11 Emotion Regulation amongst University EFL Teachers in Japan: The Dynamic Interplay between Context and Emotional Behaviour

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Introduction

If we are to fully recognise the importance of emotions in a language teacher's work, then it is crucial to understand how and why they might choose to influence the course of their emotions, be that the quality of the emotion, when it is experienced, its intensity, its length or how it is displayed. Such behaviour is known as emotion regulation (Gross, 2015), and its prevalence in language classrooms cannot be understated: we constantly regulate our emotions in some fashion (Koole, 2009), with Goleman (1995: 57) claiming the activity is a 'full-time job'. Situated and ecologically valid studies of emotion regulation are rare, particularly within language education, but there is increasing agreement that emotions (and consequently emotion regulation behaviours) function on multi-dynamic levels (King & Ng, 2018; Fried *et al.*, 2015). In light of this, emotions should not only be considered as intrapersonal phenomena, but also as being continually shaped by contexts; from the micro-level of a teacher's personal experiences and history, through their relationships with their students, peers and administrators, to the surrounding political, cultural and social systems within which they lie (Boiger & Mesquita, 2012). Endorsing the positions that (1) contexts are not 'monolithic external variables' (Mercer, 2016a: 25) but are subjectively interpreted by individuals, and (2) that the shaping of emotions by context is dynamic, non-linear and best served by

the tenets of complexity science (e.g. Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008), this chapter reports on an exploratory project into the emotion regulation behaviour of EFL teachers based at a university in Japan. We demonstrate that experienced teachers skilfully regulate their emotions in diverse ways to achieve a range of goals relating to their perceived responsibilities, their pedagogy and their well-being, and argue that the efficacy of their behaviour must be interpreted in relation to the internal and surrounding contexts that shape it. Given the important mediating role that emotion regulation can play in promoting psychological health (see Gross & John, 2003; Haeussler, 2013), we give special attention to some of the ways that the participants use emotion regulation to manage their well-being.

Emotion Regulation

Emotion regulation is contingent upon *goals*, higher-order motivations of regulation behaviour, and Tamir (2016) suggests that such goals pertain not only to performance and social aims (instrumental goals), but also to an individual's sense of self (epistemic goals), and their psychological health (hedonic goals). Research in general educational contexts shows that teachers apply emotion regulation in aid of each of these goals, including instrumental goals relating to classroom management (Hosotani & Imai-Matsumura, 2011; Sutton, 2004; Yin & Lee, 2012), epistemic goals relating to the perceived responsibilities of teaching (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Hosotani & Imai-Matsumura, 2011; Sutton, 2004; Yin & Lee, 2012) and hedonic goals relating to well-being (Haeussler, 2013). Thus, when a teacher wishes to hide their anger from their students it may be because they do not wish to impact on the class atmosphere (instrumental), because they feel it is their tacit responsibility (epistemic) or because they do not wish to feel negative emotions (hedonic).

Of course, teachers need a way of achieving such goals, and in the field of emotion regulation the term *strategies* is used to represent the tangible behavioural routines that modify the courses of emotions. There exists a large number of such strategies, and thus various heuristic frameworks have been proposed to taxonomise them. The most widely utilised framework, and the one that we adopt herein, is Gross's *process model of emotion regulation* (Gross, 2015), which has previously been employed in a range of studies within general education (e.g. Haeussler, 2013; Jiang *et al*., 2016; Sutton, 2004). While reductionist (see Quoidbach *et al*., 2015 for a full discussion of its temporal limitations), the model's virtue is its cohesiveness: it accounts for multiple ways that individuals might manipulate their external environments, as well as their own internal cognitions and behaviours, to regulate emotion.

The process model of emotion regulation posits that emotions unfold along a timeline. When an emotional situation is encountered, attention will be drawn to the event and it will be appraised. Should the event be deemed significant, an emotion will be triggered along with behavioural and physiological responses. Five opportunities for emotion regulation are afforded across this situation-attention-appraisal-response timeline. In advance of an emotion taking place individuals may apply *situation* strategies to the external world. These are actions modifying the external environment to manage emotions. *Situation selection* refers to when individuals choose to experience or avoid emotional stimuli – for example, when a teacher avoids teaching a particular class because it is stressful – whilst *situation modification* refers to individuals making changes to an ongoing situation, such as when a teacher stops dead an activity that is causing them frustration (see Morris & King, 2018). Once attention has been drawn to the emotional event *attention deployment* strategies may be employed. These strategies involve moving attention away from the source of an unwanted emotion or towards the source of a desired emotion – for instance, when a teacher ignores a student who is off-task to reduce anger. *Cognitive change* strategies influence the moment of appraisal itself and involve cognitive adjustments to how one evaluates the emotional event in question. A teacher here might excuse bad behaviour because of a student's troubled background. Finally, *response modulation* strategies, which occur towards the end of an emotional episode, target the symptoms of emotions. They are considered to be the only strategy which occurs after the emotion has formed, when teachers may choose to hide or display an emotional expression to the class, such as when a teacher hides their anger from the students.

One of the most exciting consequences of emotion regulation theory is that it affords teachers agency over their emotions, helping them to achieve a wide range of instrumental, epistemic and social goals, as well as playing a mediating role in their well-being (see Brackett *et al.*, 2010; Haeussler, 2013; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Hosotani & Imai-Matsumura, 2011; King, 2016b; Sutton, 2004; Yin & Lee, 2012); thus, emotion regulation can be considered an important teaching proficiency influencing a myriad of classroom outcomes. Although some qualitative investigations have been conducted within general education (e.g. Haeussler, 2013; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Hosotani & Imai-Matsumura, 2011; Sutton, 2004), little attention has been paid to the role of emotion regulation in language teaching. As we shall see later in the chapter, this is unfortunate since the unique emotional and social responsibilities of language teaching (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017), coupled with the fact that emotion experience and display is culturally informed (Mesquita *et al.*, 2016), means that language teachers who are working in unfamiliar emotional climates are likely to experience subject-specific tensions and stress.

Although emotion regulation behaviour as an action in itself is not unhealthy, it has been suggested that certain strategies are more adaptive than others. Laboratory research, for example, has highlighted the benefits of trait cognitive change behaviours over trait response modulation behaviours (Gross & John, 2003), and studies in general education (particularly quantitative studies) have tended to adopt this rather linear approach (e.g. Chang, 2013; Kafetsios et al., 2012; Tsouloupas et al., 2010). However, there is some evidence to suggest that the relationship between emotion regulation strategies and well-being is more complexly aligned with an individual's sense of emotional dissonance, particularly with regard to their higher-order emotion regulation goals and their identity (Humphrey et al., 2015); thus, the performative nature of teaching means that it may not be maladaptive to use response modulation to achieve instrumental or epistemic goals (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Humphrey et al., 2015; Tamir, 2016). For these reasons in particular, we adopt the perspective that emotion regulation should be investigated through a contextually valid methodology that attempts to uncover both the motivating factors and outcomes of event-specific behaviour.

Data Collection and Analysis

The research project discussed herein was designed as an exploration of three general areas of emotion regulation behaviour: the goals that language teachers report, the strategies they use to achieve these goals, and the contextual factors that underlie their behaviours. Data was collected over a six-week period during the second half of the final semester of the academic year, and analysed iteratively from one participant to the next in line with the principles of a grounded theory-based approach (Hadley, 2017).

The research was conducted at Matsugawa University (a pseudo-nym), a private institution located in a metropolitan area on Honshu, the main island of Japan. Matsugawa University has a significant foreign language department staffed by more than 50 full-time non-Japanese faculty members, who primarily teach skills-based courses to first- and second-year students. Given the aforementioned focus on the temporal, social and cultural components which shape individuals' displayed and experienced emotions, we employed a purposive sampling technique (Dörnyei, 2007) to recruit medium- and long-length career teachers that had taught for a significant amount of time within Japan. The seven teachers (three female, four male) who agreed to take part in the research originated from the USA, the UK and New Zealand, and all had master's degrees in topics related to TESOL, applied linguistics or international culture. They had been teaching EFL for 6–17 years (mean = 12 years), and had all taught in Japan for more than

5 years (mean = 7 years), with the exception of Kenneth (3.5 years). Each participant agreed to take part in an initial interview, a class observation and a subsequent stimulated recall session (Gass & Mackey, 2017). Prior to this, orientation meetings with individual teacher participants were arranged to discuss the goals of the study and gain informed consent. Classroom observations only proceeded once consent was obtained from students.

The interviews with participants were semi-structured in nature, and like other studies focusing on emotion regulation (e.g. Gross & Richards, 2006; Sutton, 2004), began with participants being asked to recall a time in the recent past when they had altered their emotions as part of their work. The proceeding classroom observations and stimulated recall sessions afforded independent observations of emotion regulation behaviour, contextualised the initial interviews and provided highly detailed accounts of event-specific incidents of emotion regulation. During classes, the observer took semi-structured notes on incidents of potential emotion, which were defined to be moments in the class when the observer (himself an experienced language teacher) reasonably considered that the teacher may have been experiencing an emotion. Recorded details included the participants' facial expressions, their movements within the classroom (including where they were looking) and their vocal transactions with interlocutors. In line with best practice (Gass & Mackey, 2017), stimulated recall sessions took place within 24 hours of the classroom observation to ensure that the details of the class remained fresh in the minds of both the participants and the interviewer. Given the short time span between the classroom events and these sessions, it was possible to walk the participant through the lesson from start to end in a form of mental time travel, with the participant commenting on their emotional behaviour throughout, and the audio-recording of the class being used to supplement moments of significant interest. All interviews and stimulated recall sessions took place in a quiet meeting room at the research site, were audio recorded and lasted up to an hour. A research journal was kept for the duration of the study and supported the analytical process.

Formal data analysis was conducted using the data analysis software QDA Miner. To begin, descriptive and structural coding (Saldaña, 2016) of the emotion regulation strategies and higher-order goals was conducted to situate the data within the agreed framework. This was followed by multiple further initial and axial coding cycles. Although generally speaking, individuals employ more than one strategy at a time when regulating their emotions (Heiy & Cheavens, 2014), the coding revealed salient themes that coordinated well with the varying stages of the process model of emotion regulation. Consequently, we took the decision to organise our discussion of the data around four main points: (1) situation strategies, combining both situation selection and situation modification

strategies with the focus placed on behaviours that make external world changes to regulate emotions, (2) attention deployment strategies, (3) cognitive reappraisal strategies, and (4) response modulation strategies.

Results and Discussion

Situation strategies and pre-emptive emotional control

All of the teachers consciously used situation strategies for creative control of their work and to maintain their well-being. Control was certainly at the heart of Roger's testimony regarding his omnipresent anxieties at perceived negative opinions of his teaching, feelings which stemmed from a mixture of internal and external sources: Roger reported being a generally anxious person in social situations, he was a relatively new teacher at Matsugawa University having worked there for less than two years, and he had been having problems with a particular student recently which had caused him significant distress. On top of these factors, he continued to feel anxiety from his formative teaching experiences working in an *eikaiwa* (private language school) where he reported that the discordant power dynamic established through the fiscally motivated teacher–client relationship had had a powerful effect on the teacher he has become: 'I had customers who had wielded quite a lot of power over you know, my living, and um yeah, sometimes when students get upset or they're just roll their eyes. I panic.' While consistent feelings of anxiety over a 12-year career may have led some to emotional burnout, Roger has learned a variety of situation selection strategies to maximise his control of classroom variables: he is highly communicative with students, making a sincere effort to engage with them outside of class; he ensures that negative experiences with students are followed up quickly with positive ones, perhaps by taking them aside to talk, or by simply making eye contact and smiling towards them; he eschews technology in favour of paper, claiming that 'it cuts down on chaos'; he employs his own set of class rules in accordance with his own beliefs on say, the use of L1, that go against the institutional status quo; and he frequently arrives in excess of 30 minutes early to class, despite occasional cynicism from colleagues.

Roger's behaviour, when considered as a whole, represents an effective form of emotion regulation known as *proactive coping*, whereby an individual builds skills and resources to predict and prevent future emotional events (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997). Proactive coping is potent in reducing the long-term effects of negative emotions (Quoidbach *et al.*, 2015), which is particularly important considering that even experienced teachers can be overloaded by the demands of the profession (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). Although on the surface it may seem that it was relatively easy for Roger to craft such a set of

anxiety-reducing strategies, he reported that he was not always so secure, and it is important to remember that proactive coping does not simply arise within a vacuum. Indeed, Roger acknowledged that the high level of autonomy he was provided by institutions such as Matsugawa University and the diverse experiences he had gained through a range of settings had been critical for him to come to grips with his past stressful experiences within the profession:

> I moved to a context where I was allowed to be a better teacher … (In my first school) the system was too tight. Like you know you could get a trained chimp in there to teach a lesson … (The job) took its toll. But then when I went to the other *eikaiwa*, it had its problems, but I could do whatever I want. And I you know, I dealt with it better.

Autonomy and control were at the heart of Hannah's use of situation selection strategies too. With six years in teaching, Hannah was one of the least experienced teachers interviewed. She noted that coming into the profession, she had held a strong vision and desire to be 'a great teacher … to change people's lives', but she reported feelings of frustration and disappointment, particularly in the early years of her career, that she wasn't always 'being who I want to be'. One of the ways that Hannah had dealt with these negative feelings was through situation selection: she had chosen to teach an extra elective which afforded her a substantial deal more control over content than her contractually obliged classes, and the impact of this control was revealed through her testimony:

> I like smile more … I have more energy … When (students are) like 'this was really interesting' and 'I can– I've changed this in my life because of what we learned' … It's really motivating I think to me.

Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) have drawn on the notion that constraints on teacher autonomy are a demotivator, as well as on ideal and possible selves theories, to suggest that teachers make efforts to maintain their vision of their ideal teaching image even when expected to follow extrinsic protocols. Hannah's use of situation selection here certainly appears to be an interpretation of this solution. It is clear that for Hannah, positive reactions to her work feed her ideal teacher self; therefore, when actively taking the opportunity to teach a class where she can forge her own learning goals, she is rewarded with a greater sense of well-being. From an emotion regulation perspective, the situation selection that Hannah is engaging in here is a form of *job crafting*: actions taken which help provide more meaningfulness to one's regular work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), and which can help to sustain positivity across careers (Falout & Murphey, 2018). Hannah is becoming

what Falout and Murphey (2018: 225) call a 'transformer', one who in the creation of her own course has redefined her role to teach more than just language, and her students' comments echo the way she describes her ideal teaching self, whether she believes she has yet attained such an ideal or not.

Attention deployment and the social responsibilities of language teaching

In contrast to the pre-emptive use of situation strategies, attention deployment strategies were applied for more immediate emotional gratification. For the teachers at Matsugawa University, their use highlighted the complex and dynamic relationships between a teacher's attempts to maintain their hedonic well-being whilst accomplishing their epistemic responsibilities, particularly within the confines of teacher–student relationships.

For four of the participants, their application of *distraction*, the movement of cognitive attention away from a source of emotion, was habitually applied to offset the negative emotions experienced when interacting with problematic students. Frank was particularly cognisant of this strategy: 'I have dead zones in my classrooms … Areas that I will avoid, often consciously.' Such a dead zone became readily apparent during his observed class, where it was noted that he rarely made eye contact with a particular student on the left side of the room. Frank revealed that his relationship with this student had recently soured following a reprimand for sleeping in class. Thus, when Frank was observed to be distracting his attention, he recognised that it was because he 'didn't want to engage … I don't quite know what to do with (her) … I don't want to have to go back and re- and revisit that memory.'

The first thing to note is that Frank's comments highlight the emotional complexities of maintaining positive working relationships with students in the face of behavioural transgressions. It is unfortunately true that fractured group cohesion can lead to an arduous school year; a thought to which Abigail, who sees some of her students at Matsugawa University four times a week, was well attuned: 'when you see students that often, you wanna be on the right side of them.' Language teaching relies on social interaction, perhaps even more so than other subjects due to its communicative methodologies and intercultural foundations (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017), and some have noted that the responsibility for imparting enthusiasm and positive emotions to students is in itself a stressful act: 'a motivational burden' (Acheson *et al.*, 2016; King, 2016b). This is heightened within the Japanese university context where it has been reported that non-Japanese lecturers like Frank are tacitly expected to be welcoming, energetic and positive (King, 2016b; McVeigh, 2002). We contend

from Frank's testimony that a potential reason for the stress of the motivational burden is his emotion regulation goal conflict. When faced with the intractable student, Frank was in the uncomfortable position of negotiating his desire for a productive social relationship against his epistemic notion of teacher responsibility. He eventually fell on to the side of the latter, perhaps in response to the very real consequences that ignoring the behaviour might cause for his relationship with the rest of the class: 'I need to send the message that this is not okay.' Unfortunately, Frank's chosen resolution came at a price, and a week after the reprimand he still referred to the incident as a 'trauma'. From the perspective of well-being, Frank's distraction should be viewed as a short-term solution. Frank is performing emotional distancing, a potential symptom of burnout when used habitually (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). Such behaviour could also be considered short-sighted, in that it may lead to further degradation of his relationship with the student, though since the semester was drawing to a close at Matsugawa University, there is also the sense that Frank could perhaps simply wait out the end of term.

Equally common were the participants' uses of a similar, though opposing, attention deployment strategy: that of *concentration*. Rather than being repelled by strained relationships, four participants reported being drawn towards, or lingering around, students whose level of engagement with the class was high. Abigail, for example, spoke enthusiastically about a group of students she frequently engages with: 'the richness of the interactions I have with them, it makes them enjoyable. Yeah, I might linger a little bit longer talking to them than I do with other students'. She reported that the group were of a high level, were studious, asked questions from 'a place of real curiosity', and self-selected to sit geographically close to her desk at the front of the class. It was clear from her interview that Abigail recalled these interactions fondly, and this makes sense when we consider that attending to positive events (both at the time, and later in our minds) brings benefits to overall well-being (Quoidbach *et al.*, 2015). Indeed there is a sense in the way that the participants applied concentration of a form of positive emotional labour (Humphrey *et al.*, 2015): that perhaps by attending to 'good' students, teachers are able to find some emotional congruence, and offset their negative emotions.

Such behaviour was not without its own emotion regulation goal tension, however, particularly for Dennis and Abigail, who reported conflicts over the ethics of preferential student attention. This delicate balance of negotiating hedonic emotion regulation goals against epistemic responsibility has recently been highlighted by Gkonou and Mercer (2017: 35) in what they have called 'the teacher paradox'. The authors therein suggest that there is a difference between treating students 'fairly' and 'equally', an idea that is worthy of further

discussion, particularly on what such behaviour might resemble in practice. For now, however, it seems that for some of the teachers at Matsugawa University, the emotional difficulty of balancing students who they would class as brilliant, or problematic, against the class group as a whole, remains a stressor tied to their emotion regulation goals which are themselves in a dynamic state of contention.

Cognitive change and the temporal dimensions of emotional behaviour

Emotion regulation, of course, can take place over a range of timescales, from the micro-scales of our mental processes, to the ontogenetic scales of our lifetimes, and it has been shown that it is routine for emotional responses to mature across careers as a result of experience (Mevarech & Maskit, 2015). It became apparent, however, throughout the data analysis, that *cognitive reappraisal* was applied even more dynamically by the participants, and this was most clearly illustrated in a series of incidents described by Dennis. During his initial interview Dennis described the following incident from a recent class in which a student shared some quite offensive stereotypical beliefs:

> One of the students was going on about how dirty Chinese people are and um, and he meant it … I was just just a short shortest period of disappointment, but then again caught myself and I thought actually no this is good, because this is the environment I want to create where we can share our thoughts.

Dennis here is describing prototypical cognitive reappraisal: in the milliseconds before an emotion took hold, he was able to reassess whether the unfolding emotion was constructive in light of his instrumental goals and modify the course of the emotion into something more productive. Of course, a complexity view suggests a series of underlying influences on this behaviour, and upon further exploration, it was revealed that a much deeper change had occurred in Dennis during the two years post-MA, when he worked as an assistant language teacher (ALT) in a Japanese junior high school:

> In the English class, the– it's all rote learning and the *ichinensei* (first year) kids would stand up … (the teacher) would just go 'No. Again. No. Again. No. Again.' And you could see all the– see them wilting in the spotlight.

Dennis spoke despairingly of this incident and others during his time as an ALT, describing what he saw as the crippling pedantry of the Japanese education system playing a causal role in the students'

inability to engage orally in the language classroom, an issue that has been shown to be pervasive in the Japanese university EFL context (King, 2013). He reported that these critical incidents, coming at a time when Dennis himself was becoming a parent and reflecting on what education should be and do, when mediated through cognitive reappraisal, led to a stark downshift in the optimism that he had for students' success. These experiences have led him to conclude that issues such as silence lie 'at the feet of the education system', helping him to feel empathy for the students. Such empathy, Mercer (2016b: 91) argues, is 'vital' to language education given its 'centrality of relationships, social interaction, communication and intercultural competence', and it is hard to argue with such a stance, at least from the perspective of teacher well-being, given the positive outcomes of Dennis's reappraisals, which have led to reduced frustration over time.

Five participants also suggested that applications of cognitive reappraisal functioned in more local timelines, most commonly across the school year. Again, we exemplify with Dennis, for whom such behaviour was vividly reported in his descriptions of ongoing interactions with a particularly difficult student. Dennis described his student as the 'alpha male', who had 'excellent English' and 'so much potential', but he also felt continually let down by him, and his emotions had fluctuated across the academic year. He reported three major changes:

> Explicitly in my mind I was like 'no I'm not having this. I can't start this way.' So called him up and gave him a bit of a dressing down, um in front of everybody, in the hopes of sort of putting him in his place a little bit. (Beginning of the academic year)

> Okay now, now I'm going to be his best buddy … I'm going to reward him by being more social and friendly. (Midpoint of first semester)

> I'm back to tough cop you know. Bad cop routine. I um, quite frosty … There's a sense of resignation about it. (Midpoint of final semester)

Dennis begins the year by adopting strict control methods as a way to cement his identity as the leader of the class, serving epistemic and instrumental higher-order goals. He then transitions through cognitive reappraisal into emotional warmth, serving social goals, before transitioning again into resignation and emotional distance by the year's end (hedonic goals). Dennis's behaviour is a clear example of how individuals and their contexts are inseparable: that they are joined in a dynamic reciprocal relationship (King, 2016a); thus, through emotion regulation behaviour, teachers can shape and be shaped by their contexts over time. Dennis's regulation and resulting emotional displays directly influence the student's behaviour, and thus all proceeding interactions

with the student. These in turn reflect back, affecting Dennis's future emotion regulation behaviour. Dennis referred to his changes throughout this relationship as 'exhausting his emotional repertoire' and it was surprising to the researchers just how common such an experience was: four participants spoke of their negative feelings of frustration and anger at student behaviour having been reappraised into what they deemed resignation as the academic year progressed. Since the data was collected at a late stage of the academic year, again there was a strong sense that these four teachers were in a kind of holding pattern until their stressful situations disappear of their own accord. Dennis's emotional journey, however, is indicative of the way that priorities in emotion goal conflict may be reorganised and resolved by teachers over time as contexts dynamically fluctuate. It suggests that while many teachers move into the school year with a sense of optimism, under sustained difficult circumstances they are liable to prioritise their well-being over other more instrumental goals, particularly if students do not respond well to their teaching.

Response modulation and the epistemic responsibility of emotional honesty

Emotional regulation, of course, can refer to an individual choosing to *genuinely express* an emotion or to *suppress* it, and both strategies are encapsulated by our final heuristic category of response modulation behaviours. As in previous studies (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; King, 2016b; Sutton, 2004) the teachers at Matsugawa University generally accepted that it was their responsibility to suppress their negative emotions, particularly when they originated outside of the classroom. They were also cognisant of the power of exaggerated positive emotions in the generation of enthusiasm (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Hatfield *et al*., 1994). Reminiscent to participants in King's (2016b) study who described their behaviour using performative terminology, the teachers at Matsugawa University used indicative language to suggest that their response modulation behaviours had become automatised, with Roger noting that he simply 'switches it on', and Frank referring to his behaviour as 'showtime!'

Interestingly, however, the participants seemed to wear different masks for different age groups, with the five participants who taught both freshman and sophomore students reporting stark differences in their behaviour between the two cohorts. With freshmen, teachers reported wanting to display 'warmth' and 'compassion' (Roger), be more 'lenient' (Abigail), or more 'solicitous' (Dennis), but they also reported controlling their emotions more: 'I'm much more aware of what I need to be expressing' (Dennis). In contrast, with sophomores the participants reported to show 'more frustration' (Abigail), to not be

'quite so animated' (Emma) and they reported being more emotionally honest: 'I am more relaxed about my emotions and managing them and um, just let come what comes' (Dennis). The participants lent diverse voices to the reasons why such a change in emotional behaviour occurred. There was a sense throughout the interviews that the students at Matsugawa University should be performing at a higher level after one year's university experience: 'they should be a bit more responsible' (Abigail). In addition, Roger noted that sophomore classes contained the word 'academic' in their titles, which he felt as an institutional pressure to treat them more seriously. Dennis felt that the power disparity had changed: 'with the freshman students I feel like, you know, the quintessential teacher with the – all powerful that needs to coax these people towards where I want them to be. Uh in sophomore there's much less of that'. No matter the reason, four of the five teachers reported that sophomore students generally did not meet their classroom expectations leading to a greater degree of overall stress than in freshmen classes.

Kenneth observed that since 20 is the age of adulthood in Japan, the mostly 19-year-old sophomore students may be undergoing emotional identity changes themselves. This sense that the teachers were dealing with young people on the cusp of adulthood was a particularly important issue for Emma, who reported a strong epistemic responsibility to provide emotional honesty to the sophomore students. This became clear through discussions of her observed class, the focus of which was a video introducing a series of sensitive topics such as female genital mutilation, gender inequality and pornography. Emma commented that when she had taught this lesson to a different group the previous week (unfortunately not observed) she found herself displaying very honest emotions:

> They wanted to know what X-rated was and you know we were talking about the sexualised images of women, and pornography … And I said it just makes me crawl when I see it … Even now you can feel, I'm like agghh! So I got that in class and and they – I let them know.

Even a week later in the interview, it was noted that Emma displayed strong emotions at the memory of this incident, but importantly, perhaps in response to the pronounced Japanese cultural tendency towards emotional suppression (Matsumoto *et al*., 2008), or the tacit feeling rules prohibiting the display of powerful emotions within distal social relationships in Japanese society (Safdar *et al*., 2009), Emma saw her conscious decision to display genuine emotion as a teaching point for her 'quiet' class:

> I got passionate, but I wanted them to see that … to get some reaction … To be able to show that I can get passionate but I can – I can regulate my

emotions as well like. I'm reacting to these and this is how we react … I don't expect them to need to go and follow up on any of this or, but I do expect them to react even somewhere in there as a human.

Emma's testimony reflects what Cowie (2011) and Loh and Liew (2016) have described as the 'moral' dimensions of language education: that content invariably moves beyond a focus on the simple nuts and bolts of sentence construction, towards a skill set for articulating complex opinions on emotive issues. In this instance, there is the sense that Emma is modelling an emotional morality: that she is demonstrating the emotional responses she feels it is important for the students to display and acknowledge when dealing with sensitive issues. Though engaging with these topics has the potential to be overtly distressing for teachers, Emma did not report this experience as being pervasively stressful. On the contrary, she appeared to feel a sense of congruence that her epistemic 'responsibility of an adult with these topics to young impressionable people' had been achieved; exemplifying the notion that emotion regulation cannot be defined as maladaptive when considered outside of its context (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Humphrey *et al.*, 2015; Tamir, 2016).

This moral dimension (or what Emma calls her 'human response') could also extend into the duty of care discourse, which purports that teachers in Japan have a prominent care-giving role to play in the lives of their students (King, 2016b). An incident described later by Emma suggested that she felt her role in this capacity also calls for genuine emotional responses, and on occasion physical displays of support in the form of a hug. The incident in question was a highly sensitive conversation with a male student who had come to ask for permission to miss class since he would be accompanying his partner to receive an abortion: 'he needed to tell me about how he was feeling and his disappointment and his confusion, and we were talking for almost an hour … I gave this student a hug because tap, tap on the shoulder didn't suffice.' Emma was aware that affection of this kind could be considered inappropriate, and recalled that during her pre-service training in her home country she had been strongly warned away from physical contact with students. Yet this attitude is not universal, and Emma cited a pivotal experience in a Korean elementary school where she was critiqued for not being physical enough with the students as informing a more contextually nuanced approach to her interactions. While she still had 'mixed' feelings on the use of touch and affection, in light of the seriousness of the incident at Matsugawa University, and the contextually appropriate duty of care, the use of Emma's hug becomes readily understandable. Emma's role as caregiver here was undoubtedly intensely emotional, and Emma reported to feeling the ramifications for an extended period. As a highly experienced teacher of more than

15 years, it was her support network of family and mentors that she could call upon to deal with issues such as these, but Emma questioned whether that might not always be the case:

> Does anyone have that kind of appropriate training to deal with teacher burnout? Teacher stress? Teacher frustration? Um depression? … What if people are getting depressed as a result of working here? How do we deal with that? Or any institution for that matter like, what is your mental health policy for your teachers?

We agree with Emma's sentiments, and support Haeussler's (2013) conclusions that institutional support can play a salient role in reducing negative emotions and informing healthy emotion regulation strategies by, for example, implementing formal support procedures, which have the added secondary benefits of increasing staff loyalty and commitment, and reducing levels of burnout.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has demonstrated that language teachers employ emotion regulation in skilfully diverse ways to achieve higher-order goals pertaining to their perceptions of responsibility, their classroom instruction and their well-being, and that such behaviour is contingent on dynamic interpretations of their internal and external contexts. Through the use of interviews, class observations and stimulated recall sessions with a group of EFL teachers employed in a Japanese university context it has been shown that teachers apply *situational strategies* in proactive attempts to maintain control over the positivity of their emotional experiences, *attention deployment strategies* to afford immediate, though short-sighted emotional gratification in correspondence with the quality of the student–teacher relationship, *cognitive reappraisal* in diverse temporal timescales to adapt to classroom stressors, and *response modulation* to support their teaching goals and relationships. It has become clear throughout that the efficacy of behaviours and emotion regulation strategies cannot be removed from the contextual factors that they emerged within, and that with regards to well-being, incidents of emotion regulation goal conflict frequently contribute to negative teacher emotions and stress. Training and professional development programmes can benefit from reflecting on the diverse ways in which teachers use their emotions to achieve classroom goals and their efficacy within context; raising awareness of the negative emotions that may occur during goal conflict, and how these may be resolved; and considering more apt long-term solutions to classroom behavioural concerns. The issues we raise in this study suggest that it is the institutions themselves which have a leading role to play in affording

teachers skills that they may use to manage their emotions effectively. Considering that emotion regulation behaviours remain underexplored, we believe emotion regulation to be fertile research ground for delineating the emotional skills of teachers and finding effective solutions to support them in the management of their classrooms and their psychological health.

Post-Reading Tasks

(1) This chapter discusses situational strategies of emotion regulation. Think about something frustrating or stressful that you have been experiencing in your current teaching or working context. What situational strategies could you employ to take charge of the situation?

(2) We considered how teachers might deploy their attention in order to regulate their emotions. Try to think of a time in your current working context when you have employed the distraction strategy. Why did you use it and was it effective? How about a time when you have employed the concentration strategy?

(3) Cognitive change is another emotion regulation strategy considered in this chapter. How have your emotions evolved as you have become more experienced in your current working context?

(4) The chapter also focuses on response modulation strategies. When do you think it is (or would be) appropriate to be emotionally honest with students, and when do you think it is (or would be) appropriate to suppress your emotions? Why?

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