their careers. Consequently, the environment of the classroom is a completely new terrain for them. In this regard, I present in the next subsection how affect, positive or negative, shaped and colored Clara's first teaching experience for being the classroom a brand new terrain for her.

4.2 The classroom: a new terrain

"First years of teaching have long proven to be challenging and frustrating for novice teachers".
(MASSEY, 2006, p. 73)

The words of the author in the quote portray well Clara's first year of teaching. In my view, it is usually challenging and frustrating because, even if teachers have considerable different categories

⁵ Psychic rewards is a term defined by Lortie that refers to rewards which "rotate around classroom events and relationships with students; the cathexis of classroom life underlies much of teachers feel about their work" (LORTIE, 1975, p. 187 *apud* HARGREAVES, 2000, p. 817).

of knowledge base such as content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge⁶ among others, novice teachers often face and experience the novelty, for example. In other words, some peculiarities of teaching seem to be learned solely in this context.

Even being supervised and monitored by experienced teachers, Clara faced thorny situations in the classroom. The student teacher presented difficulties in managing and/or dealing with them in order to feel secure. The excerpts that follow report some occurrences in class that triggered negative affective states.

Excerpt 05:

During the class, one student asked me about the style of my written test. [...] I did not know what to answer him [...]. This worried me because I need to know how my test is going to be, the style of test that I am going to apply. I realized that I need to decide about this as fast as I can. [...] Students are very anxious about the written test and this is making me anxious as well. There is this student who always makes questions about the test. And he has been missing classes because of health conditions and he missed classes of a whole unit of the textbook. I don't know what to do about it (Diary, September, 08th 2011)

Excerpt 06:

I think I am more insecure than students in relation to the written test because I have not prepared it yet, and I have no idea how my oral test is going to be either. (Diary, September 20 2011).

Preoccupation, anxiety and insecurity were experienced due to the fact that Clara never applied exams before and when questioned about them, she did not have much to say. The students' questions were the factor which triggered those negative affective states, and the reason for experiencing them lies on the fact that having no answer could represent a threat to her professional image, which she has just started to build. Moreover, Clara claims she did not know what to do in relation to the student who misses classes (Excerpt 05). In this regard, the participant reported that: "I already said that I could arrive earlier and explain the content to him (student)". However, the student teacher was worried about time management: "But I know that this is not going to be good for me because time becomes too short because of the amount of things I have to do". Even then, she says that: "I am worried about him and, I am afraid he does not do well in the test even knowing that helping him this way should not be a concern of mine" (Diary: September, 08 2011). Therefore, Clara recognizes that it is not a teacher's responsibility to help a student who misses classes for any given reason by saving time to explain the content already studied. On the other hand, the concerns about the student's learning process seem to be of a great importance to Clara. Many of the vast arrays of aspects that surround a classroom may bring, at a more intense level, difficulties, problems, and/or questionings to novice teachers since such environment is a completely new terrain for them. In other words, one may view the case of the student who missed classes as something easy to be solved; it was different for Clara, though. These accounts suggest that novice teachers may be prone to have more

⁶ Here I am referring to some of Shuman's seven (7) categories of Knowledge base in teaching. For more information consult SHUMAN, L. S. Knowledge and teaching: foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*. No. 57, vol. 1, p. 4-21, 1987.

difficulties in what comes to decision-making and when they are worried about time management. As highlighted in the study of Veen, Slegers & Ven (2005), the teacher David experienced anxiety after noticing his lack of time to perform some tasks in class. However, Clara's difficulties in not knowing what to do with the student who has missed classes is not a result of not having time to perform tasks in class, but the lack of time out of class to help such student. Thus the student teacher's report may suggest that the lack of time can be a trigger of negative affective states on a teacher's life.

A second occurrence is related to the activities planned and the questions made on vocabulary.

Excerpt 07:

In the listening activity of the textbook, there was this part that the speaker said "He is beautiful". Students got surprised about the use of beautiful for men once I had already explained that we use "handsome" to refer to men's beauty. They questioned me about that and I did not know what to answer. [...] I said to them I would look for an explanation about this but at that moment I got so embarrassed with one student who said that I had explained something wrong to them, because in the book it was written "he is beautiful". Then the book was right and I was wrong. (Diary: September, 09 2011)

Excerpt 08:

I brought a song as a listening activity. [...] When I played the song I felt that students got a little frustrated. Some filled the gaps correctly but others did not understand a single word. [...] Because of the expression in their faces I regretted bringing the song. During the activity I thought to myself "I will never bring any other song" because they were very irritated with me once they could not do the activity, and because of that I felt... I don't know. I think, anguish. (Diary: October, 25 2011)

Although the student's behavior in excerpt 07 contributed to Clara's embarrassing experience, not necessarily a student must be rude and cause a teacher any negative affective state when not knowing how to answer the student a question about vocabulary, which can also happen to an experienced teacher. What may have occurred in Clara's case is a matter of phases that novice teachers go through in a classroom in their first year of teaching, that is, their preoccupation in presenting themselves capable enough to be a teacher and, mainly, their worries in pleasing students and have their approvals about everything they say or do. Candido-Ribeiro (2012) pointed out that the teacher (Nina), who was in her first year of teaching, also reported to be very uncomfortable every time she did not know how to answer a question about vocabulary. Consequently, Nina argued she used to feel bad and more convinced that she was too far from being the teacher she wanted to be. Therefore, Nina experienced embarrassing moments in the classroom and frustration in the end. Thus, a teacher who faces difficulties in solving problems in class, even if it is a question on vocabulary which could not be answered, he/she is likely to have their affective domains negatively affected. Almeida and Mahoney (2009) also corroborate this by claiming that teachers tend to feel frustrated when they were unable to solve different problems in class.

In excerpt 08, Clara experienced anguish and regret after perceiving that the activity planned did not work for every student. There is no guarantee that an activity previously planned will work every time a teacher, experienced or not, applies it. What may have contributed to Clara experiences

those negative affective states was the lack of ability in managing the situation in order to make it work what is prone to be a total failure. Hargreaves (1998, p. 850) contends that emotions “energized and articulated everything” the teachers in his research did, including “the way they planned, and the structures they preferred to teach”. In other words, the negative affective states Clara experienced had a negative impact on the song activity she planned. This fact made her consider, even temporarily, in never applying such activity again. Finally, Clara reported that “it is awful when you plan a class and try to use your creativity, bring nice things and, in the end, you see that some students did not meet your expectations. This case affected very much my motivation” (Diary, September, 9 2011). In his inquiry with 60 elementary teachers in Canada, Hargreaves (2000, p. 820) stated that teachers reported negative emotions when they felt “defied by students”, and when these ones “did not recognize their teacher’s effort”. Therefore, affect plays an important role in the decisions a teacher makes towards the practice and methodology used in class, as pointed out by Zembylas (2002b).

5. Conclusion

Clara’s first year of teaching was shaped by various affective states which reveal and reinforce the importance in providing teachers not only support based on cognitive matters but that affect should be taken into account in order to understand what teachers do and say and why they behave in different ways in relation to their practices and their students. Although Clara has support of experienced teachers, which she also received before starting to teach and continued to receive during her teacher training, the student teacher presented difficulties in relation to some events occurred in the classroom such as questions about the type of written test she would apply, and the song activity that did not work. As Zembylas (2005, p. 468) argues, “certain aspects of teaching can only be learned in practice through how one feels and are not only described by cognitive schemes”. The author also claims that affective issues must be part of other types of knowledge that are taken into account within teacher education since “teacher knowledge is a messy kind of knowledge that involves content knowledge, learning research and teaching techniques as well as knowledge”, which Zembylas assures that can solely “be attained in social practice or by personal exploration through how a teacher feels”. Clara thought of never applying the song activity again and the reason for this lies on affect. However, after sharing such occurrence with experienced teachers, she applied this type of activity a second time, which was more successful. Therefore, this finding suggests that having experienced teachers who support novice teachers in their first years of teaching is crucial to maintain their willing and motivation in what comes to the unpredictability of the classroom. In addition, experienced teachers can provide an environment for discussion aiming at contributing to novice teachers’ development and competences.

This paper also highlights the role affect plays in the relationship between affect and decision-making. In other words, the development of the song activity which was not completely succeed in

class brought negative affective states to Clara and, consequently, made her think that such idea would not be applied in class again. Thus the affective states experienced shaped Clara's professional decisions and practices in her first year of teaching towards the style of listening activities she planned and managed in the classroom. Moreover, in many cases novice teachers are not supported by experienced ones or even participate of initial education programs as Clara has been. In other words, novice teachers who have lack of support may take paths in the process which may not be so fruitful in terms of reflection, preventing them from having opportunities to reflect on every aspect about their teaching, which in turn can contribute for the development of their profession.

The discussions presented also suggest novice teachers seem to have concerns for students' development in learning. As a result they are very prone to make efforts to help their students even knowing that some efforts they may make are not necessarily up to them, as it happened to Clara towards the student who missed several classes. In line with this view, Candido-Ribeiro (2012) stated that the first-year teacher investigated in his research showed much preoccupation with her students' development by trying to provide a comfortable environment for learning, by creating affective bonds with students, and making efforts to improve their learning process.

Finally, this study was carried out with only one first-year teacher and thus I believe it may not be generalized to other teachers. On the other hand, this fact does not minimize the importance and the objective proposed, which was to explore teacher's affect in order to emphasize how teaching is grounded in affect or that it has its roots in affective dimensions. Yet this study presents information that may help students and teachers to develop more researches on this area by aiming at broadening knowledge about affect so that any discussion on teachers' identity and/or teachers education, for instance, should consider the affective domain as an important tool to understand what happens in a classroom, a place where teachers undertake a complex set of tasks every minute.

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