SUPPORTING ESL TEACHERS WHEN THE UNEXPECTED OCCURS

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Abstract: *Teaching is a special profession that requires dedication, passion, alongside expertise and investment in skills development. Teachers know they have to conceive a lesson plan, a strategy before appearing in class, but they also know it is crucial to be able to deal with the unexpected. Given our teaching experience, which has often placed us in situations requiring immediate adaptation, this work was initiated as a means of supporting fellow educators who may feel that certain moments during a lesson risk becoming unmanageable. Thus, we got motivated to investigate the concept of "emergent language" (the primary material teachers work with when they teach by request) analyzed in Richard Chinn and Danny Norrington- Davies' volume "Working with Emergent Language. Ideas and Activities for Developing your Reactive Skills in Class". In addition, as we are generally interested in teacher development, in growing and expanding professional abilities because it helps us become more alert to students' needs, we believe that, first you ought to focus on our own progress as teachers in order to provide support for your learners thus, this is the pivot of our research in the present paper. Overall, this article explores how ESL teachers may effectively navigate unexpected learning scenarios by cultivating mindfulness, engaging in reflective observation of others, and fostering self-awareness regarding their own weaknesses and strengths.*

Keywords: *teacher's development and skills; ESL; emergent language; mental health; learner; the unexpected.*

Introduction

The academic development of teachers goes hand in hand with the development of learners. Therefore, we consider it both natural and necessary for any focus on learning progress to begin with the educators themselves. While there is a prevailing tendency to place the learner at the center of educational discourse, our proposal, by contrast, is to reposition the teacher at the heart of the learning process. This is grounded in the understanding that the teacher is the one who delivers instruction and must orchestrate classroom activities—even if this leadership is exercised subtly, through suggestion rather than imposition.

In light of these considerations, we argue that it is highly valuable to investigate concepts such as *mental health*, *emotional support*, *emergent language*, the management of *unexpected classroom situations*, and spontaneous questions or requests for clarification that fall outside the boundaries of the pre-established lesson plan. These elements, often

overlooked in traditional pedagogical frameworks, are essential to fostering a responsive and resilient teaching practice.

As a result, in the following sections, we will examine the factors that may impact teachers' mental health and, consequently, their ability to deliver effective lessons. In other words, we aim to identify and analyze the stressors that educators face in their professional environment, as well as explore strategies through which these challenges can be addressed or mitigated. By doing so, we hope to contribute to a broader understanding of the emotional and psychological dimensions of teaching, and to highlight the importance of supporting teachers' well-being as a prerequisite for high-quality instruction. More concretely, we will investigate the concept of *emergent language* and the techniques associated with its effective management in the classroom. This type of language may be explicitly requested by students or may arise opportunistically during interaction, requiring immediate clarification and pedagogical intervention. Our aim is to explore how teachers can recognize, respond to, and capitalize on these spontaneous linguistic moments, transforming them into meaningful learning opportunities.

Finally, we will illustrate our findings through two questionnaires designed and interpreted by us, targeting Romanian students and teachers. Their responses will provide concrete examples and insights for other educators who find themselves in the ongoing process of adapting to change and coping with the pressures of teaching. By including both perspectives—those of learners and instructors—we aim to emphasize the shared challenges and offer practical reflections that may support teachers navigating similar demands in their professional contexts.

Despite its inherent limitations, we consider our analysis both timely and valuable, particularly for fellow educators who may resonate with the solutions we propose. Our intention is to offer practical insights grounded in real classroom experience. By sharing our findings, we hope to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing dialogue around adaptive teaching and professional resilience.

Literature review. Mental challenges

The most basic research would reveal that there is a tremendous number of training courses for language teachers. These courses provide the necessary tools for you to become a better educator, to clearly explain matters, to strongly engage your students in classroom activities, to further diversify the content of your lessons, to bridge the gap between classroom practice and real-life situations that ESL learners might face on their own, in an unforeseen situation.

Considering the profile of most such courses, it is quite easy to notice that they focus on the student and less on the teacher as if the latter would be

a machine whose feelings and emotions are to be eliminated from the very start of the teaching process. So, in the light of the above, we have chosen to look at ways to strengthen the provider of the language lessons, to expand their abilities, to offer support whenever a teacher is faced with the unexpected.
Prior to becoming the provider of language lessons, one has to go through a stage of mental preparation. Schrier (2009), Aelterman et. al (2007), Mousavi (2007) argue that young ESL teachers, in particular, are at risk when it comes to mental health issues because the pressure that they have to deal with when teaching, can be overwhelming. Such unfortunate contexts when teaching language lessons can appear not because of lack of experience or insufficient teacher preparation, but due to being unfamiliar with "the strategies necessary for coping with the stressors found in teaching" (Schrier 283).

The pressure of teaching is constant, though, as Kurrle et Warwas (2023) try to demonstrate when decomposing the concept of *teacher well-being*. It does not stop with time, even if it diminishes in percentages as ESL teachers grow older and thus**,** more experienced and better at handling difficulties, including the unknown. What is the nature, then, of such pressure? Stressors are the elements that trigger pressure or emotional distress, hence they can be defined as follows: "something that causes great worry or emotional difficulty or a negative physical effect on the body" (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/stressor).

Examples could be noises, smells, class size, improper environment, misbehavior of students, the desire to supply "perfect" lessons. In this paper, we opt to investigate the last point in the above list. While the other stressors might be relevant for deliberation in high school or elementary school teaching contexts, in higher education, the stress to deliver impeccable lessons or lectures, to flawlessly perform rates highest as most of our university students are B2 or C1 proficient in English and they would demand more complex explanations or they would even question your credibility. One solution ought to be honesty- admit that you need to further research on the matter in order to provide a satisfactory answer, but this is rarely the norm with most teachers. Most of the times you need to thoroughly elucidate meaning or form, to deal with enquiries, without hesitation and, above all, you need not to panic. This is why teachers entail mental preparation, good mental health to be able to cope with the unexpected.

Furthermore, stressors can also activate physical symptoms in teachers such as abdominal pain, nausea, difficulty breathing, loss of appetite, muscle tightening, cold sweats, back pains, headaches, insomnia, ulcers. We can decode the following, along the same lines, encompassing the idea that reality and expectations do not always match: "when educators perceive a significant gap between their expected and observed levels of professional self-efficacy that causes burnout" (Schrier 287). Burnout is the disease of the century and

often goes along undiagnosed, being described as "extreme tiredness or mental or physical illness caused by working too hard or trying to do too much" (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/burnout).

Considering the above, how can balance be achieved? It is probably more facile to reach a balance with the help of a professional, a psychologist, and if required, with the help of colleagues through peer observation sessions or through personal, self-oriented work. In the case of peer observation classes, this practice is highly recommended because it can aid the observer in getting new ideas related to teaching and in building on their confidence as they watch other teachers perform and realize they neither need to be perfect nor to know everything, but they ought to respond positively to whatever challenges they encounter. Reactive teaching is always preferable to panicking or to pretending not to notice the questions asked. After peer observation has been done, reflection can take the shape of a questionnaire to improve your own performance in the future. Good practice is to write down answers to these questions to bring awareness closer to your next objectives, to, eventually, use new ideas on different other occasions: *What kind of skills were targeted?, Were there any activities to prepare students for the main task?, How did the students respond to the activities?, What could have been done better?, Is there anything that you wanted to do during the lesson but you did not find the time?.*

In terms of personal, self-oriented work, a teacher can exercise mindfulness which can be described as "the practice of being aware of your body, mind, and feelings in the present moment, thought to create a feeling of calm" (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/mindfulness).

Focusing on your own physical reactions reduces pressure while installing a feeling of relaxation and control.

Investigating groups of teachers, Capone and Petrillo (2020), Bricheno et al. (2009), Pillay et al. (2005) declare that the most successful performers were those with the best mental health capacity, while those who feared failure and found themselves under constant pressure of delivery and of appearing omniscient, proved to be the least achievers.

Chonpimai et al. (2025) investigate burnout and its impact on well-being among more than four hundred higher education teachers in Thailand. The study identifies key factors influencing three dimensions of burnout—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. It is especially valuable for academic institutions seeking to improve mental health support systems and calls for proactive monitoring and intervention strategies.

Thus, paying constant and sufficient attention to purpose, developing mental habits in teachers such as mindfulness can only result in cultivating teachers' resilience to stress and ensuring their professional success.

Working with emergent language

Consistent with the above examined mental preparation of teachers before actually holding language lessons, what naturally comes after such preliminary phase is performing in class. One universal truth to bear in mind, according to Richard Chinn and Danny Norrington-Davies' research, communicates that teachers "are made over time through experience, input, feedback and support" (Chinn, Norrington-Davies 1). In return, teachers have to provide support and scaffolding to their learners, without delay. To achieve that, educators need to develop their interactional skills to respond to learners' output which consists of listening and reading (receptive skills).

Classrooms as places of interaction should also be venues "for authentic real-life language use" (Illes, Sumru 3). In addition, "unplanned interactions can create conditions which give rise to humour and linguistic creativity" (Illes, Sumru 3), aspects that can ease the burden of teaching. Learning should be ludic, fun, enjoyable at all ages and this is a good enough reason why teachers should "encourage off-task conversations" (Illes, Sumru 3).

To exemplify the previously stated ideas, the same scholars, Illes and Sumru, conducted a research study in Budapest and Istanbul with students aged ten to seventeen. Data were collected between 2012 and 2013. Twenty five participants were located in Turkey and nine participants were based in Hungary, all being pre-service teachers of English. These prospective teachers confirmed all expectations, in particular, being too dependent on their pre-staged lesson plans as concluded by the authors: "highly dependent on their lesson plans" (Illes, Sumru 9). Unfortunately, spontaneous classroom communication is overlooked while off-topic conversations are "often marginalized by bringing them to a close" (Illes, Sumru 9). Given all these findings and many more, constant care and attention should be granted to creativity, spontaneity, reactive teaching through courses delivered to young teachers, through mentoring programs, colleague support, workshops and other forms of scaffolding as to be found in "Wellbeing for Schoolteachers" (2024), a volume comprised of intervention methods and tools to support teachers in their quest. Professional networks should closely work with young teachers to help them navigate through difficulties.

Looking at technicalities, or other issues than mental health challenges, given on to teachers, there are two types of language which can become triggers of communication in a lesson: target language (planned) and emergent language (unplanned, spontaneous). The second type encompasses utterances "needed or produced by learners during meaning-focused interaction" (Chinn, Norrington- Davies 7). This language requires the exploration, clarification and reformulation of a teacher to support learners in their ESL development of skills. As emergent language is incidental, it might be regarded as less

important. On the contrary, we believe that such language should be taken into consideration as it expresses the dynamics of the communication patterns exchanged between teacher and learners and when the former knows how to handle these patterns, he/she stands more chances of success, with no pressure and no stress-related consequences. To be more specific, emergent language could be anything, from grammar to idioms, from pronunciation issues to phrasal verbs, "any language items that arise naturally during interaction in the lesson" (Chinn, Norrington- Davies 10).

The main question we should be asking ourselves when the unexpected occurs is: **s**hall we ignore it or shall we serve it? On the one hand, if we decide to ignore it, our learners might get a bad impression of us considering that we are ignorant, not professional or easily distracted by things instead of focusing on the lesson. As far as we are concerned, ignoring emergent language is never a good choice. On the other hand, teachers need to decide if these items that come up spontaneously are useful or can be learnt within the proficiency level of the group. If learners are, for instance, pre-intermediate, they may find it difficult to deal with Future Perfect or Future Continuous, thus it might be wiser to tell them that such structures are to be taught later on, within a higher level of proficiency.

Still, reflecting on grammar Thornbury asserts that it "is less a thing than something that we do; it is a process. Learning, producing and understanding grammar involve engaging in processes of grammaring" (Thornbury 43). In this case, we cannot stop wondering: is grammar a set of rules to be taken off a shelf? Or should it be learnt as a continuous process? Can learners be expected to internalize the rules instantly? Many teachers would refer to "doing" grammar or covering it which "is consistent with a view which results in language proficiency" (Thornbury 44). To put it differently, grammar "does not seem to match the way language is actually acquired" (Thornbury 44), in which case, it would be artificial to teach grammar in chunks and not to refer to it when it happens to occur.

Following the same logic, the unplanned language that might be produced can be postponed to a future discussion as Chinn and Norrington- Davies advise: "any emergent language that you notice can become the target language of a future lesson" (Chinn, Norrington- Davies 10). Whatever the option, emergent language is born through interaction, through communicating voluntarily so it should be nurtured, sooner or later, to foster growth in language learning of ESL.

So, when does emergent language happen? The unplanned often pops up when learners make mistakes in which case error correction has to be gently made through asking students questions to allow them to figure out the correct form or the right meaning. In this respect, Scrievener argues that correction techniques are preferable "rather than simply giving students the answer on a

plate" (Scrievener 285), the purpose being to raise awareness and to help them correct their own mistakes. Moreover, emergent language can also be initiated by learners when formulating questions in the case of a mistake or uncertainty of choice. In the instance of Romanian learners, it might be challenging to feed emergent language as, from a socio-cultural point of view, these learners are not encouraged to ask questions when in school. This old, unhealthy practice can be replaced by a more modern and more engaging one which involves inviting students to ask questions when something needs clarifying.

Additionally, working with emergent language presents a great benefit since it is "a natural part of language learning" (Chinn, Norrington- Davies 13). Teachers might also call it "opportunistic" or "incidental" which does not mean its role in language learning is less significant. Regardless of the label, be it emergent or unplanned or peripheral, teaching cannot go on without it. While young or junior teachers might fear the unexpected or might consider themselves not ready to answer any given questions straight away (and the difficulty of that increases for non-native teachers), more senior educators could be more comfortable with such emerging summons. The unknown is to happen whether we like or not, whether we are prepared for that moment or not.

In fact, emergent language demonstrates how organic the process of learning a language can be and how beneficial it is for learners to exploit language bits through interaction, not following patterns that are artificial because these patterns resemble less, real life-situations. In other words, emergent language equals being offered learning opportunities. Sometimes, these opportunities are missed because of teacher's choices, learners' shyness, syllabus constraints, assessment requirements or time limitations.

In view of the above and to reassure some unexperienced teachers that they can perform well, a special rubric can be introduced in the lesson plan to predict the unpredictable, to a certain extent. The figure below can make a relevant enough example. Still, 100% predictability cannot be achieved:

Language item and example Say what the target language item is and give an example sentence you will use in the lesson.	**New to the Ss or revision?**	**Meaning, form and pronunciation: description and teaching** **M:** Describe the **meaning** of the item and explain how you will clarify and check it. Include any further examples, CCQs, definitions etc. you might use. **F:** Describe the **form** of the item. Say which aspects of form you'll focus on in class, and explain how you'll clarify and check them. **P:** Describe key **pron.** features of the item, e.g. word stress, contractions, sentence stress, weak forms, tricky sounds or sound clusters. Explain how you'll clarify them.	**Potential errors and solutions** Describe errors Ss might make with meaning, form and pron. For solutions, refer to your planned lesson activities, CCQs etc. or other actions you might take if necessary.
to reach a decision	**revision**	M: to make a decision F: verb + noun (collocation) P: /tə riʧ ə dɪˈsɪʒən/	Problem: Ss may leave the article "a" out Solution: T monitors and repeats the collocation with the article included
to stick to your principles	**revision**	M: not to abandon your beliefs F: verb + noun (collocation) P:/ tə stɪk tə jɔ ˈprɪnsəpəlz/	Problem: ss might feel using "to" two times, in front and after the verb is redundant and may decide to leave one out Solution: T monitors and points to the omission
to explore a situation	**revision**	M: to analyse an event F: verb + noun (collocation) P: /tu ɪkˈsplɔr ə ˌsɪʧuˈeɪʃən/	Problem: Ss might find the combination weird as in their mother tongue one usually explores nature not a situation Solution: T explains that collocations are fixed expressions and that they need to be learned by hear

Fig. 1- Selected from a lesson plan conceived by the author, Alina Costea, during a CELTA certification course provided by International House Bucharest Language School, in 2023

As for the engagement of students when they enquire about language items, working with such unpredictable instances might appear more memorable to them than an ordinary, well-planned in advance lesson. It also encourages autonomy in learners which translates to being able to make their own choices about learning.

As for the teacher's part in the matter, creating the right conditions to feed curiosity and understanding for emergent language stands crucial in the process of learning and teaching.

Looking closely at lesson planning, opportunities for teaching emergent language seem more limited in the first stages when the emphasis falls on the target language of the lesson, on practicing and producing it. Numerous such opportunities can arise in the second part of the lesson when the production phase gives way to freer practice thus learners can express their ideas and thoughts beyond strict barriers. It can happen when learners are asked to role-play a dialogue or to interview a colleague on a certain topic. Still, a teacher does not need to change his lesson plan dramatically if things do not go according to plan, but he ought to remember that the beauty of their profession is to be creative, flexible, to adapt to the needs and requests of the learners, not to blindly stick to a plan.

Further on, to illustrate the opportunities mentioned above with types of activities that are great catalysts for emergent language to be produced, we should start checking the very first one at the top of each lesson- *lead-ins*, activities that introduce the topic while trying to engage students in the discussion. These are mostly speaking activities, whether students have to describe a picture or to state their opinions regarding some ideas or themes. The disadvantage of a lead-in activity lies in its length as it is a warm-up activity and cannot be longer than five to ten minutes.

Another example of an activity that triggers emergent language could be *brainstorming.* While students are preparing to listen to a presentation on work-life balance in modern societies, they could be asked to brainstorm ideas related to this topic, so communication in groups or pairs can become a fertile soil for unplanned production of language.

Or teachers may invite learners to predict the content of a text by analyzing the pictures next to the text or by only reading the title of the text. *Prediction tasks* before reading comprehension activities are always fruitful for unexpected discoveries. These tasks can be expanded by introducing response questions such as: "What do you think?, What are your views on that?, Would you like that? Why/why not?".

Additionally, when giving feedback on a task or when correcting mistakes, teachers should not miss the chance to clear uncertainties, other than the target language aimed at in the lesson plan. It could be that the target language of that particular lesson includes Present Perfect which should not prevent any teacher from referring to the usage of Past Simple, by contrast, if circumstances require so.

Managing emergent bits of language could be strengthened by introducing intervention techniques which can be used successfully. The easiest one is *explicit reformulation* which equals to overt explanation. This can be contrasted to *recast* which is implicit reformulation (the teacher does not explain overtly, but reformulates what the learner has said). Moreover, there is *clarification request* which can be initiated by the teacher or by another learner ("What do you mean?", "Can you clarify?", "Can you give me a synonym?").

Another useful technique is *to elicit* or "encourage the learners to reformulate their output themselves" (Chinn, Norrington- Davies 60). This approach might be more time-consuming than other techniques, but it can be more rewarding. By the same token, *metalinguistic feedback* could be offered to higher level students, consisting of "you draw attention to the error, and then use grammatical or linguistic terminology to provide information about it" (Chinn, Norrington- Davies 61). The risk with this technique is that many students would find it too theoretical and too difficult to digest. With university students this technique might work as they remember grammar from school, but with other categories of students such as company students (people that are supported by their employers to learn English because they need it at work), it is better avoided. Still, metalanguage is used in textbooks**,** so it can be convenient to prompt to, for example, a tense and its usage in different contexts. But most learners will not find such metalinguistic explanations appealing as it might be the case with the next potential sequence: metalanguage is

> "the language used to analyze or describe a language. For example, the sentence: *In English, the phoneme /b/ is a voiced bilabial* is in metalanguage. It explains that the b-sound in English is made with vibration of the vocal cords and with the two lips stopping the airstream from the lungs" (Richards, Schmidt 70)

A more efficient technique bears the name of "delayed feedback" which entails sharing the observations and examples collected during overseeing a group or a pair of learners having the purpose of all students benefiting from teacher's explanations.

Apart from those already mentioned, teachers could use *recalls* ("Do you remember when we learned about….?") or interventions initiated by either the teacher or the learners. All these techniques and many others can be mixed and appropriately selected for the right audience, in the right circumstances.

Having considered all the above, one question still arises - What should teachers prioritize? They should prioritize different language aspects depending on the type of lesson. If the focus is on communicative skills then prioritizing language that causes breakdowns in communication does not seem advisable. If you consider a grammar lesson then, what is the priority, accuracy or fluency? Chinn and Norrington- Davies choose fluency as the ultimate target "as the desire to speak accurately is something that holds many learners back from taking risks and developing their skills through interaction" (Chinn, Norrington- Davies 76).

Nevertheless, teachers should encourage students to ask questions. They can also rely on their intuition to identify language issues, but this is not fully guaranteed to solve all problems. What is certain is that "working with emergent language requires a combination of skills and techniques, and each one can take time to master. Experience and practice matter" (Chinn, Norrington- Davies 101).

In order to apply the theoretical aspects regarding the utility of emergent language and the benefits of supporting ESL teachers to better perform in class given the realities that we face, we have conducted two surveys in 2024 on a selection of fifty university students in their second year of study (aged twenty to twenty one), Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences, Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania and on thirty ESL teachers from Constanta (having at least ten years of experience in teaching English to Romanian students), for various levels of proficiency and diverse learners' ages, from elementary school to high school and higher education. The method that we chose to use was random sampling to reduce biases so university students and teachers could express their choices to participate or not in the surveys (their contribution to the surveys was voluntary). Both surveys confirmed our hypotheses. However, limitations might be considered

due to small sampling, local context, respondents' cultural background (all of them, teachers and students were Romanian).

In the first research, targeted at students/learners, the questions used were: *1. Are you encouraged to ask for clarifications when something that you do not know appears during an English lesson?,, 2. How do you learn better? (through grammar, discussions, listening, vocabulary work), 3. Do you remember what you have learnt when you connect it to a topic or to the textbook?, 4. Choose a word to describe English lessons: fun, interactive, useful, well-organized, memorable, creative.* For the first question, 70% of the respondents said "yes" which indicates a high level of dynamics of the English classes. For the second question, 60% chose "discussions and vocabulary", 20% of the learners opted for "listening", while 5% went for "discussions and listening", and 5% answered "grammar". This is to testify, once again, that too standardized teaching and learning does not appeal much to students, as they prefer creativity, unplanned opportunities to learn a language. Such unsurprising findings led us to the next question, number three which was answered with a majority of 80% in favour of remembering something learnt through its connection with a certain topic. Further on, question number four in our survey saw a repetition of the words *fun, interactive, memorable, creative* which can only confirm that ESL lessons cater to students' needs and are meant to give them freedom of choice when it comes to learning styles. Overall, our findings matched our expectations, providing, at the same time, good signs of healthy habits of Romanian ESL teachers, regardless of the proficiency level they teach.

The second survey that we conducted in 2024 on a related matter, that of supporting teachers of English through training courses, peer observations, mindfulness techniques, led to similar results as the previous investigation. We created a set of four questions meant for ESL teachers as follows: *1.What training courses have you attended lately?, 2. What kind of support have you received from your employer in terms of developing professional skills?, 3. What type of support would you need in the future?, 4. Are you mentally prepared to perform in class in any circumstances?* For the first question, the interviewees mentioned a variety of courses attended in the last period of time, but many of them were aimed at developing students' skills (such as working with students with special needs, raising cultural awareness in class, using technology, teaching pronunciation and so on), not considering the provider, namely the teacher. In terms of support received from the employer, that is to say, the school or the university where they are employed, teachers said that they are regularly asked for feedback or are evaluated on their needs, but this is formal, in the shape of a questionnaire. They have also referred to support from colleagues related to teaching materials that are necessary in class and that they can borrow from each other, informal discussions associated with

class management or dealing with the unexpected, and, occasionally, peer observation sessions. As far as the third question in our survey is concerned, teachers would like to have more opportunities to engage in exchange programs with other colleagues of English from abroad, to benefit from more training courses that target their needs, not solely the students' needs, and would take training courses to teach them relaxation techniques, would build on their confidence and would, also, show them how to de-escalate conflicts or to solve difficult situations. The last question referring to mental health scored an impressive percentage of negative responses (85%), but with the additional message that, even though many teachers feel mentally unprepared, they reported that they do not have a choice as they have to perform whatever the circumstances. In short, teachers are under constant pressure to deliver good lessons thus focus should be concentrated on their needs as well, not only on those of students. While efforts have been made in different forms and shapes, including non-formal aid, educators still require to be trained to be equipped to deal with the unexpected, to be comfortable in class, to be able to admit that they do not know everything as to ultimately deliver memorable lessons to their students.

Conclusions

To reiterate the idea introduced at the beginning of this paper, according to which teachers are in need of mental health support and good care to develop their professional skills, especially when dealing with the unexpected, we strongly advocate for a change of focus or a more balanced approach in which teachers are, at least, as important as students in the educational processes. We also have to consider reflecting on teaching methods combined with substantial expertise when discussing about professional growth as summarized below:

> "To advance from a novice teacher to expert teacher, it is advisable to develop the ability to improvise when the unexpected happens in class, and this can be done by adding to your repertoire of skills. In this way, you are empowered and better able to meet your learners' needs" (Chinn, Norrington- Davies 107)

For the purpose of bridging the gap between theory and practice, teachers have to show willingness to reflect on their performance. It is best to be open-minded, sympathetic, free of prejudice to come to the best possible results. Teachers should "reflect on critical incidents both inside and outside the classroom" (Farrell 15). Reflecting on your actions is a human activity that has been practiced and refined since the dawn of time. We do believe, in agreement with Farrell, that "reflection is not a one-off event, but a lifelong endeavor for language teachers" (Farrell 18), a way of life, differently put. The

same author identifies three types of reflection- reflection on action, reflection in action, reflection for action. Broadly speaking, the process of reflection can be understood as:

> "a cognitive, emotional process accompanied by a set of attitudes in which language teachers systematically collect data about their practice and, while engaging in dialogue with others, use the date to make informed decisions about their practice, both inside and outside the classroom" (Farrell 47)

Therefore, teaching and reflecting should be perceived as interwoven. As permanently reflecting on your professional actions, standards, and results, leads to development, less experienced teachers, at the start of their career, can become more confident, more aware of the challenges connected with their chosen profession and thus more likely to faster solve difficulties in class.

In a study about happiness which is defined between purpose and pleasure, Paul Dolan finds that people declare themselves happier when they are satisfied with their jobs, with their boss, with their daily tasks "which suggests it is most important that the job is a good fit for the individual rather than the type of job per se" (Dolan 76). Besides, the author ranks socio-professional categories, with florists and gardeners being the happiest (87% of those interviewed), teachers being almost in the middle of the range (scoring 59%) and bankers scoring the lowest (44%). Happiness at work should not be regarded as a metaphor or as something unachievable because it is strongly connected to mental balance and sanity. As we can see, teachers still have a long way to go in this direction which calls for a lot of action, support**,** and care, otherwise their performance is going to be "sadder and sadder".

To conclude, teaching takes time and effort to be invested in. Teachers should be provided with a considerable amount of help in the shape of training courses, peer observation sessions, mindfulness practice, especially junior educators. This does not mean that senior teachers are sheltered from stormy situations or unhappiness at work. They, also need assistance, as they need to realize and to accept that one cannot know everything, that one can choose to exploit an unplanned event related to language matters or decide to postpone it for a better suited occasion. After all, teachers are managers of learning as Diane Larsen-Freeman puts it

> "teachers who teach as if their practice causes learning, while recognizing that they are not in control of all of the relevant factors, and that at the least they are in partnership with their students in this enterprise, can be true managers of learning" (Larsen-Freeman 184)

Whatever the profile, the experience or the choices made by teachers, this professional category must be held up to grow, in all the interpretations of the word.

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Web Resources

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