Integrating Emotional Agility into Pre-service Language Teacher Preparation: From Theory to Practice

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A B S T R A C T

Emotional agility has a fundamental role in educational contexts and developing agility skills in teachers is essential to enhancing their teaching effectiveness. The aim of this study is to improve pre-service language teachers' emotional agility through a four-module workshop, equipping them with the necessary skills before they begin their teaching profession. The research examined how developing emotional agility skills affects future language teachers' personal and professional development. Data were collected through five participants' opinions on the reflections before, during, and post-workshop sessions. The findings revealed that pre-service teachers gained emotional self-awareness, learned how to become "emotionally agile teachers," and developed practical coping strategies for personal and professional situations creating emotional challenges. The study demonstrated that emotional agility training can contribute to pre-service language teachers' personal and professional development providing them strategies to use with their own students. The findings suggest that integrating emotional agility training into teacher preparation programs can better prepare future language teachers for the emotional complexities of language classrooms.

Keywords: emotional agility; teacher education; emotional agility training; reflections

A R T I C L E   H I S T O R Y

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Introduction

The recent developments in the world, especially including rapidly advancing technology, the post-pandemic shift to online teaching methods, and changing occupational dynamics, require educators to address various pedagogical and emotional demands. This need becomes specifically important for language teachers because of using and teaching an unfamiliar language, which is full of insecurities both for the learners and the teachers, especially if the language they are teaching is also a foreign one for them (Crawford, McBrayer & Fallon, 2021; Dewaele & Li, 2020; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Teaching can include more demanding situations for the novice teachers who must deal with the realities of the classroom including challenging emotions. Since novice teachers are usually taught how to teach in "controlled settings", they do not know how to react when feeling certain emotions (Tejeda, González & Martínez, 2016). Therefore, teacher education programs are expected to prepare their future teachers to be able to deal with all these uncertainties. Teachers need to become conscious of the emotional labor so they can regulate them when necessary.

Emotional agility can be counted as a critical skill for language teachers in dealing with uncertainties. David (2016) defines emotional agility as a skill necessary to be able to examine and accept one's emotions as informative guides rather than barriers to be controlled. A similar terminology, emotional intelligence, as originally identified by Goleman (1995), includes self-control, passion, persistence, and self-motivation. Although emotional intelligence and emotional agility are distinct concepts, they are often used interchangeably in the literature. While emotional agility is the focus of this study, both terms will be used synonymously throughout this paper for consistency with existing research

Research in the area highlights the impact of teachers' emotional competence in education. Emotionally intelligent teachers, for instance in Gkonou and Mercer (2017)'s study, were found to create more supportive and engaging learning environments and maintain better relationships with their students, while Mercer, Oberdorfer and Saleem (2016) and Ning (2023) argued that these teachers lower their students' anxiety and increase positive attitudes. Similarly, studies by Dewaele (2020) and Oxford (2020) revealed many professional advantages of emotionally competent teachers. Dealing with difficult students, helping students cope with language anxieties, building strong relationships with their students, and fostering a more fruitful learning environment can be counted among these advantages. Emotionally agile teachers have also been stated to manage their stress effectively showing greater resilience and job satisfaction as well as maintaining their own psychological well-being (Mercer et al, 2016). Teachers efficiently controlling their feelings have been argued to be involved in their teaching activities better not only cognitively, but also psychologically (Zembylas, 2003). Yet, current teacher training programs have been claimed to primarily focus on teaching methodology and language skills neglecting their teachers' emotional agility development (David & Congleton, 2013; Derakhshan & Nazari, 2022). Despite the requirements of the current world to combine language teaching skill with emotional adaptability, this gap in their knowledge and skills repertoire is concerning for the teachers (Benesch, 2017; Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024).

This study therefore aims to address this critical gap by implementing and evaluating an emotional agility program based on David's (2016) framework. The program aims to develop pre-service teachers' capacity to recognize and understand their own emotions as individuals and professionals with the hope of helping their students become emotionally agile individuals. To achieve these aims, the study addresses three research questions:

1.   What are pre-service language teachers' expectations and needs regarding emotional agility training?

2.   How does participation in an emotional agility workshop influence pre-service teachers' personal and professional development?

3.   How do pre-service language teachers evaluate their emotional agility workshop experience in terms of meeting learning expectations and contributing to personal and professional development?

Literature Review

The theoretical foundation of the emotional agility workshop designed for pre-service teachers in this study, its significance in language teaching, and its role in teacher preparation programs all of which started to gain attention in recent years will be examined in the following part.

David (2016) focusing on the importance of emotions in our lives and how we can become emotionally agile proposes four steps of emotional agility. She claims that agile people are aware of their emotional experiences, accept them without labeling them as good or bad and without trying to avoid them and use them as a guide for their future actions rather than perceiving their emotions as obstacles for their lives. Four key components of the emotional agility model she developed are: showing up (facing emotions), stepping out (creating distance from emotions), walking your why (aligning actions with values), and moving on (making necessary changes). What these components are and why they are important will be explained below.

1. Showing Up

The first component of emotional agility, which is called "showing up" involves individuals to face their thoughts, emotions, and experiences with curiosity, kindness, and courage (David, 2016). It requires trying to acknowledge one's emotions without resistance. Petteneli (2017) claims that focusing on the feeling and trying to determine if it is a good one or a bad one decreases our problem-solving ability leading to lower levels of well-being in addition to consuming our mental energy. She further claims that some common barriers hinder people from accepting their emotions. Ignoring our difficult emotions, avoiding, rationalizing, or blaming our thoughts, overgeneralizing past disappointments, or forcing ourselves to be happy or positive all the time are among the signs showing that we are hooked according to David. Thus, to become emotionally agile, realizing barriers as the first step and addressing them later are essential to develop emotional awareness and to continue with the further steps.

Mark Manson (2022) adding on what Suzan David said even mentions the existence of "meta feelings" arguing that we have feelings *about our feelings*. He categorizes these meta-feelings into four types:

1.   Feeling bad about feeling bad which causes extreme self-criticism

2.   Feeling bad about feeling good which causes feeling guilty

3.   Feeling good about feeling bad which causes moral and ethical problems

4.   Feeling good about feeling good which causes overestimating yourself

As can be expected, while feelings are difficult to handle, meta feelings are even more difficult. Therefore, being self-compassionate which is not a common practice for many of us is strongly recommended as one of the best strategies for overcoming these negative thoughts and getting hooked in. When one is a self-compassionate person, he stops being the worst critic of himself with a perfectionist attitude. According to Neff (2022), self-compassion involves treating oneself as he would treat a friend. She argues that the components of self-compassion include being kind to oneself, rather than beating oneself up when one makes mistakes, remembering that no one is perfect and everyone makes mistakes, and becoming aware of external and intrinsic variables while accepting them as they are. Jarosinski (2022) claims that practicing self-compassion repeatedly increases our overall well-being empowering us to build healthy relationships and develop greater resilience.

2. Stepping Out

The second component of emotional agility, "stepping out," according to David means creating a psychological space between emotional triggers and responses. She claims that since our emotions have valuable information we need to use for personal development, trying to understand them instead of giving an immediate reaction helps us to respond to events flexibly and become an agile person. If we are feeling angry for example, we might actually have the fear or sadness underneath that anger; we can only realize this real feeling when we step out of the situation. Being an observer rather than the "actor" in a play, for instance, is one of the strategies David suggests for viewing experiences more objectively.

3. Walking Your Why

"Walking your why" is related to being aware of one's values and actions, as stated by Suzan David. This helps one align the emotional responses with one's values which function as a compass to make decisions in moving in the right direction. The hospital cleaning staff who viewed their work as making the hospital experience positive for patients and bringing them flowers can be mentioned as an example of people valuing what they are doing (Schiraldi, 2017). Thus, it can be stated that noticing the gaps between one's values and behaviors is the first step toward closing them.

4. Moving On

The final component, "moving on," includes developing a change mindset which involves believing that positive change is possible with effective motivations as in developing *'want-to'* motivations instead of '*have-to'* ones and developing successful habits. Therefore, getting out of one's comfort zone and moving to discomfort can develop a person's skills and nurture relationships.

Emotional Agility in Language Learning

Learning a language is a unique experience full of challenges demanding learners to adopt an agile attitude. Learning it in a foreign language environment is even more demanding due to many good reasons. To illustrate, even if learners succeed in expressing themselves accurately in a language completely foreign to them, the possibility of sounding "stupid" due to making mistakes in the pronunciation of a word would still require the learners to take many steps out of their comfort zones and adopt an emotionally agile aptitude (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). For Turkish learners of English, there are many additional reasons of learners' possible fragile emotional states just like the other learners trying to learn the foreign language in a classroom

context. In her study conducted with Turkish learners Aydın (2001) found comparing oneself with other students, teachers' comparison of students, fear of making mistakes while being spotlighted, and setting perfectionist expectations as the reasons of language anxiety in addition to different cultural variables (Aydın, 2001).

According to Jarosinski (2022), students cannot learn efficiently when they are suffering emotionally, and many suffer psychologically because of feeling lonely and sad. Thus, it can clearly be argued that if teachers want to empower their students academically, supporting their emotional well-being is also a necessity alongside their professional development. Oxford (2020) similarly points out the importance of emotional agility as a critical factor in creating inclusive learning environments, specifically in multicultural classrooms.

Adding to the importance of the emotional well-being of learners, Dewaele and Li (2020) discuss how teachers' emotional competence influences student motivation in using the target language and achievement. Chen, Sun, and Jin (2022) discuss the importance of systematized emotional training programs in improving student engagement and helping teachers with better classroom management abilities, in addition to their enhanced teacher professional identity formation. Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2010) and Ismail, Patra, Yang, and Ajanil (2023) agree with them and claim that the emotional intelligence of teachers influences teaching practice. Fried (2011) also points out that since emotions have huge impacts on learning, teachers need to be supported in regulating the emotional climate of their classes. The results of his study revealed some strategies to be more effective than the others because of the individual differences. He also argued that strategies that work better in different situations need to be investigated further. Yet, as Joseph, Zemen, McCord and Fado (2019) indicate, especially in higher education context there is a significant gap in the focus of emotional training offered to individuals and the studies examining their effectiveness.

Teacher Preparation and Emotional Agility

Despite extensive research supporting the importance of emotional competence for effective teaching, significant gaps remain in the practical applications in educational contexts. Studies such as Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2010) strongly confirm the influence of teachers' emotional intelligence on their teaching effectiveness. Most of these studies in the literature however mainly focus on in-service teachers and ignore pre-service teacher growth. This gap is especially concerning as Derakhshan and Nazari (2022) point out that although experienced teachers might regulate their emotions better, novice teachers' transitioning from being students to teachers often struggle with the challenges they come across in the classroom emotionally. It is consistently shown that teachers with strong emotional regulation skills show improved work engagement and mental health (Greenier, Derakhshan, & Fathi, 2021; Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024) with better classroom management skills (Valente, Lourenço, Dominguez-Lara, Derakhshan, Németh, & Almeida, 2022).

Addressing the necessity of integrating emotional agility awareness into pre-service teacher education, Elmas (2023) recommends the positive impact of including some practical exercises explicitly in language teaching classes. To exemplify, 'five-*minute emotional- attunement exercise'* in which students try to understand others' emotions and possible underlying reasons might be a good idea to encourage students to become more empathetic towards others' emotions. Or, by '*keeping compassion reflections'* or '*writing forgiveness letters'* to each other students can learn how to deal with their negative feelings and become agile individuals.

As a result, the literature points out a clear need for systematically integrating emotional agility training into teacher preparation programs. Pre-service teacher education particularly will benefit from models that combine theoretical knowledge with practical strategies to help future teachers bridge the cognitive and emotional dimensions of teaching. Research on the effectiveness of such program designs and implementations will guide institutions in incorporating emotional agility training into their curricula.

Thus, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature by implementing and evaluating an emotional agility program specifically designed for pre-service language teachers.

Methodology

The study involved five pre-service language teachers (4 female, 1 male) in their fourth year of study in the English Language Teaching department at a private university in Turkey. Participants' ages ranged from 21 to 23 years old. All participants were completing the second part of their teaching practicum courses in their final semester. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic during their university education, they were all familiar with online learning environments, therefore conducting the workshops on Zoom and sharing experiences did not cause any problems for them. All fourth-year pre-service teachers in the department were informed about the training program via an email explaining the aim and the structure of the workshop. They were also informed that the participants who were

- willing to keep a reflective diary throughout the workshop period,

- available to attend all four workshop sessions,

- volunteering to apply the strategies they learn with the students they have in their teaching practice contexts would be selected for the training.

Six pre-service teachers were selected for the training after the open notice, but one of them could not continue after the second workshop due to his health problems and had to quit. Since the training included in-depth discussions and personal sharing during the sessions, the small sample size was intentionally preferred. This size could make meaningful interactions and immediate detailed feedback to written reflections possible.

The training sessions, which consisted of four modules, were delivered over four days between September 29 - October 2, 2023. Each session was planned to last two hours, but all of them exceeded the planned period due to the detailed personal sharing of the participants.

The training program had three objectives: developing participants' emotional agility as individuals (Module 1 and 2), as teachers (Module 3), and providing them with practical strategies to foster emotional agility in their students (Module 4). The modules were organized as follows with the aim to answer the following questions:

Module 1: Emotional Awareness (Showing Up)

- What is emotional agility?

- How conscious of your emotions are you?

- How do emotions affect our lives?

Module 2: Personal Development (Stepping Out)

- How can you become an agile person?

- What (not) to do in our lives?

Module 3: Professional Development (Walking Your Why and Moving On)

- How can you become an agile teacher?

- What (not) to do in our classes?

Module 4: Practical application strategies

- How do emotions affect students' lives?

- What strategies can you use with your students to help them become agile?

The online workshop sessions were conducted synchronously via Zoom, in an interactive and supportive sharing learning environment. Each two-hour session combined theory and practice with various tasks encouraging participants to think about their experiences. To maintain confidentiality and encourage participants to share their feelings securely, these sessions were not recorded. In addition to individual reflection tasks, small group activities for practicing emotional agility strategies were also incorporated into the training program. This sincere but professional atmosphere encouraged active participation and honest sharing of experiences. In addition to sharing their perspectives, pre-service teachers were encouraged to ask questions to each other, offered constructive peer feedback, and contributed to the collaborative learning environment as desired for the training.

Data Collection

Reflective writing was used as the data collection tool throughout the four-module workshop. Participants' reflections were gathered in three phases: in the pre-workshop reflections participants were asked to write about their expectations of the training they would participate, and their current emotional awareness levels; during the workshop they were given various reflective tasks and asked to respond on them. One sample task for each module can be given as follows:

TASK for Module 1: Emotional Awareness (Showing Up): Try to be as specific as you can and write about what you are feeling at the moment in 10 minutes. Think about;

- Your relations with your family, friends, teachers

- What happened yesterday, what you are planning to do today, tomorrow

- Your dreams, wishes, fears, worries, obligations

TASK for Module 2: Personal Development (Stepping Out): Think about a time you were angry or anxious and focus on the reasons why you were really angry or anxious? Focus on one of the feelings and explain what made you feel angry/anxious.

TASK for Module 3: Professional Development (Walking Your Why and Moving On): Write your job description so that people would want to apply for it. Highlight the benefits. Especially consider those aspects of the job that call for your strengths, skills, and values—and give you the greatest pleasure, including interactions with others. Imagine hiring yourself. Keep the new job description handy. Reread it when you get frustrated or when you wonder why you are doing the work you are doing.

TASK for Module 4: Practical application strategies: Choose 3 of the following and give examples from your own life. Write about when they were told you and what you felt.

Giving advice /Underestimating /Lecturing /Consoling /Storytelling /Covering up /Sympathizing /Questioning /Explaining /Correcting

Each task was designed to enhance pre-service teachers' emotional awareness and promote their personal and professional emotional growth. The final module included tasks that equipped them with practical strategies for fostering emotional development in their future students.

The aim of the post-workshop reflections was to address pre-service teachers' overall workshop reflections, asking them to evaluate if their expectations were met and contributed to their self-perceived personal and professional growth in emotional awareness. Participants' suggestions for future workshop implementations were also gathered in these reflections.

Data Analysis

To categorize and interpret the data gathered from participants' reflections, a qualitative research design was employed. Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2012) framework. The recurring patterns were identified in parts related to participants' emotional awareness, and personal and professional development. These parts focusing on similar topics for each research question were then grouped into themes. Answering the research questions. Due to the limited participant number, the analysis was done manually. Some quotes were then selected representing each theme and presented using pseudo names in the findings part. To ensure validity, the themes and categories were shared with an experienced language teacher educator. As a result, an 85% inter-rater agreement was achieved.

Findings

The analysis of pre-service teachers' expectations of emotional agility training before the workshop revealed two main themes: their desire for personal emotional management and their wish to gain knowledge to apply what they learn in their own teaching experiences to increase their own agility as teachers and their learners. Regarding the first theme, participants expressed

their desire to develop personal emotional competence. Their expectations included being able to regulate their emotions, as in the following statements:

> *-to describe and control my feelings better (İrem).*

> *- to be aware of how to be an emotionally agile person (Seyda).*

> *-to learn how to react in nervous situations (Beril).*

Beyond emotional control, one of the participants, Ali, expressed his expectations to be able to identify emotional causes:

> *-to learn which emotions cause more reactions (Ali).*

Pre-service teachers also mentioned addressing the professional application of emotional agility in the teaching context, especially concerning how teachers reflect their emotions to students and the emotional effect of the teaching profession on them, as seen in Beril and Seyda's reflections:

> *-to learn how and how much to reflect my emotions to my students as a teacher (Beril).*

> *-to learn about the emotional and mental impact of the teaching profession on teachers (Seyda).*

The second research question examined the impact of the emotional agility workshop on pre-service teachers' personal and professional development. The analysis of the reflections revealed three main themes. First, the reflections demonstrated participants' improved emotional self-awareness to their emotional responses. Second, it was clear from the analysis that they developed a deeper consciousness of their professional identities. They, as the training aimed, they gained an understanding of the characteristics of an emotionally agile teacher. Third, as their reflections showed they developed practical coping strategies they can apply in both personal and professional contexts.

The following reflections to the participants' recognitions of their emotional patterns can be signs of the first step of increased awareness of their own emotional challenges can be presented as examples:

> *- I am my own worst critic (Seyda).*

> *-I have high expectations for myself (Melek).*

> *- I compare myself with other people (İrem).*

Their awareness was reflected in varying areas, for instance as we talked about how they struggle with negative emotions Melek mentioned the lack of coping strategies she had by saying:

> *-I never want to have any negative feelings and when I have them, I cannot control them (Melek).*

When the importance of being self-compassionate as a coping strategy was mentioned Seyda stated:

>   *-I am a very compassionate person, but I cannot decide how self-compassionate I am (Seyda).*

Pre-service teachers' reflections also revealed sources of their emotional distress caused by family expectations as in Melek's and İrem's reflections:

>   *-I am worried about fulfilling my family's expectations... I want to make them feel proud of me, so I put high expectations on myself" (Melek).*

>   *-My relationship with my family creates confusion in my mind. I feel stuck between fulfilling their expectations and living my own life. I ask myself if I am a good sister and a good daughter (İrem).*

Academic pressure pre-service teachers felt, basically the exams were indicated as the sources of anxiety and stress they experienced, as noted by Seyda:

>   *-I have a feeling that if I get a good score on the exams my life will be good (Seyda).*

Another significant theme noticed in the pre-service teachers' reflection was the tension between their personal values and societal expectations, as Ali noted:

>   *-I try to do my best to fulfill my needs and take a step forward, but something always happens and sets me back because the society I live in has different values than mine (Ali).*

Global and national challenges arose as the other significant sources of stress and insecurity among pre-service teachers. Their reflections revealed concerns about various external events and societal issues affecting their emotional well-being. As Beril expressed:

>   *-I am worried about my future. I am afraid of not being able to grow old and live in a safe environment. The earthquakes, the pandemic, and the recent events in the world and our country make me anxious (Beril).*

Participants also noted their concerns about economic instability and global and national circumstances of the world they are living in:

>   *-With all these uncertainties in the world, I wonder if I will be able to maintain a stable career and provide for myself (İrem).*

>   *-I worry about how these challenging times will affect education systems and my future students (Ali).*

As shown in their reflections, pre-service teachers were suffering from many psychological challenges caused by different sources. Considering the importance of the well-being of teachers in the effectiveness of their teaching practices, addressing these emotional and psychological needs during pre-service training should be prioritized.

In addition to enhanced emotional self-awareness, the data revealed increasing awareness of pre-service teachers' professional identities, particularly regarding the impact of the pandemic on their preparation, as Seyda expressed:

> *-I believe we lost a lot during online teaching. We passed the courses, but I don't feel we really learned. Especially the practical skills we will need as teachers will cause a problem for me. I do have an internal chatterbox about this issue. I feel I do not have a rich toolbox that I can use in the classroom (Seyda).*

They also mentioned feeling stressed due to the professional competition especially after the pandemic, as expressed by Beril:

> *-Especially after the pandemic I experienced this feeling of comparison and felt that I had to be better to compete with others (Beril).*

As another aim of the workshop, participants' conception of an "emotionally agile teacher" was influenced by the training they received. When asked to define an agile teacher, they identified several key characteristics an agile teacher needs to adopt including continuous professional improvement, technology integration capabilities, effective classroom guidance, and emphasis on emotional education integration. As Seyda reflected they also underlined their awareness of the importance of dealing with emotions in education programs:

> *-As teachers, we must help our students become 'emotionally agile'. As educators, we must incorporate emotional education into the curriculum by encouraging self-awareness, emotional expression, and empathy (Seyda).*

Participants also demonstrated indication of developing emotional management strategies and acquiring tools they could use in both personal and professional contexts. The workshop aimed to help participants increase their understanding of the temporary nature of emotions as a key coping strategy. As seen in the following reflections, it can be argued that they learned to recognize and label their emotions as the first step, as one described:

> *-What we need to do is learn the process and practice it. Firstly, we should think about our initial emotions and give them a label (Beril).*

> *- This awareness taught me that I should know myself and my emotions better. I learned that I should create a "space" for the sudden decisions I make (İrem).*

This understanding was also confirmed by Ali who noted:

> *-I have learned that our immediate reactions and feelings may not reflect reality and can be illogical (Ali).*

The workshop's impact was also clear in Melek's implementation of gratitude practices as a coping strategy:

> *-I have started to keep a gratitude notebook, and it has helped me a lot in realizing what I have and what is valuable to me (Melek).*

Pre-service teachers also connected how their personal emotional agility might affect their professional applications. A participant noted:

> -I can help learners become emotionally agile by letting them be themselves and teaching them how to be self-confident (Seyda).

From the analysis of the participants' reflections, it is possible to say that pre-service teachers developed enhanced emotional self-awareness, demonstrating a better understanding of their emotional patterns, and recognizing various sources of stress. They also showed increased awareness of their professional identities, in recognizing the importance of integrating emotional education into their teaching practice. Finally, participants developed practical coping strategies, learning to understand the temporary nature of emotions, and applying emotional agility concepts in both personal and professional contexts. These outcomes suggest that the workshop effectively supported pre-service teachers in developing both personal emotional competence and professional readiness for addressing emotional aspects of language teaching.

The analysis of pre-service teachers' evaluations of the effectiveness of the workshop revealed several themes regarding their learning expectations and outcomes. First, it should be underlined that all participants reported having positive experiences, with many indicating that the workshop even exceeded their expectations:

> - It exceeded my expectations and gave me more than I anticipated. Thanks to this workshop, I was able to analyze my emotions more carefully and understand the underlying reasons better (Melek).

> - It was like therapy. We needed to talk about our emotions a lot (Seyda).

> - We learned a lot, starting with the first module. We left this workshop with lots of useful information (Beril).

They stated that their understanding of emotional agility concepts significantly increased as demonstrated by Ali's reflection:

> -At the very beginning of this workshop, I did not even know what 'emotional agility' was. Now I have started to implement many strategies in my life thanks to the workshop (Ali).

A second noteworthy theme almost all pre-service teachers expressed was the value of peer learning and shared experiences. They highlighted how collaborative learning reduced feelings of isolation:

> -Thanks to my friends. We shared many feelings and thoughts. I realized that I am not alone in my dilemmas (Seyda).

> -It is such a safe environment. Everyone is so great and nonjudgmental (İrem)

They also appreciated being exposed to diverse perspectives during group discussions:

> -I highly valued the feedback from my fellow participants... listening to the perspectives of others allowed me to gain a more comprehensive outlook (İrem).

-I've learned that everybody has their challenges in life. That's a fact but, somehow, we all try to control our emotions. I'm sure this knowledge will help me a lot in my personal and professional life. It was an amazing experience and workshop! (Beril).

The workshop's contribution to participants' emotional management development emerged as a third theme. Pre-service teachers reported improved emotional awareness and stated that they gained the ability to manage their emotions, with Beril and Seyda noting:

-Now, I just stop and think about my emotions. There is no rush. So, I just stop, relax and try to be sure (Beril).

-During the workshop, although it was challenging to recognize certain weaknesses within myself, acknowledging and accepting these areas for improvement marked a significant step in my personal development journey. Particularly, I realized I lacked the skills to effectively manage my emotional responses. This process facilitated a deeper understanding of myself and my emotional reactions (Seyda).

Recognition of the potential for integrating emotional agility into their teaching practice was also expressed by pre-service teachers:

-As a teacher, this workshop inspires me a lot. I believe that combining the language teaching and the topic of emotions will create very curious atmosphere for students. Most of the student like talking about emotions. Maybe, by this way, students can get the ability of empathy to understand each other. Actually, I will prepare my students for life. This is the most important mission as a teacher (Melek).

- I am confident that I will implement some of the strategies and techniques I learned during the workshop in both my personal life and my relationships with my students. By striving to be more understanding and patient with my students, I have noticed a stronger connection between us (İrem).

- I have found opportunities to work more effectively and empathetically with my students by updating myself. This experience enabled me to perceive myself as a more competent educator (Seyda).

Finally, while most of the participants were completely satisfied with the whole experience and did not have any feedback for future implementations, İrem suggested an extended period and the format delivered in a face-to-face format:

-I would love to have such a useful workshop held face-to-face over a longer period of time (İrem).

To conclude, it is possible to state that the four-day training aiming to increase pre-service teachers' emotional agility awareness achieved its goals in meeting their expectations, contributed to their personal and professional development and they all appreciated this contribution feeling to be equipped with practical ideas to use with their future students.

Discussion

This study demonstrates the noteworthy value of integrating emotional agility training into pre-service language teacher preparation programs. The four-module workshop developed in this study helped pre-service teachers increase their emotional awareness, strengthen their professional identity, and learn practical coping strategies they can use in their personal and professional lives.

The emotional agility training and its impact demonstrated positive outcomes on future teachers. All five participants started the training process with very motivation and a stated desire to

develop their emotional competence and regulating their emotions. Considering the fact that participation was voluntary, this finding may not be surprising, yet what should be underlined, as also stated by the participants is the fact that "emotions are not a part of any stage of education". Despite the value of emotional competence in teacher education, as supported by earlier research (Mercer & Gkonou, 2017; Dewaele, 2020), the absence of the focus of emotions in the curriculum remains as a big gap.

When asked about their expectations to participate in the training pre-service teachers indicated their wish to understand how emotional agility applies in teaching contexts, particularly regarding how teachers' emotions affect students and how the teaching profession influences teachers' psychology. The final reflections of participants revealed the workshop's success in developing this self-awareness. While struggling with negative emotions and the lack of coping strategies at the beginning of the workshop they stated being more equipped in dealing with their negative emotions. This result of pre-service teachers' not knowing what to do in difficult emotional states can be attributed to the Turkish curriculum's heavy emphasis on cognitive aspects of learning while neglecting the affective domain. However, as stated previously, emotions can influence how teachers teach and how learners learn, and teachers must be taught not only how to deliver subject matter but also how to manage the emotional dimensions of teaching and learning (Richards, 2020). Such a support, as claimed by Derakhshan and Nazari (2022) and Farrell (2016), is especially required for novice teachers who experience shock including frustration, inadequacy, and isolation in their transition from being a student to becoming a teacher in their first year and who need to develop their conceptions of 'self-as-teacher'.

As findings indicated, pre-service teachers reported increased emotional agility awareness, recognizing how emotions are influenced by various factors mainly including family expectations, academic pressure, economic instability, professional competition, and global challenges such as the pandemic. Similar results regarding external pressures have also been reported by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012). They found that these factors cause stress and insecurity among pre-service teachers, which then impact learners' willingness to learn.

Participants using various coping strategies for managing negative emotions indicates that emotional regulation can be taught, and as David and Congleton (2013) and Richards (2020) suggest, explicitly addressing emotions through activities like journal writing, role plays, case studies, and teacher narratives in teacher education programs can be used as awareness raising activities. Supporting these findings, Chen, Sun, et al. (2022) also argue that systematic reflection enhances both emotional awareness and professional development. This gap has been noted in related research on emotional intelligence by other language teachers (Gkonou and Mercer, 2017; Pekbay, Karasu, and Tunaboylu, 2021). Turkish pre-service teachers' reflections in this study supported their argument of the usefulness of practical application and reflection opportunities in developing their emotional competence.

The findings of the study revealed that participant teacher trainees developed a deeper understanding of their professional identities as emotionally agile teachers, as revealed in their perceptions. Their exploration of emotionally intelligent educators focuses on characteristics and ways to incorporate emotional education through self-awareness, emotional expression, and student empathy. This recognition of emotions' significance in education also aligns with Benesch's (2017) findings.

This study aimed to propose a model for including emotional agility into pre-service teacher training by adapting David's emotional agility concept. The participants' reflections revealed that they appreciated the 4-step model. By creating an accepting environment and emphasizing collaborative learning, the workshop established the kind of "positive emotional ecosystem" described by MacIntyre and

Gregersen (2012), where teachers could safely express their feelings. Participants reported feeling better equipped to manage difficulties they would encounter in their personal and professional lives. As Benesch (2017) emphasizes, emotional management is a fundamental skill especially for novice teachers who face various challenges. The results presented participants' stronger perceived professional self-concepts, indicating that emotional competence training builds confident teachers. The development of practical management skills during the workshop offers promise for future teachers to achieve enhanced teaching effectiveness and increased work satisfaction. Many researchers have emphasized the importance of practical application and reflection opportunities in developing emotional competence among language teachers (Gkonou and Mercer's, 2017; Pekbay, Karasu, Tunaboylu, 2021). The workshop's collaborative structure has also enhanced the outcomes, indicating peer interaction and reflection facilitate the development of emotional competence. Similar elements have been reported by Dewaele and Li (2020) and Oxford (2020) in creating a supportive learning environment teacher development.

To conclude, the success of this training can be attributed to several factors: the creation of a non-judgmental environment, implementation of task-based learning approaches, regular reflection opportunities, focus on practical classroom applications, and emphasis on collaborative learning. The design followed in this study, including these key elements of the training program, can be strongly recommended for teacher training programs with similar objectives. Finally, the suggestion to extend the program length and shift to a face-to-face format might create more enduring effects than shorter virtual program.

Conclusion

Being agile is not an inherent characteristic of human beings. It needs a conscious effort to learn and develop. This study offers a model for increasing emotional agility awareness for pre-service teachers with an intentional effort. Since the results of the study demonstrated the effectiveness of the training program based on pre-service teachers' positive feedback, it can be recommended for language teacher education. The program's framework based on four key components of the emotional agility model by Susan David (2016) might also be used in other fields of education both at the pre-service and in-service teacher training across various educational disciplines.

The findings of this study which aimed to implement and evaluate the emotional agility program revealed three main outcomes, as perceived by the participants. First, participants stated improved emotional self-awareness and learned how to recognize their emotional patterns and the sources of their emotional states. Second, they indicated developing stronger professional identities as "agile individuals and teachers" and recognized the importance of emotions in language teaching. Third, they learned practical coping strategies for both personal and professional situations.

This study has important implications for language teacher education. Primarily it emphasizes the necessity to include emotional agility training into teacher preparation programs. A training conducted in a non-judgmental collaborative learning environment, implementing task-based approaches focusing on practical classroom applications and allowing regular reflection opportunities can be highly recommended to teacher training programs.

Although the findings of the study may not be generalizable because of the small sample, the experiences of pre-service teachers might still contribute valuable insights into emotional agility integration into teacher preparation programs. Future studies increasing the number of pre-service teachers and the duration of the training program would be very beneficial for verifying the impact of the proposed training program in teacher education. Future teachers in this study stated

being equipped with emotional agility strategies to use in the classroom. Longitudinal studies observing the real classroom applications of these teachers would be necessary to understand the impact of emotional agility training in education. Student outcomes of such a training also deserve focusing on. As David (2016) argues, longitudinal studies tracking teachers from pre-service training into their early career years would give more reliable results on teachers' applications. Research across various cultural and educational environments on emotional agility training could inform program adaptations. In addition, raising emotional agility awareness among teacher trainers who serve as role models for future teachers implementing classroom strategies would have significant implications for educational contexts. As Johnson and Golombek (2020) point out, what teacher educators do, including their intentions and the consequences must be made explicit to teachers and not just what they ask them to do. It is therefore possible to conclude that teacher educators' emotional agility awareness or lack of it will also have positive or negative impacts on teacher education.

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