EMOTIONS AND TEACHING PRACTICES

By

Danielle Denise Brown

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages—Master of Arts

2022

ABSTRACT

EMOTIONS AND TEACHING PRACTICES

By

Danielle Denise Brown

This thesis is an autoethnography which explores the relationship between the emotions and teaching practices of a novice language teacher throughout one semester of teaching. It addresses two questions: (a) What emotions related to teaching were experienced throughout that semester? and (b) How did those emotions affect their teaching practices? Reflective journaling was practiced to document emotions experienced throughout the semester. An analysis of reflective journal entries revealed five emotions that affected the instructor's teaching practices: fear, guilt, shame, exhaustion, and joy. These five emotions were found to affect the instructor's teaching practices in a variety of ways, with some effects being more positive or negative than others. The refined model of teacher emotion (Chen, 2021) is used to describe the antecedents and consequences of each emotion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Peter De Costa, for providing me with insight and guidance throughout the thesis process. Thank you to my second reader, Dr. Koen Van Gorp, whose thoughtful comments and words of encouragement helped me improve this work. I am also grateful for the advice and wisdom of Dr. Estrella Torrez, who helped me find my way forward when I was feeling lost on my thesis journey. Thank you to the amazing faculty members of the MSU Womxn of Color Initiatives (WOCI) for hosting the WOCI retreat, which provided a space of community, empowerment, and healing exactly when I needed it most. I am grateful to my parents and sisters, who have always supported and believed in me. I would also like to thank my friends Amit and Manasi, who frequently cheered me on with encouraging words and countless cups of tea. Further, I could not have gotten through graduate school with my sanity intact had I not shared this journey with Bethany and Trang. I am so grateful for our Friday work/therapy sessions—they helped keep me going when things seemed hopeless. Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to my partner, Valentin, who comforted me during multiple sob sessions and metal breakdowns when I felt overwhelmed with thesis-writing. Thank you, Valentin, for always reminding me that I am more capable than I give myself credit for. I could not have asked for a more supportive and loving partner.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT

In May 2019 I graduated with a B.A. in Linguistics and absolutely no idea what I wanted to do with that degree. I knew only two things: 1) I loved language and wanted to keep that in my life 2) I had no desire to pursue a Ph.D. in Linguistics and become a professor. So, what were my options? As I considered my possible futures, one seemingly obvious path lurked in the back of my mind: teaching English. But this was a path I wanted to avoid for many reasons, the primary one being that I had felt for most of my life that I would not make a good teacher. I was bad at explaining things and hated feeling inept while I mumbled and fumbled my way through an explanation.

This self-assessment of my teaching potential proved to be accurate during my six-month span as a volunteer English tutor for a local adult ESL literacy program. I felt completely lost while preparing for each tutoring session. Had I chosen a good lesson topic? Had I chosen appropriate vocabulary words? What were effective ways to teach vocabulary? Was my lesson of decent quality? How could I accurately assess the quality of each lesson? I arrived and left each session with these questions and many more, never seeming to find the answers, and feeling that teaching was better left to those who had the actual skill for it.

Thinking back on those six months and considering the option of teaching English, I knew only one thing for certain: If I was going to be an English language teacher, then I needed to develop skills in that area. I believed that with training, those feelings of uncertainty would vanish, and I would enter the field of language teaching as an English language expert, well-versed in best teaching practices and language teaching pedagogy, bursting with confidence in my new skills and abilities. Therefore, in fall 2020, I enrolled in a two-year M.A. TESOL program with that goal in mind.

Things did not quite work out as I had imagined. Three years later, I am now in my final semester of the M.A. TESOL program and have completed one full semester as a graduate teaching assistant (GTA). I had hoped that my first teaching experience would help spur me forward on a path to teaching excellence. I had imagined that when running a classroom for the first time, I would be able to apply all that I had learned in graduate classes into my teaching practice with ease. I was naïve, and ill prepared for reality. I felt unsure of my lesson plans, and worried that they were not effective enough to promote learning. The newfound confidence I'd imagined was nowhere to be found, and the insecurities and self-doubt had multiplied tenfold. Those emotions had a direct impact on my teaching practices, which brings us to the focus of this autoethnography. It describes the first teaching experience of myself, a novice language teacher, analyzes the five emotions that occurred during that experience, and reflects on how those emotions affected my teaching practices.

This thesis begins with a review of relevant literature on language teacher emotion. Next, I present several examples of autoethnography in language teaching research and explain my own approach to autoethnography as it pertains to this thesis. I then describe the five emotions that I experienced during one semester of teaching and identify the antecedents and consequences of those emotions, reviewing them with the refined teacher emotion model (Chen, 2021) in mind. The thesis then concludes with a brief discussion of potential implications and possible future directions.

CHAPTER 2: LANGUAGE TEACHER EMOTIONS

Why should anyone care about the emotions of language teachers? Language teacher emotion is an area in SLA research that has garnered increased interest in recent years and has been shown to affect many aspects of a language instructors' profession, including teaching practices and classroom management styles (Gkonou & Miller, 2020; Kostoulas & Lämmerer, 2020). And with good reason, I would say. My first semester of the M.A. TESOL program covered many useful things, such as lesson planning, classroom management, teaching methods, and language policy. I expected the challenges that might come from creating a lesson plan, performing needs analysis, and other things of that nature. However, I did not expect to feel emotionally drained after each lesson, and failed to anticipate the way in which being socially 'on' for two hours, that is performing the social role of teacher, would take a large toll on my mental and emotional resources. To help contextualize my reflective exploration of teacher emotion, I will first provide an overview of language teacher emotion research.

Cognitive Versus Social Approaches to Understanding Teacher Emotions

To understand teacher emotion research, one must also be aware of the two approaches that have been taken in the exploration of teacher emotion: the cognitive approach and the social approach. Both approaches seek to determine and describe the numerous factors that are involved in teacher emotions, however, each approach takes a different angle. In this section, I will describe the difference between these two broad approaches, drawing heavily from the excellent overview provided in De Costa et al. (2019).

Cognitive Approach

The cognitive approach is one that is rooted in psychology and focuses on the individual and how that individual responds to emotions, in addition to how well they maintain their own

emotional well-being. One key feature of this is the idea of teacher immunity, which asserts that teachers seek to maintain emotional equilibrium by balancing forces that pull toward emotional consonance or dissonance, as was the case in Golombek and Johnson (2004). This study described how a language teacher's battle to reconcile her understanding of best practices based on knowledge from teaching experiences and teaching courses, contradicted with what worked best for her group of students at the time. The cognitive approach is also concerned with how teachers perceive, manage, and experience their emotions. Researchers tend to observe what factors have positive or negative effects on teacher well-being, and some focus on the ways in which classroom frustrations affect a teacher's emotions.

Another key idea in the cognitive approach is emotional intelligence, which is "the capacity to recognize our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships" (De Costa et al., 2019, p. 2). In this view, emotional intelligence is s a psychological trait that emphasizes teacher agency and self-regulation as central to emotional intelligence.

Social Approach

The social approach is more interested in the various social factors that affect teacher emotions. For example, the ways in which teachers emotionally navigate school policies have been discussed (De Costa et al., 2020), as well as the language-as-commodity effect of neoliberalism and the affective consequences thereof (De Costa et al., 2019). Another example of a social factor that effects teachers' emotions is native speakerism and native speaker bias; both concepts, which view the native speaker of a given language as the exemplar of linguistic excellence by which language learner achievement is measured, have been known to promote biases against and discrimination toward non-native speakers of a language, thereby affecting

language teachers' experiences in the field (Holliday, 2006; Lowe, 2020). To put in simply, the social approach views emotions as a result of "a confluence of factors" (De Costa et al., 2019, p. 2). Many researchers who approach teacher emotion research with a socio-cultural lens tend to consider forces at the macro (societal)-, meso (institutional)-, and micro (classroom)-levels. It is also often considered with constructs such as teacher identity (i.e., how a person's teaching identity is constructed in relation to historical, personal, social, and contextual factors), emotion labor (i.e., the labor involved in regulating emotions in alignment with rules on proper or improper displays of emotion in a given work setting), and teacher agency (i.e., the extent to which teachers exercise their professional autonomy within a specific temporal and socio-cultural environment) in mind (Varghese et al., 2005; Benesch, 2018; Miller & Gkonou, 2018).

Positive Versus Negative Emotions or an Emotion Continuum

Research on language teacher emotion has also adopted a binary view of emotion, placing them into negative or positive categories (Barcelos & Aragão, 2018), while others analyzed emotions along a continuum (Oxford, 2020). Additionally, research has shown that negative emotions can sometimes lead to a positive outcome, as they can affect teachers' professional lives in ways that are beneficial for the well-being and professional development of the teacher (Gkonou & Miller, 2020; Kostoulas & Lämmerer, 2020; Oxford, 2020).

Oxford (2020) uses teacher narratives to showcase the mix of positive and negative emotions that compose an individual teacher's well of emotional well-being, and to demonstrate how those wells play a role in teachers' professional and personal lives. She first introduces the idea of a well of emotional well-being as a source within all of us, composed of all possible human emotions and their "countless forms, strengths, and shadings" (Oxford, 2020, p. 247). The author integrates additional frameworks related to emotion into the exploration of teachers'

emotional well-being and discusses the close relationship between negative and positive emotions, going on to explain the benefits that can be gained from negative emotions, contrary to what many might instinctually believe. She then presents five brief case studies of teachers, illustrating the mix of both positive and negative emotions that form each teacher's well of emotional well-being. Finally, Oxford (2020) provides an overview of the various themes found in each case study, ultimately concluding that learning to understand and accept both positive and negative emotions can lead to improvements in a teacher's well-being.

Gkonou and Miller (2020) describe how emotional experiences can become critical incidents, formative moments which affect an important change in a teacher's professional development. The authors describe the role that narrative short stories in particular can play in a teacher's professional growth, as well as in developing emotional self-awareness. Critical incidents are events where the significance of said event is only realized upon later reflection, and typically involves a dynamic shift in understanding and perspective (Gkonou & Miller, 2020). The authors present critical incidents that emerged during interviews with thirteen English language instructors working in the U.S and the U.K. They then describe the various themes that emerged throughout each of the critical incidents. A common thread was that teachers described the incidents negatively, yet often followed up with positive reflections of how those incidents affected their professional development.

Kostoulas and Lämmerer (2020) introduce a resilience model, which they use to demonstrate how a teacher's resilience system affects that teacher's ability to make adaptive or maladaptive adjustments after processing negative emotions. They do so by first explaining the term 'resilience' to mean a "teacher's capacity to continue to function effectively in their professional roles in the face of adversity" (Kostoulas & Lämmerer, 2020, p. 90). The authors

then introduce a model of teacher resilience and use that model to analyze the resilience systems of two pre-service teachers as they navigate their first teaching experiences. Their resilience systems, comprised of the participants' inner strengths, environmental factors, and external support systems, yield contrastive results. One participant's strategies for resilience led to adaptive outcomes, while the other's led to mostly maladaptive outcomes. However, both participants stories demonstrate how stress or adversity can contribute to professional growth.

The research described above portrays the myriad of ways in which emotions can affect various aspects of a teacher's personal and professional life. It also demonstrates the various creative and insightful methods that researchers have used to approach inquiries into teacher emotion. The studies demonstrate how a variety of factors can affect a teacher's emotional state, their relationship to and outlook on teaching, their approach to teaching, or all three.

Autoethnographic Research in TESOL

Autoethnography has been used by several language education researchers to explore their own teaching practices and to relate them to the broader language teaching field. For example, in his autoethnography, Canagarajah (2012) documents the navigation of his emotions and identity during his professionalization as an English teacher, while also discussing the impact that his experiences had on his own confidence, his identity as a teacher, and the importance that communities of practice can have on local teaching circles. Canagarajah draws from knowledge gained from scholarly articles, teaching-related correspondence, past authored texts, and the creation of the narrative itself to form his autoethnography.

Another example of autoethnography used in language teacher research is provided by Ku (2021), who documents his experiences teaching at a Taiwanese university. Specifically, he uses his digital journal entries, text threads, and personal memories to create a dramatization of

his personal and professional experiences entitled *Dear Eric* (Ku, 2021). He explores how his professional teaching identity interacts with and results from his lived experiences as a Taiwanese American, and how his identity affects his life within and beyond the classroom.

Han et al. (2021) is a collaborative autoethnography in which three researchers draw from their personal memories to explore their identities as English language teaching professionals, and the ways in which those identities have been shaped by each of their transnational experiences. They also explore their understandings of what it means to be a TESOL practitioner in a modern, globalized, world and the responsibilities therein.

Liao (2021) guides readers through her experiences as an L2 English student, specifically throughout the time in which she began to explore writing poetry in English as a "meaningful literacy practice" (p. 59). Her methods of reflection involved a review of thirty-two poems written in her L2 and free-writes which focused on her experiences writing poetry in an L2. She then uses those data sources to create new poems that express the emotions she felt during her initial English poem-writing experiences and reflects on the ways in which those experiences shaped her identity as an L2 writer and as a novice English teacher.

I mention these autoethnographies as examples of the many creative methods that language education researchers have used in their individual approaches to autoethnography. However, each of these studies focus on teacher identity and not teacher emotion. There seems to me to be a scarcity of articles using autoethnography to examine teacher emotion in the literature. My own search yielded three articles that combined autoethnography with an inquiry into teacher emotion.

The first is a reflective exploration conducted by Henderson (2018) in which she analyzes her experiences as an early years educator, focusing on the implementation of child protection

policies, instances of emotional dissonance, and internalization of social policy. To do so, Henderson draws from her memory to produce a performative narrative entitled *Listening to Lola* (Henderson, 2018). She then connects the narrative to literature related to early years practitioners and places herself in the center of that literature, locating where her experiences fit into the research. Henderson also reflects upon the emotional demands that go along with being an early years practitioner, and expresses concern for the ways in which practitioners embody the emotion work practices expected of them.

A second autoethnography that features teacher emotion is offered in Liu et al. (2021) which concerns the negotiation of emotions experienced during the first author's experience teaching online in Wuhan during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Liu used personal journal entries, student feedback, teaching materials, and videos of group reflection sessions to document and reflect upon her emotions. She describes her emotional ups and downs of teaching online during a global pandemic and reflects on the strategies that she developed in response to her emotions. She centers her experiences in relation to the established frameworks of emotion labor, emotional rules, and emotional regulation strategies.

In the third autoethnography on teacher emotion, Song (2022) reflects on her experience with online teaching and how those experiences became developed strategies to manage the feelings of vulnerability that emerged. The data sources from which Song drew while creating her autoethnography included online course syllabi, teaching materials, communication with students and peers, teaching portfolio materials, and self-narratives. Her reflective practice allowed Song to identify her status as a "non-native' English speaker and her unfamiliarity with online learning pedagogy as sources of vulnerability. She was also able to develop emotional reflexivity while teaching, which allowed her to reflect on the possible reasons for student

silence during class, making mundane what had once been a source of anxiety. Her journey of reflection led to a deeper understanding of herself and of her role in and relationship to online language teaching.

Each of these studies is a conversation between the researcher and the literature, in which the researcher examines themselves in relation to theories of teacher emotion, reflecting on how those theories apply to their own professional and personal lives. The authors of these studies were also able to identify areas of growth that occurred as a result of their journeys of self-reflection. I seek to do the same with this autoethnography, examining my own experiences in relation to teacher emotion research, and to discover and share truths about my relationship to teaching, and my growth as a teaching professional.

A Refined Model of Teacher Emotion

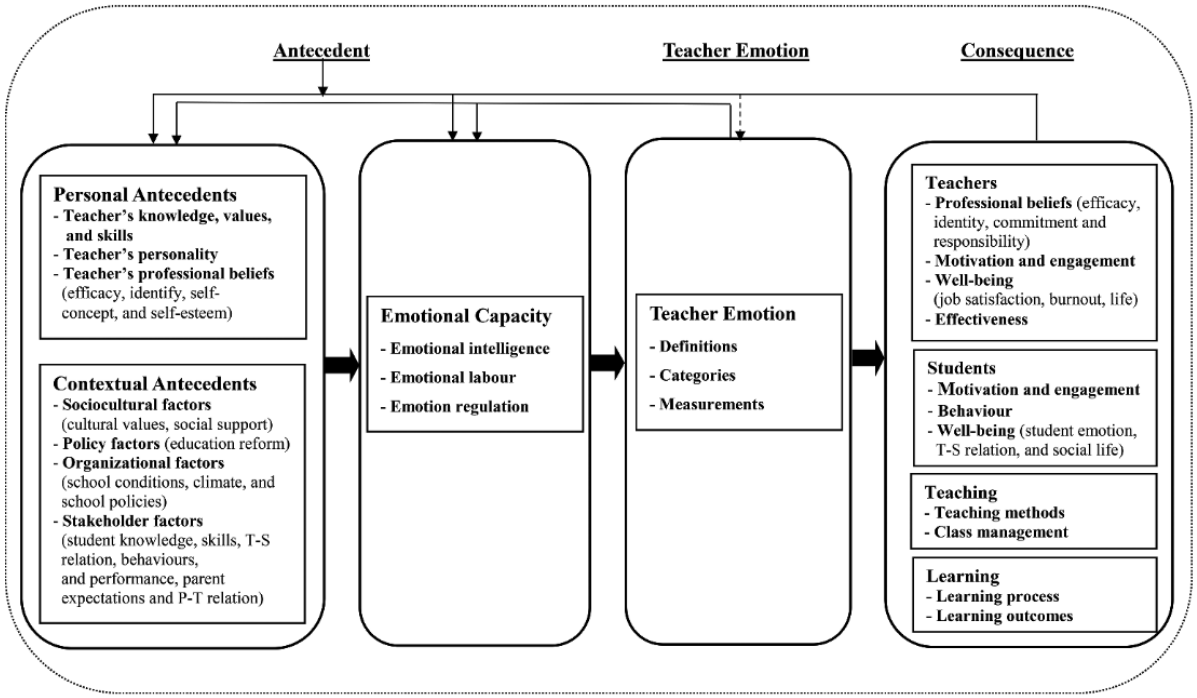
There are many frameworks and theories that exist in the literature on teacher emotion and language teacher emotion. I was at a loss to find where my story fit into the discussion, until I came across a refined model of teacher emotion created by Chen (2021). After reviewing my data and identifying the themes I found therein, I returned to Chen (2021) and felt a strong connection between that piece and my own teaching experiences. The refined model of teacher emotion is a helpful heuristic which enables me to neatly and clearly present the emotions relevant to my teaching duties, the antecedents to those emotions, as well as their consequences. To create this framework, Chen conducted a review of eight hundred and twelve articles on teacher emotion between 1895 and 2019. Based on the themes which emerged from the literature under review, she created a model of teacher emotion which outlines the often reciprocal relationship between antecedents, teacher emotions, and consequences (2021).

In the refined teacher emotion model, antecedents, consequences, and the nature of emotions are all interrelated (Chen, 2021). In Chen's model, shown in Figure 2.1, antecedents precede emotions, which are then followed by consequences. Antecedents consist of three subcategories: *Personal Antecedents* (e.g., teacher's knowledge, values, and skills, teacher's personality), *Contextual Antecedents* (e.g., sociocultural norms, school policies), and *Emotional Capacity* (e.g., emotional intelligence, emotion regulation). Consequences include four broad subcategories: Teachers (i.e., teacher's professional beliefs or effectiveness), Students (e.g., student motivation and engagement), Teaching (e.g., teaching methods and classroom management), and Learning (e.g., learning processes and outcomes).

My study is an autoethnography which seeks to identify the factors that trigger various emotions, and to determine how those emotions impact my teaching practices. This autoethnography focuses predominantly on cognitive factors, as it primarily deals with the ways in which I as an individual perceive and experience emotions related to teaching. This is reflected in the fact that the majority of antecedents that I will later identify fall under *Personal Antecedents* in the refined model of teacher emotion (Chen, 2021), while only a scant few fall under *Contextual Antecedents.* The research questions guiding this study are 1) What emotions occurred throughout my teaching experience and 2) In what ways did those emotions affect my teaching practices? In the next chapter, I provide further explanation of autoethnography as methodology.

Figure 2.1

A Refined Model of Teacher Emotion (Chen, 2021)



CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Autoethnography differs from traditional ethnography in the sense that in the former, the researcher-participant is the insider of the sociocultural context which is being examined (Mirhosseini, 2018). It foregrounds the view of the subject and moves beyond the boundaries of the traditional understanding of research, in which the role of the researcher is to observe and analyze others, controlling the narrative of the subject. Because of this, autoethnography has often been viewed and used as a tool for the decolonization of social inquiry (Yazan et al., 2021), as it returns the narrative power to the subject, allowing them to provide their own observations and analyses and to control its presentation in the research. It is not intended to be generalizable but seeks to provoke deeper thought and understanding of how people exist in social contexts. According to Mirhosseini (2018), autoethnographic research "may create prospects for rich social science inquiry, including TESOL processes and practices. Such in-depth inquiry may shape possibilities for diving into deeper layers of language education contexts and language learners' and teachers' experiences" (p. 84). When used by language teachers, this methodology allows them to explore and analyze their own experiences. Such self-awareness can lead to an enhanced understanding of one's teaching and learning practices (Sardabi et al., 2020). Adopting this methodology has allowed me to observe and reflect on the ways in which emotions affect my teaching practices and to make adjustments to those practices, improving my skills as a language instructor. In essence, this paper is a personal exploration of the intersection between my emotions, and my effectiveness as a language teacher.

Doing Authoethnography

The data on which I draw from for my own autoethnography stems from entries from my reflective teaching journal. Throughout my first semester of teaching, I frequently evaluated my

emotional state by taking mental note of the emotions that I felt throughout class periods. Butterfly feelings in my gut combined with nervous-sweat and an all-too-fast speaking pace helped to confirm feelings of fear. A drop in my stomach confirmed feelings of guilt and shame, and excited smiles combined with temporary forgetfulness of my teaching-related fears indicated moments of joy. I did my best to keep these assessments in my memory until I could record them in my teaching journal. While writing about these moments, I was also able to consider the moments leading up to each class session, such as lesson planning, meetings with colleagues, and grading. I also reflected on the role those moments played in the emotions that I experienced during instruction and after instruction.

Once the semester of teaching was complete, I reviewed my journal entries for common themes related to different types of emotions, taking of note of each emotion that was expressed in each entry. I then searched for connections between those emotions and any related effects on my teaching practices. This was done by identifying sentences in entries in which I clearly stated a connection between an emotion and a teaching decision, and by further reflecting on my experience throughout the semester as a whole. From this analysis, five main emotions recurred most often throughout the journal entries and had a continuous effect on my classroom instruction: guilt, shame, fear, joy, and exhaustion. Table 3.1 highlights journal entries that, together, provide a summary of the emotions that I experienced throughout this semester of teaching.

Table 3.1

Samples of Emotionally-Inflected Journal Entries

Emotion	Sample Journal Entry
Guilt	11-4-21 During this class, the students had a test. I felt that I hadn't explained everything well enough to the students. And we really only a test because all of a sudden four weeks had passed and it was time for me to give them a second test. So **I felt bad for the students, I felt that my teaching wasn't effective enough**, and that prompted me to spend the hour before the test reviewing intonation and vocab – which they hadn't even thought about for like a week and a half. And then there was a true/false listening part of the test. The students did just fine. Honestly, the test was super easy. But I'm not sure if I could call it a true assessment of their skills. **I'm failing these students.** And I feel like there's no time to improve by reading up on grammar and speaking skills. I'm so tired.
Shame	9-16-21 **I stupidly decided** to go over the vocab list and have students pronounce each word. It was terrible. **I was internally cringing the whole time.** Never again. I thought that I should probably go over pronunciation, to see if there was anything that the students were having trouble with, or had questions about. I think it was also an attempt to legitimize my teaching (to myself and my students) by covering explicit language features. **But no, it was dumb. Just so dumb.**
Fear	9-9-21 I felt like an imposter – pretending like I know what I'm doing. But this day at least I had an okay lesson plan. I was glad that I was able to use an audio diary for a lesson. It's a goal that I've had for my teaching – using authentic materials. But at this point I still hadn't used any diverse materials. Honestly, at this point I was struggling, just trying to get by day by day. Teaching is very emotional. Why did no one warn me about that? I have to stand up there and perform that role of Teacher – because that's what I expect from myself, and I feel like that's what the students expect from me. But by the end of the lesson I am drained. Just so drained. **And terrified that I'm messing things up. That my lessons are not actually helpful and they're going to come away at the end of the semester having learned nothing.**

Table 3.1 (cont'd)

Emotion	Sample Journal Entry
Joy	9-7-21 I really felt like a fraud during this lesson. I was asking students questions, wondering if they were stupid questions. Just all-around insecurity. **I really loved hearing the students' presentations on their language and academic goals. I like connecting with them as people and getting to know them a little.** I feel much more comfortable in these moments than when trying to teach language skills. Buying textbooks in class did not go smoothly. I didn't have the right link for them and they weren't able to buy them. I ended up finding the right link and sending it out after class. But I hate when I get things like that wrong. I want my class to go smoothly so that it instills confidence in the students and so that I feel more confident about my lessons.
Exhaustion	11-13-21 **I felt a bit apathetic about everything this week.** There was so much to do – a lot of classwork and deadlines. Personal life things. I was just **trying to get through one day at a time**. When I walked into class on Thursday, I didn't put in effort to appear cheerful or pleasant. Not that I appeared unhappy either. Just sort of there. Sort of a – "we know what we're here to do, so let's get it done" kind of vibe. Which I don't think was a bad thing. I only mention it to say that I think it was a marker of how the stress had gotten to me, and I was at the *expletive* it point. Even then I still cared and worried about how things would go. But it was baseline of worry and motivation to conduct a decent class, with **an underlining current of "eh."**

In this autoethnography, I use the refined teacher emotion model (Chen, 2021) to organize and clearly describe the antecedents and consequences of teaching-related emotions that I experienced during fall semester of 2021. I review the antecedents of the five emotions that I frequently experienced in the classroom, specifically personal and contextual antecedents, two sub-foci within the broader category of emotional antecedents (Chen, 2021). I identify personal antecedents which contributed to my emotional state while teaching: my professional beliefs, my perceived knowledge, and my perceived values and skills in language teaching. My discussion of contextual antecedents will focus on various organizational factors which contributed to my emotional state during the first week of teaching. I also review the consequences which resulted from those antecedents—these include adjustments to my professional beliefs, motivation,

engagement, and well-being. I will then discuss how those consequences affected my teaching methods and my approach to classroom management.

In the following chapter, I describe the emotional experiences that occurred while teaching solo for the first time. I share journal entries that demonstrate examples of joy, guilt, shame, fear, and exhaustion that I felt during one semester of teaching. I also describe the sources of those emotions and the consequences they had on my teaching practices.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

From the five dominant emotions mentioned previously, there are three emotions that frequently occurred together throughout my first semester of teaching. The first emotions were fear, guilt and shame—all three of which will be discussed in the next section. Each emotion either occurred concurrently or served as an impetus for the others. Discussing fear, guilt, and shame separately would be disingenuous to my experiences. As I describe the events that triggered these emotions, it will become clear that these three were very much intertwined.

Exhaustion was another emotion that I often felt throughout my initial teaching experience. This emotion was ever-present and increased as the semester progressed, predominantly borne from prolonged periods of stress and anxiety. Joy, the fifth emotion to be addressed, occurred less frequently than other emotions. Joy was most commonly triggered as a result of a what I perceived to be a successful lesson plan, or from positive interactions with students.

Following the refined teacher emotion model (Chen 2021), I will answer both research questions regarding the emotions I felt during this teaching period and their effects on my teaching practices. Fear, guilt, and shame are the emotions of focus in section one of the following chapter. In that section I will describe two teaching events, each selected for the reason that I recognize them to be clear examples of instances in which fear, guilt and shame worked together to affect both my teaching experience and teaching practices. Sections two and three will center on exhaustion and joy, respectively. In each section I will map my experiences onto the refined teacher emotion model (Chen, 2021), indicating the antecedents, emotions, and consequences of various teaching moments.

The Fantastic Trio: Fear, Guilt, and Shame

I now describe two teaching events that demonstrate instances in which fear, guilt and shame worked in tandem to affect both my teaching experience and teaching practices.

Teaching Conditionals

It was during one of the weekly meetings with my skills coordinator that I was gently reminded of a teaching objective I had yet to meet with my students: Conditionals. I was a bit worried, as I was not one hundred percent certain what conditionals were. Too scared to reveal that I didn't recognize the term and worried that by doing so my lack of qualifications and ineptitude for teaching would become apparent, I endeavored to find answers on my own. After a panicked searched I immediately recognized its use: to describe things that could or would have been if X event had or had not occurred.

However, I lacked the explicit knowledge of this grammar form necessary to explain to my students the rules and patterns of the form, as well as the reasons behind those rules and patterns. Knowing that my implicit knowledge of this feature would not be enough to effectively teach this material to my students led to another frantic search for details on conditionals and how they work. The idea came to me to focus this lesson around the topic of "winning the lottery," which I felt would be a perfect topic with which to practice the use of the first conditional. In the context of other lesson plans that I created throughout that semester, this "lottery" lesson plan was one of the few that inspired a sense of pride and confidence. In journal excerpt 1, I reflect on how the lesson went:

> Excerpt 1
> On this day I introduced Unreal conditionals (name from the grammar book) and immediately thought of the lottery as a way to use this form. However, I forgot to take into account that at least half of my students are rich and don't really have dreams about winning the lottery.

> All in all though, that class went smoothly. Although I did feel a little bit like an imposter when going over the grammar. It helped to have clear things to teach them, instead of the abstractness of teaching 'listening and speaking.' But I certainly didn't feel like a grammar expert. Because I'm not. I only have a loose understanding of English grammar paired with my intuitions as a native speaker. So, while I can sort of confidently teach the basics, I just really hope they don't ask me anything more complicated that I don't know.
> I wish that I could pause time, stock up on knowledge and resume this course more prepared than I am now.
>
> (10-5-21)

As stated in the journal entry, this initial lesson on conditionals went better than I had hoped. Despite my insecurities regarding my perceived lack of knowledge on the topic, I was able to create a lesson plan on a topic with which I felt comfortable. And although I feared to be asked in-depth questions regarding the rules and structures of conditionals, I was spared such a panic-inducing moment. However, a week later, during another meeting with the skills coordinator, I found out that I had erred in covering the first conditional. Dismayed to realize that I would need to cover grammar once again, with the correct conditional this time, I began another informational quest, this time with a focus on the *third* conditional.

Questions raced through my head as I faced the prospect of teaching grammar once again. "What from my MA TESOL classes could I draw on to teach this in the most effective manner?" "What am I missing from those classes?" "Why in the world hadn't I taken the grammar class during my fist year?" This journal entry (Excerpt 2) from 11-9-21 provides some insight into my emotions that day:

> Excerpt 2
> I didn't really know much about conditionals at all, neither the 1st conditional that I erroneously covered before or the 3rd conditional that I covered today. In both cases I relied on the grammar textbook's definition. And this time I found a handy video that helped explain it pretty well, I think. And then I added extra info/help where I could. The students did really well with it too. Although it got tricky when one student asked me why in some

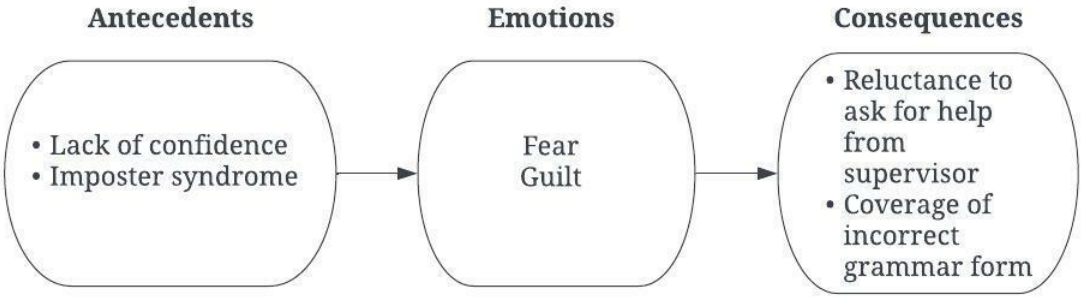
> places the third conditional uses 'had' in one clause and 'have' in the other. I could only point him to the grammar handout where it spells out how to form the 3rd conditional, but I couldn't explain why. I felt like the parent whose only answer to their child's question is "Because it is." I want to reach a point where I know the answers so that I can be more helpful. Right now I feel the opposite of helpful.
>
> (11-9-21)

I perceived my teaching abilities to be too inadequate to properly teach the third conditional to my students, and that fear prompted me to seek out instructional videos to do the explaining for me, making up for what I lacked. The feeling of inadequacy that resulted from my inability to answer a student's question regarding the *why* behind the rules of the third conditional lowered my confidence even further (see Figure 4.1).

These journal entries show evidence of fear which stemmed from lack of confidence and an intense bout of imposter syndrome. When reviewed with the refined model of teacher emotion (Chen, 2021) in mind, we can see that the antecedents here fall under "Teacher's knowledge, values and skills" and "Teacher's professional beliefs" (Chen, 2021).

Figure 4.1

Antecedents, Emotions, and Consequences Related to Teaching Conditionals



Those antecedents (i.e., a lack of confidence and imposter syndrome) served as a foundation on which the fears I felt toward teaching conditionals would take root and grow. The

guilt and fear caused by my perceived professional shortcomings, and a fear of failing my students prompted me to seek help from internet resources to provide what I thought to be better instruction than what I could provide using my own limited grammar knowledge.

Teaching Thought Groups

A major factor contributing to my *lack of confidence* as a teacher was my inexperience. I had sole charge of a classroom, tasked with guiding students through curricular objectives which I only partially understood. I was meant to offer instruction on skills and concepts that I had not mastered myself. I was a terrible public speaker yet evaluated my students on the quality of their class presentations. I felt as if I was an *imposter*. An imposter who was trying her best, but an imposter, nonetheless. The result was a constant fear of being found out, and of students realizing that they had gotten stuck with a teacher who knew nothing. I was also governed by fear of (1) my supervisors at the ESL center realizing that I was not up to this job after all, and (2) everyone realizing that I was still too new at this teaching thing and that I was not yet fit to run a classroom. During such moments in which I find out that I am meant to provide instruction on a topic that I do not understand, such as conditionals, my feelings of insecurity rise, and my confidence goes through the floor. Which is what happened once again when I was reminded in another enlightening meeting with the speaking/listening skills coordinator, that I needed to cover thought groups.

I had not heard this term ‘thought group’ before and was set with immediate panic. “What are thought groups?” “Is this something I should already know about?” “How can I learn about this topic well-enough and quickly enough to teach it to my students?” My fears of being found out for an inept fraud prevented me from asking the skills coordinator to explain what

thought groups were. So once again, I turned to Google to search for that information I needed.

The following journal entry provides a rough portrait of how the lesson went:

> Excerpt 3
> On this day we practiced more of the third conditional and I introduced thought groups. I felt like a complete fraud because I wasn't familiar with thought groups or the 3rd conditional really. I often consider how I am walking proof that being a native speaker of a language does not automatically make them the expert, because 90% of the time I never know that the *expletive* I'm doing. What business do I have "teaching" students about things that I have zero familiarity with? None. I entered this program because I wanted to learn how to teach. While I definitely know more than I did when I first began, I still feel totally unprepared to run an actual classroom. I'm so glad that I have this chance to run a classroom for the first time, but it's also showing me just how ill prepared I am. **I worry about when I have a job – I'm worried that the teachers and supervisors there will immediately see that I'm a fraud and terminate my employment expeditiously.** So, since I had no active knowledge of thought groups, I relied heavily on an activity that my supervisor had given me. But it didn't go very well. I relied on the description of thought groups on the sheet, and also on some descriptions that I had hastily researched the night before, but the students clearly didn't understand and I didn't know how to help them. I felt like such a failure – and **I once again felt sorry for these students who got stuck with me as an instructor.**
> It doesn't help that I'm always so short on time. If wasn't dealing with graduate school stuff – classes, homework, thesis proposal stuff, etc. – I would have had more time and energy to dive deeper into thought groups, and to redesign the skill coordinator's activity to something that was more beneficial. I did modify it a bit, by adding something I saw as better that I found online – but I didn't have the expertise or knowledge to support the students as they tried to figure it out. **I don't even feel that I can really assess them on thought groups. That would just be unfair, seeing as I didn't really teach them in the first place.** This whole thing is a mess. But back to time. I feel so burnt out. I am overwhelmed. There is so much to do and not enough time to do it. I want everything to stop. I had my 5th breakdown this year, in Wells hall, and I struggled to keep my tears hidden from everyone. **I'm just so over everything. I can't wait until all of this is over.**
>
> (11-11-21)

I felt that lesson was a complete bust. I was grasping to explain thought groups to the students and was flustered and exasperated because I didn't fully understand the subject myself. My students were also confused, and when tasked with practicing thought groups, it was evident that they were uncertain on how to begin. In this moment I felt like a complete failure and felt guilt towards my students for having failed them. The guilt and sense of accountability towards my students pushed me to cover thought groups again. I was determined not to leave things as they were, and to give my students a proper lesson.

After more internet searching I landed on a jackpot: a very detailed informational packet for teachers, explaining what thought groups are and how to teach them—I felt as if a miracle had dropped from the sky. After reading this packet, I had a more solid understanding of thought groups and how they worked and felt far more confident teaching this topic to my students in the next lesson. This is reflected in the following journal entry:

> Excerpt 4
> I felt a lot better about teaching thoughts groups in class today. After feeling so incompetent about it before, I did more research and found better sources that were more effective in helping me understand what thought groups were. I even found a pdf document prepared by some university, specifically meant to help teachers teach this topic. It was so helpful in helping understand, and in giving me examples of different ways that I could explain it to my students. So, I incorporated my new knowledge from that onto some slides, did the second half of the activity from the first website I had found before (the MLK) speech. **This time, I didn't feel helpless in trying to explain, and the students didn't seem super confused like they did last week. I felt a little proud of myself for the improvement that I'd made.**
>
> (11-16-21)

Feeling confident in my lesson and my ability to effectively explain the material made a massive difference in how I existed in the classroom space. I was able to worry less about how I was being perceived by my students, and more about how they were handling the material. After

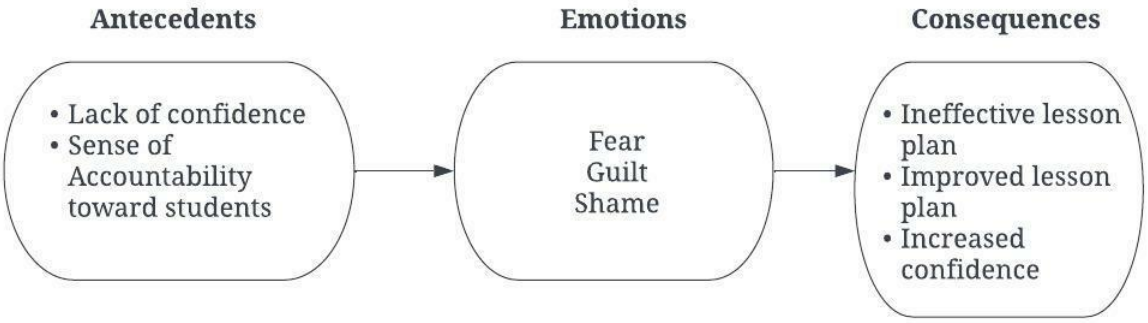
that lesson, I knew that I wanted all future lessons to be as such. I had now experienced the type of teacher that I could be when I truly felt that I knew what I was doing. As a result, I spent even more time lesson planning, chasing the feeling of preparedness that I'd felt during the lesson on thought groups. This led to another proud teaching moment, as shown in (Excerpt 5) below:

> Excerpt 5
> **I was super proud of a way that I thought of to integrate more practice with thought groups into the new unit 7 listening.** I downloaded the script from Qskills online, and copied part of it for students to mark thought groups on as they listened. I felt good because I had almost effortlessly followed the steps for a listening: scaffold (with vocab and/or background info), listen at least twice, have students doing something as they listen and have students do something in between listenings. The last one I only recently learned from Charlene. But it all just fit together so well today. Ugh, I was so happy and proud. I still feel it now, writing this 3 days later.
>
> (11-18-21)

In this experience regarding thought groups, a lack of confidence in my teaching ability, and a sense of accountability toward my students served as antecedents that generated feelings of fear, guilt and shame (see Figure 4.2). These emotions, while not always warranted, were effective motivators—they led to an improved lesson plan and served to increase confidence in my teaching ability. This experience with thought groups also taught me an important lesson: that feeling prepared and confident during a lesson allows me to worry less about how I appear to students and to focus more on their comprehension of the material, making my lessons more effective.

Figure 4.2

Antecedents, Emotions, and Consequences of Teaching Thought Groups



The Fourth Emotion: Exhaustion

Before describing the ways in which the emotion of exhaustion affected my teaching methods, I would like to add some context to what was happening in the world during this time, namely, a global pandemic. I can clearly recall the day that the Covid-19 pandemic became real for me. It was a morning in early March, 2020. As I do every morning, I checked my phone notifications first thing upon waking up. The very first email in my inbox was from the university president, announcing that the university was placing a pause on all in-person instruction, and that all classes for that day were cancelled. I woke my partner, who was a graduate teaching assistant at the time and who had a class scheduled for later that afternoon. After I told him the news, he immediately cursed and opened his laptop to check his email for further updates from his department, while I grappled with the realization that the pandemic was no longer something distant, happening in other places far from me and those I loved. It was here. I had yet to realize that what I then considered ‘normal’ would soon be a thing of the past.

The next impactful moment occurred when I received a phone call from the local Census office, where I worked at the time. My supervisor informed me that all work in the office would

cease for the foreseeable future. I lived my life for the next month and a half in a weird fever dream: I would wake up, check the day's covid numbers, listen to the news, doom scroll on Twitter, and watch the global and local death toll rise. Casual errands and daily interactions which had required little attention before, now created a sense of unease, fear, and anxiety. It was unclear how close or far I should be from the person in front of me in the grocery line. Accidentally touching a cashier's or waiter's hand during a bag handoff was now a moment of panic, as I had to make sure to take the bag such a way so that my hand and the cashier or waitress's hand did not touch. This feeling of general unease has stayed with me throughout the pandemic, although it has gradually lessened as I became accustomed to the new way of things. But the increased mental anxiety and stress continued throughout my first year of grad school, making what was already an exhausting experience even more so. The semester breaks never seemed like enough time for me to feel fully recharged. I was starting each semester with a battery half full, including the semester in which I taught for the first time. By the start of my second year of graduate school, whatever faculties I had within myself to make it through a school semester while simultaneously taking courses and teaching were greatly reduced, and my mental capacity to handle the responsibilities of a TA broke down further each day. By the end of that semester, I was a wreck. And the mental and sometimes physical exhaustion that I experienced during that semester impacted my approach to lesson planning, as well as decisions that I made in the classroom. I will now share with you a few journal entries that demonstrate some of those impacts.

The first is an entry written very early in the semester. It was the third week of class, and at that time everything felt very chaotic. I found lesson planning to be particularly stressful, as I was frightened at the idea of carrying out my lesson plans in front of actual students, not just my

MA TESOL classmates. The stakes seemed much higher, which added stress to an activity that I already found to be quite stressful and time consuming. I was also still reeling from the chaos of the previous two weeks, in which I had rushed to plan for the course after being informed of my course assignment only days before classes began. At the same time, I was learning how to create class materials on Desire2Learn (D2L), the online learning platform used by the university. Essentially, there was a lot to handle all at once, so perhaps it was not too surprising that only a couple of weeks into the semester, I abandoned my teaching morals and chose the easier route: using textbook activities that I knew were not up to par according to current pedagogy research as I understood it. The following journal entry reflects my feelings that day:

> Excerpt 6
> **This week I was feeling pretty overwhelmed and stressed, so I used a lot of activities from the textbook.** The problem is, a lot of these activities are *expletive*. They're just lacking. Shallow. So I prefer to design my own or to expand from the textbook. But this day I just didn't have time. So, I used activities directly from the textbook and I was not confident about my lesson at all. Just not at all. But the annoying thing is, relying on the textbook would be so much easier for me. It would take so much less time. But I don't think I can't get myself to do it again. I want to make sure that these lessons are worth something to the students (even if they don't know it).
>
> (9-14-21)

It was important to me to ensure that the activities I used in class matched the standards that I have developed over my time in the M.A. TESOL program. However, the mental stress that came from that hectic time led me to compromise my teaching morals, and to abandon those standards altogether. In this case the antecedent for the emotion of exhaustion was contextual: the time constraints and responsibilities of a graduate student combined with a chaotic start to the course. The increased level of exhaustion that I felt led to the consequence of a less than ideal

lesson plan. Additionally, my uncomfortableness with that lesson plan gave me further resolve to ensure that the activities I used in class met my own professional standards.

And as the weeks went on, the time commitments and teaching responsibilities remained consistent, but my capacity for meeting those responsibilities with my sanity intact waned. I wanted a break—from everything—but no break was forthcoming. Therefore, when I received word that the language program testing office wanted to use class time to give my students a practice exam, my first thought was that it would be a welcome break from planning lessons. Each semester, the testing office gives a practice exam to students in each ESL center course. It helps them to improve their tests, and it gives the students a chance to practice the end-of-semester exam. It is not, however, required for an ESL center instructor to agree to use class time for these tests. In such cases where the instructor declines, the students are asked individually to take the practice test. However, it seemed that it was expected of me that I agree to schedule a class period during which my students would each take the practice exam. The time needed to take this test—approximately one hour—meant that for this class period, the time for which I needed to plan lesson materials went from eighty minutes to twenty minutes—a blessing to my tired soul.

On the day that the test was scheduled, I led my students through two activities, then led them to a computer lab to meet the exam proctor. But the proctor never showed, and after fifteen minutes of waiting and sending emails to the testing office with no response, I decided to send the students home. The following journal entry provides some insight into my motivations for making that decision.

> Excerpt 7
> And then, we were supposed to go down for an [ESL center] test but the proctor never showed up and I didn't have anything planned for the second half of the class. **Honestly, I was glad when the [ESL**

> **center] Testing Office contacted me about the test because it meant that I could spend less time planning. And when things went awry, I sent everyone home about 40 minutes early. Not only because I didn't have anything planned, but because I was tired and I really didn't want to teach anymore that day.**
>
> (10-12-21)

The stress of teaching combined with the stress of being a graduate student served as *antecedents for the exhaustion* that I felt, and this exhaustion meant that I grasped at this perceived chance to take a break from lesson planning that day. The consequence was that I was then empty-handed when the students were unable to take the practice exam and the remaining class time needed to be filled.

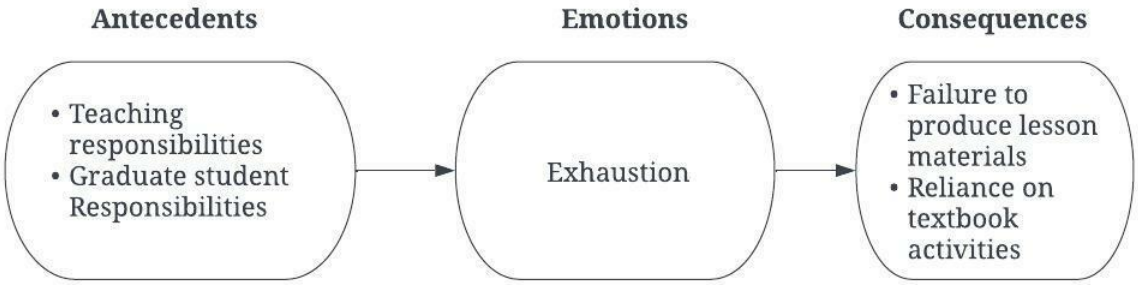
Another example in which my mental exhaustion affected my approach to teaching occurred a few weeks later into the semester. I was once again feeling run down from my efforts to perform the duties expected of me as a teaching assistant and a graduate student. I was also faced with planning activities and making materials to teach a topic of which I had little knowledge. Again, I made the decision to save myself time and mental anguish by choosing activities that I was not fully confident about, as seen in the following journal entry:

> Excerpt 8
> During this class, I introduced Intonation with Choices, which I am far from an expert on. Luckily, [the skills supervisor] had some materials that I could use – activities and things. Planning this lesson was easy because I basically just went with [the skill supervisor]'s stuff and chose some practice items from the textbook**. I was just out of mental energy to put more effort into making my own materials, and these seemed suitable enough.**
>
> (11-2-21)

This was another incident in which my exhaustion prompted me to make less-than-ideal choices about my lessons. The combined antecedents from the previous examples of moments in which I experienced exhaustion can be simplified to the responsibilities and duties of a graduate teaching assistant and a graduate student (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3

Antecedents and Consequences of Exhaustion



The quality of my classroom instruction suffered as a result of this exhaustion, leading to ineffective lessons and in one instance a failure to produce the activities and materials needed to continue classroom instruction. This feeling of exhaustion only increased as the semester went on. The following journal entry paints a fairly accurate picture of my mental state as the semester gradually came to a close.

> Excerpt 9
> There are so many days where I want to walk into class and tell the students "You all figure this out" and then leave. **I'm so burned out. I don't know how I'm going to finish this semester. I am crawling to the finish line.**
>
> (11-9-21)

I clearly was very much ready to be done with instructing this course. And as the final weeks of the semester dragged, on my exhaustion grew, still. Fortunately for my sense of worth as a teacher, there were no further instances in which I used sub-par activities from the textbook. I did, however, frequently question whether a career in English language teaching had been the correct choice for me. Yet, at the same time, I knew that I could not make a definitive judgement without having yet experienced teaching as my sole job, free of the pressures of graduate school. I also considered that not all of my teaching experiences had been moments of doom and gloom.

There were, interspersed throughout the semester, moments of joy that convinced me to continue to give this teaching thing a chance.

The Fifth Emotion: Joy

As I mentioned above, not all of the emotions that affected my classroom instruction were negative. There were also moments where I was able to experience the joys that come with teaching, instead only of stress, worry, and fear. The following journal excerpt provides one such example.

> Excerpt 10
> I really loved hearing the students' presentations on their language and academic goals**. <u>I like connecting with them as people, and getting to know them a little.</u>** I feel much more comfortable in these moments than when trying to teach language skills.
>
> (9-7-21)

This was the first moment where I realized that the most interesting part of teaching for me, is the students themselves. Each student had their own goals, hobbies, and interests—their own unique perspective on the world and how it should be. I found myself rooting for their success in this course and with all of their goals for the remainder of their lives. This realization prompted me to include more sections of class where the students could share their views on the topics being covered and make connections with their personal lives. These moments allowed me to view each student as an individual person as opposed to a mere name next to a grade. One such moment is documented in the following journal excerpt.

> Excerpt 11
> There was another instance where I was able to get to the students as people. While discussing the 'what if' questions I went to each pair to find out each student's answer. They had some really fun answers – I was shocked by the student who said that if the world were ending, he would go around committing crimes! But yeah, **<u>that was a lot of fun. I really do like the discussion parts more.</u>** And I think they provide good speaking practice. But I shouldn't do that

every lesson, and I have to cover other skills. **But maybe once a week?**

(10-7-21)

In the journal entry, I describe my desire to include moments for discussion in every class going forward. However, I had to consider my responsibility to cover several other skills related to speaking and listening, not just conversation. As a compromise, I set an intention to include discussion sessions during class at least once a week. I viewed this an opportunity to increase the number of enjoyable teaching moments for myself, and to provide my students the opportunity to share personal anecdotes with the class, something I believe is important for establishing a sense of community in the classroom.

Excerpt 12

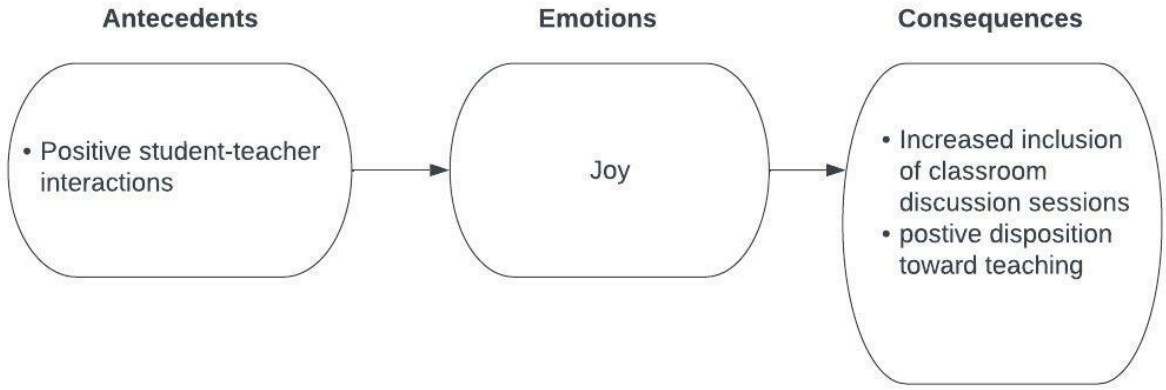
Also, I enjoy doing fun things in class. I want to do more things that are fun, and still grounded in SLA theory/beneficial for students. I enjoy teaching more when I am having a good time (even if the students aren't, like yesterday). Not that everything can be fun. But when it can, I will make sure it happens. That's how I will be able to stay in this career, I think. Otherwise…. I might have to switch to something else. Like assessment or something.

(11-18-21)

In the excerpt above, I have realized that intentionally planning for joy in my lessons helped me to persist in moments in which I was stressed and tired, moments when I wanted to stop caring about the quality and effort that I put into my lessons. These instances of joy allowed me to forget the stress and insecurity that I felt when standing in front of students, pretending to be a teacher who knew what she was doing. They helped me to connect further with the students in that class, and helped me realize that caring for my students as people helps me to find purpose in my profession.

Figure 4.4

Antecedents and Consequences of Joy



The antecedents (Figure 4.4) that led to the moments of joy that I have shared in this section predominantly stemmed from positive interactions with my students during class sessions. The consequences of this emotion were increased time for student discussion during class time and increased positive feelings toward my role as an English language teacher.

It has not escaped me that the section describing moments of joy during my teaching practice is the shortest section in this chapter. While short, it is also a reminder of the power of joy: that such small, fleeting moments gave me the strength and motivation to carry on until the next moment of joy. While this section on joy is the shortest, it was by far the most impactful emotion for me as a novice teacher. Those moments were also the main reason why I have not abandoned this profession and run for the hills.

The Five Emotions: A Summary

The refined model of teacher emotion (Chen, 2021) aided me in illustrating the connections between the emotions I experienced while teaching and their impact on my classroom instruction. It has proven to be an effective tool for organizing the antecedents of my

emotions as well as their consequences, and to pinpoint the aspects of teaching which cause or are affected by those antecedents and emotions.

In section one, I described how antecedents of insecurity, lack of confidence, and a sense of accountability toward my students led to emotions of fear, guilt and shame, the consequences of which were to make improvements to my lesson plans. In section two, I described how the antecedents of teaching responsibilities and graduate student responsibilities led to emotions of exhaustion, which prompted me to compromise on my pedagogical values. In section three, I illustrated the ways in which antecedents of positive teacher–student interactions led to moments of joy, the consequence of which was to include more of the classroom activities that sparked said joy in my lesson plans. There seem to be various factors that influenced my emotions, from internal factors such as personality traits, to external factors such as pressure to perform well scholastically and professionally. In the next chapter, I will discuss what implications these results had on the future direction of my teaching.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

As Gkonou and Miller (2020) noted, “Emotion is ubiquitous in all human activities, and teaching and learning are no exception” (p. 131). Teaching is both emotionally rewarding as well as emotionally demanding and intricately intwined with our work. I consider it important for teachers to be reflective in their practice and to identify factors that may affect instruction.

The five emotions that I identified in my journals each helped to shape my teaching experience during fall semester of 2021, and it was not uncommon for me to experience all five during a single class session—a moment of joy inspired by a teacher–student interaction, followed by a mixture of fear, guilt, and shame caused by a student asking a question that I did not know the answer to. The struggle with exhaustion was a constant battle, and as the semester progressed, increasingly more mental resilience was needed to complete the teaching tasks of the day. Regularly, fear that I was not a good language teacher would cause me to agonize for hours over my lesson plans in the hopes that creating and executing perfect lessons would convince the students and myself that I really was a good teacher. That fear would follow me into the classroom, where during each lesson, I would search for signs that my students were engaged and understanding of the material, which I used to assess whether my teaching methods were effective. When those signs were absent, and it seemed instead that my students were hopelessly confused, the guilt and shame of being an inadequate teacher would add to the original fear that I was a “bad” language teacher or, in the case of teaching thought groups, would motivate me to find ways to improve. The joy that followed from successful lessons, and from engaging with my students, served to remotivate me at times when the pervasive exhaustion that I felt throughout the semester gnawed at my determination to succeed.

The antecedents of the emotions that I felt—fear, guilt, shame, exhaustion, and joy—fell under both personal and contextual categories of antecedents in Chen's (2021) model. The subcategories of personal antecedents included *Teacher's Professional Beliefs* (lack of confidence, imposter syndrome, sense of accountability). The subcategories of contextual antecedents were *Stakeholder factors* (positive teacher–student interactions) and *Organizational factors* (my teaching and graduate student responsibilities).

The different categories of consequences of the emotions I experienced related to teaching were *Effectiveness* (reluctance to ask for help, covering the wrong material, ineffective lesson, improved lesson, failure to produce ideal lesson materials) *Professional beliefs* (increased confidence, a more positive view of teaching) *Teaching methods* (reliance on subpar textbook activities, more student-centered discussions).

I found the refined teacher emotion model to be helpful in organizing and contextualizing the various causes and effects of teaching-related emotions that I experienced. As I was predominantly interested in the causes and effects of my emotions, I centered my focus on the broader categories of antecedents and consequences from the model. As the model was created from an extensive review of the literature on teacher emotions at the time of publication, I found it interesting and relevant to see how my experiences fit into the model and by extension, the literature.

Writing this autoethnography has allowed me to identify effects that emotions have had on my own classroom instruction. It has enabled me to develop strategies to help reduce and, when appropriate, increase those effects. In particular, to mitigate negative effects stemming from fear, guilt, and shame, I now focus on taking actions to dispel those feelings, such as putting forth my best effort to complete teaching tasks to the best of my ability and accepting

that a perfect lesson plan is not a realistic goal. I also try my best to accept moments of failure as opportunities to improve my practice. To compound the positive effects of emotions on my teaching practice, I seek to foster connections and build classroom community by integrating activities that I feel allow my students to take an active role in classroom learning, which to me means creating opportunities for students to share their opinions on the concepts being discussed and to make personal connections between those concepts and their own lives. This has helped to increase the joy that I experience while teaching, which has also had a direct effect on my self-worth as a teacher and has helped to increase the number of positive feelings toward the profession.

This autoethnography also served to highlight how negative emotions may at times lead to positive outcomes, as demonstrated by, for instance, Gkonou and Miller (2020), Kostoulas and Lämmerer (2020), and Oxford (2020). Specifically, the fear, shame, and guilt that I felt while planning and leading the initial lessons on thought groups led to a deeper understanding of my own teaching skills and my limitations as well as to an improved language lesson which elicited a rare sense of pride and accomplishment.

I strongly believe that performing reflective work has allowed me to discover facets of my teaching at a faster rate than I believe I would have through passive observation alone. Given how generative the reflective practice I engaged in has been for me and my teaching, I wholeheartedly encourage novice and veteran language teachers alike to purposefully reflect on their practice, as they may gain valuable insights after reflecting on the relationship between their emotions and their teaching practices.

Limitations and Possible Future Directions

I suspect that when writing my journals, I tended to remember negative teaching experiences more than positive ones. Thus, smaller positive experiences (e.g., fleeting moments of joy) which I may have experienced in the moment may have been unintentionally omitted from my journals or overshadowed by stories of negative emotions. This may be combated by making intentional efforts to note positive experiences that occurred. It could be as simple as asking oneself such questions as "what positive things happened while teaching today?"

Much of the anxiety and fear that I felt regarding teaching were due to my novice status and a general disposition for self-doubt. My superiors at the ESL center, however, held more positive opinions of my teaching skills. The skills coordinator in particular commonly offered positive, reassuring comments during our weekly meetings. These positive comments nearly always resulted in a temporary boost to my self-esteem and a renewed sense of confidence in my teaching ability. Confidence in my lesson plan was a large factor in the amount of fear, guilt, or shame that I felt prior to, during, and after a class session, therefore, it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that lesson plans made soon after receiving positive comments from my supervisor may have led to less negative emotions and more joyful ones. To that effect, I suggest that teacher emotion researchers consider investigating the effects of a supervisor's comments on a teacher's confidence and emotions.

It also may have been interesting to continue journaling throughout the following spring semester. I was unable to do so due to time constraints, however it is possible that with a full semester of teaching under my belt, the effects of emotions on my teaching practices may have lessened during the subsequent semester. Alternatively, an additional semester may have allowed me to determine the extent to which the strategies I developed to mitigate negative effects of my

emotions and to enhance the positive effects were effective. Given this, I would suggest that researchers and teachers interested in reflecting on the relationship between their emotions and their teaching practices, consider collecting data on said topic throughout an entire academic year, if possible.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This autoethnography provides important documentation of a graduate student's first teaching experience and its emotional impact. As we age and gain experience, it becomes increasingly difficult to recall how we experienced a specific part of our lives. A thesis such as this, which documents my experiences and emotional state as a graduate student teaching for the first time, can serve to remind those with far more teaching experience what an initial teaching experience looks and feels like. Further, this autoethnography may offer novice teachers comfort, knowing that they are not alone in struggling and feeling unable to meet the tasks that graduate school demands of them. To these new graduate teaching assistants, I would like to say that navigating grad school for the first time can be difficult, and teaching is no easy task. Those two things combined can be… a lot. I spent much of my graduate program believing that I was a failure compared to the other graduate students in my cohort. I believed the same when comparing myself to the other TAs who worked for the ESL center, as they each had more experience than I. It was only during a few chance venting sessions with those TAs, that I realized they were struggling as well. They, too, were having trouble keeping up with grading and creating lesson plans. It comforted me to know that I was not alone in my struggle with teaching. I found support by reaching out to and bonding with those in my cohort and I strongly encourage that those new to graduate school try the same—it makes all the difference.

Ultimately, this autoethnography has been a reflective journey that has allowed me to examine the ways in which emotions affect my teaching practices. My experiences of fear, guilt, shame, exhaustion, and joy often influenced my instructional decisions. Those instructional decisions impacted my lessons and determined whether I perceived those lessons as positive or negative, which in turn held great sway over my perception of self-worth, my relationship to

teaching, and my teaching goals. This introspective deep-dive into such a personal and vulnerable topic has not always been pleasant or comfortable, but it has helped me grow as an individual and a teacher. I am grateful to have embarked on this journey, and I am pleased to have now shared it with you.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Barcelos, A. M. F., & Aragão, R. C. (2018). Emotions in language teaching: A review of studies on teacher emotions in brazil. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *41*(4), 506–531. https://doi.org/10.1515/cjal-2018-0036

Benesch, S. (2018). Emotions as agency: Feeling rules, emotion labor, and English language teachers' decision-making. *System*, *79*, 60–69. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2018.03.015

Canagarajah, A. S. (2012). Teacher development in a global profession: An autoethnography. *TESOL Quarterly*, *46*(2), 258–279. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.18

Chen, J. (2021). Refining the teacher emotion model: Evidence from a review of literature published between 1985 and 2019. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *51*(3), 327–357. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2020.1831440

De Costa, P. I., Li, W. & Rawal, H. (2020). Should I stay or leave?: Exploring L2 teachers' profession from an emotionally-inflected framework. In C. Gkonou, J.-M. Dewaele, & J. King (Eds.). *The emotional rollercoaster of language teaching* (pp. 211–227). Multilingual Matters.

De Costa, P. I., Li, W., & Rawal, H. (2019). Language teacher emotions. In M. A. Peters (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of teacher education*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-1179-6_262-1

De Costa, P. I., Park, J., & Wee, L. (2019). Linguistic entrepreneurship as affective regime: Organizations, audit culture, and second/foreign language education policy. *Language Policy*, *18*(3), 387–406. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-018-9492-4

Gkonou, C., & Miller, E. R. (2020). 'Critical incidents' in language teachers' narratives of emotional experience. In C. Gkonou, J. Dewaele, & J. King (Eds.), *The emotional rollercoaster of language teaching* (pp. 131–149). Multilingual Matters.

Han, S., Haneda, M., & Madany, M. (2021). Towards glocally situated TESOL practices: Collaborative autoethnography. In B. Yazan, S. Canagarajah, & R. Jain (Eds.), *Autoethnographies in ELT: Transnational identities, pedagogies, and practices* (pp. 206–222). Routledge.

Henderson, E. (2018). Researching practitioner experiences through autoethnography : Embodying social policy, exploring emotional landscapes. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, *17*(1), 32–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X18809135

Holliday, A. (2006). Native-speakerism. *ELT Journal*, *60*(4), 385–387. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccl030

Kostoulas, A., & Lämmerer, A. (2020). Resilience in language teaching: Adaptive and maladaptive outcomes in pre-service teachers. In C. Gkonou, J.-M. Dewaele, & J. King (Eds.), *The emotional rollercoaster of language teaching* (pp. 89–110). Multilingual Matters.

Ku, E. (2021). Dear Eric: An autoethnodrama of exploring professional legitimacy as a transnational EFL instructor. In B. Yazan, S. Canagarajah, & R. Jain (Eds.), *Autoethnographies in ELT: Transnational identities, pedagogies, and practices* (pp. 88–106). Routledge.

Liao, F. (2021). When my professor tells me to write poetry in my second language: A poetic autoethnography. In B. Yazan, S. Canagarajah, & R. Jain (Eds.), *Autoethnographies in ELT: Transnational identities, pedagogies, and practices* (pp. 57–74). Routledge.

Liu, S., Yuan, R., & Wang, C. (2021). ‘ Let emotion ring’: An autoethnographic self-study of an EFL instructor in Wuhan during COVID-19. *Language Teaching Research*, 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688211053498

Miller, E. R., & Gkonou, C. (2018). Language teacher agency, emotion labor and emotional rewards in tertiary-level English language programs. *System, 79*, 49–59. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2018.03.002

Mirhosseini, S. A. (2018). An invitation to the less-treaded path of autoethnography in TESOL research. *TESOL Journal*, *9*(1), 76–92. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.305

Oxford, R. L. (2020). The well of language teachers’ emotional well-being. In C. Gkonou, J. Dewaele, & J. King (Eds.), *The emotional rollercoaster of language teaching* (pp. 247–268). Multilingual Matters.

Sardabi, N., Mansouri, B., & Behzadpoor, F. (2020). Autoethnography in TESOL. In J. I. Liontas (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of English language teaching* (pp. 1– 6). Wiley Blackwell.

Song, J. (2022). The emotional landscape of online teaching: An autoethnographic exploration of vulnerability and emotional reflexivity. *System, 106*, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2022.102774

Varghese, M., Morgan, B., Johnston, B., & Johnson, K. A. (2005). Theorizing language teacher identity: Three perspectives and beyond. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, *4*(1), 21–44. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327701jlie0401_2