

# “It’s Time, Put on the Smile, It’s Time!”: The Emotional Labour of Second Language Teaching Within a Japanese University

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**Abstract** Interest in the emotional dimension of language learning has been growing in recent years as researchers try to understand what role students’ emotions play in the complex processes involved in second language acquisition. This chapter represents a new conceptual direction within language learning research because rather than focusing on learners’ emotions, it provides an in-depth account of the emotional labour performed by instructors. Emotional labour is the forced management of one’s emotions in order to conform to the social norms associated with a professional role. Teaching involves high levels of emotional labour as teachers are required to manage and display particular emotions in appropriate ways in front of students. Reflecting the dynamic and shifting nature of emotional states, the chapter draws from data collected during a series of semi-structured interviews to report upon the surface acting, deep acting and the suppression of emotions performed by a sample of language instructors teaching English within a Japanese university. As emotions are socially and culturally derived, the chapter examines issues surrounding emotional labour within intercultural contexts, and considers potential links between emotional labour, teacher stress and burnout.

**Keywords** Emotions · Emotional labour · Teacher stress · Surface acting · Deep acting

## 1 Introduction

In recent years, the emotional dimension of second language (L2) learning and use has begun to catch the attention of applied linguistics researchers, with an increasing number of studies focusing on the role that learners’ emotions play in success or failure to acquire a foreign language (e.g., Dewaele, 2005; Gregersen, MacIntyre, & Meza, 2014; Méndez López & Fabela Cárdenas, 2014; Mercer, 2006). Rather than

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examining learners' inner psychological experiences, this chapter represents a new conceptual direction within L2 research in that it provides an account of the emotional labour performed by instructors. Teaching is an inherently emotional endeavour (Hargreaves, 1998, 2000; Meyer, 2009; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Zembylas, 2005, 2007) and to be successful at it is not merely a case of acquiring good subject knowledge and a familiarity with pedagogical techniques. As Hargreaves (1998, p. 835) points out, "Good teachers are not just well-oiled machines. They are emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy." At the heart of teaching lie the interactions which occur between the teacher and those being taught, and it is this interpersonal exchange which brings with it a critically important emotional dimension to the profession.

Adopting the perspective that emotions are dynamically fluctuating phenomena (Dörnyei, 2009; Gregersen, MacIntyre, & Meza, 2014) whose antecedents and consequences are best understood when the social context and the interpersonal relationships formed within this context are examined (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Parkinson, 1996), in this chapter I report on a small-scale exploratory project, which aimed to investigate the self-reported in-class emotions experienced by five experienced foreign language instructors working within a private university in Japan. I discuss the notion that there exist tacit psycho-cultural norms, which shape what 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' teacher emotions are within particular contexts and relate how the participants in the current study responded to these norms through the self-regulation of their emotions during classroom practice. Teachers' emotional job demands are inherently stressful (Greenglass, 2000; Kyriacou, 2001) and so I report on some of the strategies participants used in order to protect themselves from this stress in an effort to maintain their psychological well-being.

## 2 Emotional Labour

The term *emotional labour* was first coined by the sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1979, 1983) to describe how workers, usually in the service sector, manufacture or suppress their emotions during interactions with others. This forced management of one's feelings is undertaken with the aim of displaying emotions deemed to be appropriate within specific social contexts and which conform to the social norms associated with a particular professional role. A commonly cited (e.g., Benesch, 2012) illustration of this, and one that is based on Hochschild's original research, is the case of flight attendants, who are expected to remain outwardly calm and smiling for the duration of the flight as a sign of reassurance to passengers. The effort required to express such organisationally desired emotions can be mentally exhausting and a dissonance between one's true feelings and one's sanctioned emotional displays may result in self-estrangement and depersonalisation (Hochschild, 1983; Näring, Briët, & Brouwers, 2006; Näring, Vlerick, & Van de Ven, 2012; Tsang, 2011). If viewed from a Marxian perspective, this loss of control

over emotional displays and the inability to show ‘true’ emotions at work mean employees’ emotions may be deemed to be the commodities of the organisation they work for and hence exploited for profit (Fineman, 2000; Hochschild, 1983). Indeed, as we shall see later on in the chapter, the financially-driven practices of educational institutions can significantly impact upon the emotions of their employees.

That said, it would be wrong to conceptualise emotional labour as being a solely negative phenomenon. The managed display of a teacher’s emotions serves to maintain good interpersonal relationships with students, thus helping to achieve academic and social benefits, and may also act as a way of socialising younger learners to appropriately regulate and display their own emotions (Chang & Davis, 2009). Furthermore, when teachers are able to pursue their own agendas through the use of emotional labour, rather than employing it to suit the wishes of others, it can lead to pleasurable and rewarding experiences in the classroom (Hargreaves, 2000). Finally, the presence of emotional consonance (see Zammuner & Galli, 2005), whereby appropriate emotions coincide with what is actually felt and can therefore be outwardly expressed with relatively small effort in the pursuit of educational goals, is another potentially positive aspect of the emotional dimension of staff-student interactions helping shape enhanced feelings of personal accomplishment for teachers.

### 3 Data Collection and Analysis

The research described in this chapter was essentially small-scale and exploratory in nature meaning the study was not bound by a rigid set of research questions but rather its lines of inquiry remained open and flexible in response to new and relevant themes as they emerged during the course of an iterative process of data collection and analysis. Using Zembylas’s (2005) taxonomy of teacher emotions as its initial point of reference, the study employed a semi-structured interview approach, which aimed to explore teachers’ perceptions and beliefs about the emotional labour involved in teaching English as a foreign language in their workplace, particularly with regard to how contextual factors helped shape their emotions at work. The interviews also aimed to uncover examples of actual classroom incidents which the participants deemed to have had a significant emotional dimension for them, whilst seeking to better understand the differing strategies they used to regulate their emotions during classroom exchanges and how they coped more generally with the stress-inducing emotional labour demands of their jobs. One’s emotions are, of course, highly personal and present a potentially sensitive topic for investigation. With this in mind, I decided to conduct a series of non-threatening, unobtrusive exploratory interviews because this type of qualitative approach held most promise for gaining in-depth, meaningful accounts of the teachers’ emotional labour. Such an approach is underlined by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) who draw on Oppenheim to remind us that exploratory interviews

are commonly employed to investigate emotionally loaded topics and, with skill on the part of the researcher, they enable participants “to talk freely and emotionally and to have candour, richness, depth, authenticity, and honesty about their experiences” (p. 413).

The research site was a large, private university located in a metropolitan area on Japan’s main island of Honshu. For the sake of institutional anonymity, I will refer to the site as Takanami University. Well known for specialising in foreign language instruction, the university boasts an enrolment of around 13,000 students, over three quarters of whom are undergraduates following four-year bachelor degree programmes. A typical student at the institution would be a female in her late teens/early twenties who commutes daily to the university’s relatively new and prestigious campus in order to study English Language and Communication. She might be taught by one or more of Takanami’s approximately 200 full- and part-time non-Japanese faculty; many of whom reside in purpose-built accommodation provided on campus.

A purposive sampling strategy (Patton, 2002) was adopted to select a cohort of mid- to late-career expatriate instructors in full-time employment at the research site, who were responsible for teaching English as a foreign language to undergraduate students. In order to avoid superficial accounts of the institutional and socio-cultural aspects of the study, a key criterion when selecting interviewees was that they had to be in possession of a relatively prolonged (more than 5 years) experience of language teaching specifically within a Japanese context. In the end, five teachers agreed to take part in the study, four males and one female, whose teaching careers spanned from nine to 26 years, with the average being 19 years. Set out below is a brief introduction to each of these participants (all names are pseudonyms):

- Rufus: Rufus became an English language teacher after graduating from university in his native United States with a first degree in the late 1980s. He initially taught for a number of years in China before moving on to the Middle East and eventually ending up in Japan. Of his 26 years of teaching experience, the last nine have been in Japan working at the research site where he teaches integrated skills classes to first-year students.
- Alexander: Like Rufus, Alexander is also a veteran language practitioner with over 25 years in the profession. Originally from the United States, Alexander has taught in a range of contexts around the world, including a substantial period in Central Europe where he worked as a teacher trainer in the state sector there. He has 6 years’ experience teaching English in Japan.
- Marcus: Also coming from the United States is Marcus who has 18 years of experience teaching English as a foreign language. He has spent 10 years working in Japan, the last eight of which have been in his current position where he primarily teaches English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to first-year students.

- Nora: Nora is an Australian who has 9 years of language teaching experience, five of which have been in Japan at her current workplace. She has a background in modern foreign languages and studied Spanish and German before embarking on a teaching career in mainstream education. In her current role, she teaches social science content-based classes in addition to ones which focus on developing students' integrated skills for EAP.
- Jonah: At the time of interview, Jonah had been an English language professional for 16 years and had spent 12 of these teaching in Japan. Despite being a United States citizen, he received the bulk of his education in Japan and had consequently become a fluent speaker of Japanese. Jonah was selected for the study in part because of his 'insider knowledge' and the emic perspective he could bring to interpreting classroom events and student behaviour.

Following an explanation of the purposes of the study and after having gained their informed consent via a written consent form, participants were interviewed in face-to-face, in-depth sessions, which lasted for up to one hour. All of the interviews were audio recorded with the interviewees' permission and then transcribed as soon as possible after the encounter in order to allow for concurrent data collection and analysis to take place. This approach made it possible for emerging patterns of data from one interview to feed in and inform subsequent data collection sessions. Grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) guided an iterative process of data coding, whereby transcripts were read multiple times to identify significant and relevant content themes. I find that I can engage most deeply with transcriptions when I can physically manipulate them in my hands, allowing me to pick up one section, compare it to another, place similar testimony together, and so on. As a consequence, and though it might appear rather low-tech nowadays, coding was performed on hard copy texts, with initial low-inference codes gradually being supplemented for higher order, emotional labour-relevant ones. To complement the interview data, I kept a research journal (see Altrichter & Holly, 2011), in which I noted down my ideas and reflections following each interview and throughout the project, thus contributing to the ongoing process of interpretation and analysis.

## 4 Results and Discussion

### 4.1 *The Emotional Labour of Caring for Students*

Teachers' beliefs about caring for students play a critical role in shaping their professional identities, and help guide the pedagogical choices they make (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; O'Connor, 2008). While the humanistic aspects of teaching can be a source of intrinsic motivation for some educators, for others, there may be a dissonance between the care they are expected to display and what they actually feel

towards students. The emotional labour of having to induce context-appropriate caring emotions or suppressing inappropriate non-caring ones is likely to prove draining over time. As Alexander put it when talking about his long career, “I’ve always been interested in people and I don’t think I’d have been able to teach this long if the care had been artificial or manufactured. That would be *very* stressful.”

All of the teachers in the study spoke to some degree about the importance they placed on building and maintaining caring relationships with their students at the university (cf. Cowie, 2011). However, the participant who stood out in this regard was Jonah, who spoke extensively about the care and nurture he invested in his students and how he believed this was an essential part of a teacher’s role within a Japanese educational setting. Jonah recounted how the turning point in how he regarded his professional identity had occurred a few years earlier when he began working at a Catholic high school in Japan which placed great emphasis on the moral instruction of its pupils rather than focusing exclusively on academic progress. Jonah described how the school termed this approach as “education of the heart” and explained how he had been heavily influenced by the way in which his colleagues systematically acted as a kind of “third parent” to the students in their charge. He explained:

Part of the role of the educator in Japan is similar to a parent. So even as a college professor, there are times when I am a surrogate parent for my students. If a student needs me in that capacity, I’m there. The subject of what I teach is secondary to my relationship with my students. It’s what I believe education should be. Foremost is my relationship with my students and I open myself up completely to them.

The first point to make about Jonah’s testimony is that it illustrates well the notion that teachers’ professional identities constantly evolve and dynamically reflect the socially situated aspects of their roles as they emerge through interaction with others (see Flores & Day, 2006; O’Connor, 2008). Establishing supportive and caring relationships with students and helping them to deal with various non-academic problems was much more of a priority for Jonah in his teaching than developing his students’ second language skills. While Hargreaves (2000, p. 813) argues that placing too much emphasis on emotional caring for students can in some circumstances lead to a “welfarist’ culture” in which academic achievement is occluded, Jonah’s interview data suggests he believed such an approach to be wholly appropriate to the context he was working in. His reference to himself as a “third parent” might at first glance seem overly indulgent and inappropriate, but when we consider the transferential nature of student-teacher relationships and the importance placed on interdependency within Japanese educational settings (see Hendry, 1986), Jonah’s assessment of the importance of care in his professional role becomes all the more understandable. Indeed, Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998) alert us to the value of viewing individuals’ classroom experiences within a transferential context and argue, “Relationships with teachers are almost always transferential. For most students, there probably is an unconscious hope that the teacher will enact the role of a good, nurturing, protective parent” (p. 188). Jonah appears to have readily taken on such a role but research into the emotional labour of teachers

working in mainstream education contexts (e.g., Rogers & Webb, 1991) suggests that the asymmetrical nature of care in staff-student relationships may leave teachers vulnerable and open to emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, and as I will discuss later on in the chapter, an inability to engage in some degree of emotional distancing is likely in the long term to harm the psychological well-being of a teacher.

## 4.2 *The Suppression of Negative Emotions*

Emotional labour, of course, does not just involve the regulation of positive emotions such as caring. All of the participants in the study spoke about managing negative emotions which they regularly experienced in their teaching at Takanami University. The most common among these involved feelings of irritation, frustration and anger in response to what they perceived to be uncooperativeness on the part of some students during learning tasks. All of the teachers in the sample recounted how they engage in emotional labour when faced with such incidents by actively suppressing negative emotions and making a conscious effort not to display their true feelings to the students. As an example of this, Rufus recounted a classroom incident he had experienced just prior to our interview. Part way through teaching an integrated skills lesson to a group of first-year students, it became clear to Rufus that the majority of the class were simply not listening to him, preferring their own off-task conversations to his task instructions. In order to win back their attention, he pretended to storm out of the room in a melodramatic manner. I asked Rufus what his true emotions were during the incident. He responded:

I was annoyed but annoyed such that it was kind of a game. I didn't show my true emotions, how really pissed off I was 'cos I came back in with a big smile on my face. Actually, I was really angry but I could only show it in a comical way.

Other participants also spoke about their efforts to avoid displaying negative emotions when teaching. Alexander explained, "I won't display anger or irritation but if one's been provoked, I think it's only fair to show one's not amused. But one doesn't get into a rant." Marcus too explained how he was careful not to show how he really felt when negative emotions arose in his teaching, explaining "I try to regulate frustration when the students are chatting constantly in Japanese and no one else is intervening. I try to laugh and smile but it's hard when it happens every week." As experienced professionals with long service at the chalk-front, the participants were well aware that teachers play a crucial role in forming a positive learning atmosphere within the classroom and that the display of negative emotions is hardly conducive to establishing and maintaining such an environment. In the words of Jonah, "Anger and frustration damage relationships in the class and aren't productive in terms of teaching the students or building a relationship with the students." While such an awareness of the potentially harmful effects of unpleasant emotions may help teachers to justify the management of their in-class, public emotional displays, certain student behaviours can nevertheless still trigger negative

emotional reactions even in the most saintly of instructors. One such trigger discussed by the teachers in the current study was the non-participation and silence of some of their learners.

Although the teachers were in agreement that students at Takanami University were generally very well-behaved and any disruption occurring during lessons was of a relatively low-level nature, a recurring theme in the interviews was the way in which some students' silent behaviour had the potential to trigger a negative emotional response within the participants. For example, Rufus talked about the annoyance that orally non-responsive students sometimes induced in him, stating it was his belief that some of his learners employed silence as a means of forestalling any further L2 interaction with him whilst he monitored group activities in class:

Well, of course it violates standard conversation practices that when someone asks you a question and actually selects you as the next-turn speaker, that it's your kind of job to respond to that individual. And leaving that person in the lurch by having extended silence or just staring profoundly doe-eyed at someone without saying 'I'm sorry?' or 'pardon me?' or 'could you repeat that?'—any of the small things actually I taught at the very beginning of the year. So that's where my anger came from, was that this would be a pattern that seemed to be effective in terms of getting me to walk away. (Rufus)

In previous research (King, 2013a, b, 2014), I have demonstrated how verbal unresponsiveness in Japan's L2 university classrooms is a commonplace, yet complex phenomenon, with learners' silences emerging through a series of interconnected routes shaped both by external situational influences and learner-internal factors. Rather than simply denoting passivity or a lack of L2 ability, the silence that triggered Rufus's irritation is interpreted by him to be a tactical construct of non-cooperation and hence it represents an active state in which the learner has *chosen* to refrain from talk. For Rufus, it is the seemingly volitional nature of this silence (see MacIntyre, 2007), and the way it signifies a rejection of him as an interlocutor, that appears to play a major role in his negative emotional response. In my research journal I noted after our interview that Rufus spoke with some animation about this issue, and that even after 9 years at the university, unresponsive students still appeared to be drip-feeding his stress levels at work.

Alexander and Marcus also spoke about having to manage their feelings of frustration when met by a wall of silence in their teaching but indicated they felt better able to cope (both psychologically and pedagogically) with such incidents now compared to when they first began teaching at the university. While student silence was still the source of some exasperation for both teachers, Marcus explained how he had tried to embrace the concept of teacher wait-time (see Ingram & Elliott, 2014) when dealing with it, while Alexander spoke about how his improved knowledge of Japanese socio-cultural issues (see Lebra, 1987) had led him to try and gain a more empathetic understanding of why some learners refrained from conversing in the target language in his classroom. In Marcus's case, it is interesting to note that the use of silence itself can be an effective tool for emotion management (Saunders, 1985), and by extending his silent wait-time when interacting with students he would have gained valuable cognitive appraisal space to engage in such management.

### ***4.3 Bearing the Motivational Burden Through Emotional Labour***

Intimately linked to classroom silence is the issue of student motivation. While recent strides in L2 motivational research (e.g., Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015) have demonstrated how learner motivation is a dynamically evolving construct constantly shaped by any number of intervening variables, a number of teachers in the current study recounted how they felt it was primarily their responsibility to instil intrinsic motivation into their learners and that this could be achieved through manufacturing and exaggerating their displays of pleasant, positive emotions. The following comments by Marcus and Rufus illustrate the point well:

I feel responsible for motivation in my classroom. I do believe it is our job to be cheerleader. And I explain it to my students in terms of I'm like their coach, we're a team. (Marcus)

I think they've not tended to have enjoyed their English classes during their school careers and I think it's important they like what's going on in my classroom and stay engaged. So I'll do whatever I have to. For 90 minutes I'll be bright, cheerful, enthusiastic. For 90 minutes I'm emotionally turned on. (Rufus)

Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) draw on Csikszentmihalyi (1997) to argue that a teacher's enthusiasm is infectious, can therefore be transmitted to students and that some of the most influential educators "are the 'nutcases' whose involvement in the subject matter is so excessive that it is bordering on being crazy" (p. 187). Unfortunately, the day-to-day reality of teaching is that not all instructors can be 'nutcases' in every lesson they teach and so when enthusiasm does not occur naturally, it either has to be summoned up or manufactured. Acheson-Clair (2013) describes this type of teacher behaviour as "bearing the motivational burden", and while Takanami University is hardly the motivational wasteland found by Acheson-Clair in her study of US high school L2 classrooms, teachers in the current investigation nevertheless reported having to sustain efforts to regulate positive emotions in order to foster intrinsic motivation in the classes they taught.

Interestingly though, four out of the five participants perceived their motivational roles at Takanami University to be quite different to their Japanese counterparts and believed that efforts to appear bright, engaging and enthusiastic in the classroom had the potential to cause students to view them as having a relatively diminished professional status, in which they were seen as mere 'entertainers' rather than serious language practitioners (cf. Shimizu, 1995). Marcus commented, "The traditional role of the foreign EFL teacher at this university is of entertainer, as cheerleader, encouraging the students to do well, encouraging them in an activity or lesson", while Rufus explained, "You have to smile and keep everyone engaged which takes a lot of emotional energy on my part. At times I have to be the funny guy, the joker, the class clown."

Nora also commented on this issue, relating it to the use of a more student-centred, communicative approach to language teaching:

From my experience, rightly or wrongly, Japanese students expect foreign teachers to be funnier, amusing, less serious than our Japanese counterparts. Perhaps because a lot of the way we teach, our teaching methodology is about student-centredness and so the focus is on them and they see us as being more friendly, less strict as we're trying to facilitate their participation rather than being the centre of attention... Often the hoops we make them jump through... seem like entertainment to them.

The contrast with Alexander's assessment of the teaching role adopted by some of his Japanese colleagues is striking:

In the students' experiences, if they've had foreign teachers at school, they've been sort of pets or entertainers. That's been their niche in that situation and that's created an expectation. My students don't expect the Japanese staff to be entertaining. Many of the older Japanese staff especially, stand at the front and lecture from their notes, the students at the back of the room, sleeping, eating, taking notes, looking at their phones, whatever. As far as I can tell, they accept that this kind of *sensei* ((teacher)) is going to play this kind of role and they don't question it too much.

It is important to stress that the testimony presented above concerns how participants *perceived* there to be differences in the emotional dimension of how Japanese and non-Japanese instructors taught and engaged learners at the research site. Obviously, such dichotomous generalisations should be approached with caution if we are to avoid an essentialist interpretation of classroom life at the university. It was beyond the scope of the study either to prove or disprove the interviewees' assertions on this matter, but the fact that they perceived there to be a disparity in the motivational burden taken on by non-Japanese staff in comparison to Japanese colleagues is in itself significant. This points towards the socially constructed nature of emotions and the believed assumption amongst the sample that Takanami University implicitly desired its non-Japanese teaching staff to be bright, cheerful, enthusiastic and entertaining when interacting with its students. The existence of such tacit psycho-cultural 'feeling rules' supports the notion that evolving teacher identities are highly context-dependent and are in part shaped by emotional practice in the classroom. Indeed, by engaging in the sustained regulation of emotion displays in order to instil intrinsic motivation into students, it seems participants were resigned to the fact that this would contribute to a diminishment in their perceived professional status at the university.

#### ***4.4 The Performance of Emotions and Emotional Distancing***

So what strategies did the teachers in the study employ in order to regulate their emotions and comply with Takanami University's implicit feeling rules? Hochschild (1983, 1990) suggests there are two dramaturgical strategies involved in

emotional labour: deep acting and surface acting. In deep acting, an individual makes an effort to actually feel organisationally desired emotions. This may be achieved through the use of internal dialogue or by drawing upon mental imagery. For example, a teacher who may not be in the best of moods prior to entering the classroom might consciously try to visualise past teaching successes whilst cajoling herself that she really cares about her students and is going to enjoy teaching the lesson. Surface acting involves manipulating one's outward appearance so as to display the surface effects of emotions whilst not actually feeling them. Tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and so on are simulated and work to hide what one is actually feeling. Simply put, surface acting is faking it.

There is a noteworthy connection between Hochschild's notion of surface acting and the testimony of Marcus, who spoke about his sustained efforts to appear bright, cheerful and enthusiastic in front of learners despite the fact that he deemed such behaviour to be somewhat at odds with his personality. Interestingly, Marcus had a background in theatre before he became a language teacher:

I've realised recently the way I prepare for a class is how I used to prepare for theatre. I arrive early, have a moment by myself, take a few deep breaths and then I put the face on. It's the persona, it's the teaching persona. I look at the whole 90 minutes of class as being a performance. Before I leave the office, I always tell my office mate 'it's time, put on the smile, it's time!' It's a performance.

Of course, acting can be great fun but the problem with a teaching approach which relies heavily on the performance of context-appropriate emotions, is that over a prolonged period of time it tends to result in negative psychological consequences for the teacher in the form of mental strain and emotional exhaustion (Näring, Briët, & Brouwers, 2006; Näring, Vlerick, & Van de Ven, 2012; Philipp & Schüpbach, 2010). Indeed, the emotional dissonance created by portraying emotions that are not actually felt is inherently stressful and many teachers resort to protecting themselves from this stress by fostering a sense of depersonalisation and detachment from their work.

Echoing the findings from Marcus, Rufus framed this detachment in terms of having a context-dependent, transformable identity and claimed, "When I walk out of the classroom, I can go back to my true identity. I'm not on call, I'm not on stage, I don't have to resume those roles. My job is over." Nora too spoke of maintaining a disconnection from what occurred in the classes she taught, stating, "I'm detached" and that her teaching "doesn't define who I am...it doesn't inform who I am as a person". Indeed, Nora was very careful not to let her students into her inner life and her reluctance to engage in self-disclosure can be regarded as a psychological defensive strategy. She commented:

If you talk to any of my students over the past 20 years, they will tell you any number of ridiculous stories about me because I lie to my students all the time. *All* the time! ((spoken while laughing)) You know, if you talk to my students now, I'm married with three kids and a dog ((laughs—Nora is single, childless and has no pets)). They don't know about me. I make up stories about my family because it suits the situation, I need an example. I don't need to have my students know about me.

Although somewhat ethically questionable, Nora's reluctance to be truthful when talking about personal issues in class can be interpreted as a means of creating emotional distance from her students, making her less vulnerable to the day-to-day stresses of teaching at the university. In contrast, Alexander presents a more measured, realistic and sustainable approach to maintaining an emotional distance in his teaching:

From my background in teacher training, I don't think it's a good idea to be a buddy or a friend to the student. Concern and friendliness is appreciated but our roles are different in the classroom. I'm not interested in their social lives or personal, emotional odysseys. I think maintaining a distance comes naturally to me.

One feature of the research setting related to emotional distancing and which seemed to play a significant role in the work-related stress of the study's participants was that accommodation for the majority of full-time non-Japanese teaching staff is provided on the campus site. Although there are obvious benefits to this (e.g., not having to pay the huge deposits demanded in Japan's private rental sector; the absence of a stressful daily commute), living amongst colleagues and the close physical proximity of the teachers' homes to their workplace made the mental task of separating work from home all the more difficult. Rufus explained:

The housing situation makes things worse because we live in a fish bowl and you can't get away from the university. You have to eke out the quiet moments because the students are around you 24/7 to some extent.

As Kyriacou (2001) rightly reminds us, maintaining a healthy home life is a key palliative technique used by teachers to cope with work-related stress. However, with the blurring of work and home life at Takanami University, successfully adopting this coping mechanism proved to be a less than straightforward task. Hinting at an ongoing interplay between the work-related and acculturative stress in his life, Marcus recounted how he had taken the somewhat surprising step of renting a second home in order to be able to demarcate work from his personal life:

One of the things that's kept me here is that I got an apartment in another city. I've got a life outside of this university. I have a life that's separate—that's really important for my mental health because it's stressful being an English teacher living in a foreign country.

According to Kyriacou (2001), the sources of stress experienced by a teacher are unique to the individual and "depend on the precise complex interaction between their personality, values, skills and circumstances" (p. 29). With this in mind, it would be wrong simply to state Takanami University's housing provision directly causes teachers at Takanami University to experience work-related stress. However, the challenging nature of forming an appropriate emotional distance from students and work issues in such a context does appear to have the potential to be a salient factor in the diminishment of teachers' psychological well-being.

#### **4.5 Institutional Change, Working Conditions and Teacher Emotions**

A final theme to emerge in the data was the way in which recent educational reforms and changes in working conditions at the research site had impacted upon teachers' emotional experiences at work. Prior to the commencement of the investigation, a change in upper-management at the university had brought with it extensive reforms to curriculum content, course structure and the administrative duties of staff. This period of uncertainty and change saw a deterioration in labour relations at the university which culminated in the formation of a new small-scale union for teachers concerned about job insecurity and the institution's failure to enrol them in the *shakaihoken* (social security) system. An atmosphere of vulnerability (see Kelchtermans, 2005) and mistrust pervaded the university as teachers were denied access to any of the institution's decision-making processes and the faculty meetings they were required to attend lacked debate, serving merely as forums for management to inform staff of new policies. Tellingly, Marcus listed the emotions he attempted to hide during these meetings as "disgust, shock, anger... and boredom". He continued:

Teachers here aren't treated like professionals. There have been a lot of changes which don't take into account our experiences and skills. And a lot of the time the decisions and dialogue about education have nothing to do with education. The primary goal here is money and decisions aren't usually made based on the needs of the students.

One suspects that financial considerations were also at the heart of the university's questionable policy of employing the majority of its full-time non-Japanese language teachers on one-year renewable contracts with a maximum term of 5 years. After this term, staff were forced to leave the university and reapply for posts (if available) at a reduced salary (for more on the 'academic apartheid' of employment practices at Japanese universities, see McVeigh, 2002). Rufus, who was approximately a year away from being forced to leave his job at the university, spoke about his concerns for the future and how the institution's policy made him feel expendable and incredibly undervalued as professional. He described how it had become increasingly difficult for him to emotionally invest in his teaching with the enforced end of his career at Takanami looming large. Both Marcus and Rufus's testimony underlines the notion that teachers' emotions are dynamically influenced by interaction between the individual and his/her institutional and social environment, and that reforms to teaching practices and changing working conditions can play a central role in this process (van Veen & Slegers, 2009). As I pointed out earlier, emotional labour does not necessarily have to result in negative psychological consequences for teachers, but if institutions fail to ensure a supportive and positive working environment in which employees are valued and nurtured, we should not be too surprised if such consequences occur.

## 5 Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that emotional labour is an important, yet neglected aspect of L2 teaching and that the investigation of teachers' in-class emotional experiences represents a new and potentially fertile direction for future language learning psychology research to take. With its focus on the emotional labour performed by a group of experienced instructors employed to teach English at a private university in Japan, using self-report qualitative data the study shed light on the ways in which participants managed their in-class, public emotional displays in order to achieve educational goals and to conform to their institution's socially-derived tacit rules concerning 'appropriate' emotions during classroom encounters. The study's findings highlight the significant role that contextual factors play in dynamically influencing teachers' emotional experiences and how these experiences not only help shape their classroom practices, but also in the long run have the potential to negatively impact upon their personal well-being. The implication of this is that teacher training programmes and in-house professional development forums need to begin raising awareness of the emotional demands of language teaching and introduce teachers to a range of effective emotion regulation skills and coping mechanisms aimed at combating teaching-related stress. Of course, ideally, we should be aiming to prevent language educators from experiencing emotional labour-related stress in the first place rather than dealing with it in a palliative manner. But where can realistic, research-based solutions to this issue best be found? With its focus on well-being, contentment and the building of positive emotions and greater engagement, perhaps the new and expanding subfield of positive psychology in SLA (see MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014) is the perfect place to start looking for answers...

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