

# TEACHING DIARIES AND NEGATIVE EMOTIONS: TWO TEACHERS ADJUSTING TO THEIR FIRST YEAR IN A JAPANESE UNIVERSITY

**Amanda J. Yoshida**

**María Vanessa Góngora Jurado**

Kanda University of International Studies

## ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the two most salient negative emotions experienced by two teachers during their first year at a private university in Japan. Both teachers kept a diary of their first year to uncover similarities and differences in their adjustment to their new work environment. The diary data revealed situations that brought about feelings of frustration and overwhelm. For teachers to better understand and support each other, encouragement to use reflective practice tools, such as teaching diaries, are needed at every stage of their careers.*

## INTRODUCTION

As teachers settle into a new work environment, there is an adjustment period. In recent years, teacher emotions have become a topic of study as people have come to realize that not just the learners, but also the teachers matter. Keller et al. (2014) state that "Teacher emotions matter" (p. 78) because teaching, itself, is full of a range of emotions, such as enjoyment, anxiety, and even anger. Various aspects of teachers, including identity, motivation, efficacy, agency, and autonomy have been topics of study. However, Mercer and Kostoulas (2018) point out that understanding "teacher psychology" and the emotions involved in academic environments, not just classrooms, "can ensure that they flourish in their professional roles and are able to be the best teachers they can possibly be - for the sake of their own professional well-being as well as for their learners' well-being and ultimate learning" (p. 2).

During the orientation sessions at their new job, the authors of this paper agreed to keep a diary of their emotional adjustment throughout the first year using the framework of reflective practices. The primary goal of this

research project was to uncover the emotions that both authors, who come from different backgrounds, experienced as they transitioned to a new teaching context. The secondary goal was to analyse and deeply reflect on the causes of their most salient negative emotional responses throughout the year, and to examine strategies for overcoming difficulties. MacIntyre et al. (2019) point out the lack of research into language teachers' psychological health and tools to analyse such emotions (for exceptions, see Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018; Talbot & Mercer, 2018; Hiver, 2018). While Cowie (2011), Loh and Liew (2016), Zemblyas (2003), Yin et al. (2016) have employed interviews to collect data based on teachers' emotions, the authors of this paper have noticed that no previous studies exist in which emotions are analysed through teaching diaries.

This paper will examine relevant literature on reflective practices and teacher emotions, present a method for diary analysis, and explore the emotional journey that two teacher-researchers (the authors) experienced in their first year of teaching in a new context.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Reflective Practices**

Although there are many definitions of reflective practice, we agree with Farrell's summation (2015) that it is "a process of recognizing, examining, deliberating over the impact and implications of one's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, knowledge, and values on classroom practices" (p. 8). Reflective practice therefore can and should extend beyond the classroom into the school context. Furthermore, reflective practice can influence a teacher's whole self, both professionally and personally, regardless of their experience, and it serves a variety of purposes (Farrell 2015). Of particular interest to us in this paper is that reflective practice helps "develop resourcefulness and resilience required to face future challenges and changes in the profession" (Farrell, 2015, p. 114). While teachers may naturally reflect on their practices, many teacher-researchers recommend using a reflective tool or framework, such as a teaching diary, for reflective practice to reap the most benefits.

### **Collaborative Teaching Diaries**

Both of us have always enjoyed writing, and we each had maintained personal and teaching diaries in our pasts. We agreed that teaching diaries would be helpful in our first year as we adjusted to a new environment and that opening our diaries up to each other would help to mitigate the inevitable rollercoaster of emotions.

Teaching diaries are one such tool that can be used for reflective practice. We agreed it is a good way to not only reflect about our teaching but also to write about a variety of issues about teaching and life in general. Bailey (2001) points out that teaching journals can be used to articulate problems, vent frustrations, clarify issues, and explore one's own thoughts or ideas. A teaching diary can help teachers develop professionally; however, we concede that collaborative teaching diaries may be an intimidating endeavor for teachers who are new to the notion of writing down, exploring, and possibly exposing one's thoughts to peer colleagues who may read their diaries (Mann & Walsh, 2017). In addition, we acknowledge the difficulty of writing journal entries because most teachers have never been taught how to do it, as noted in Mann and Walsh (2017), and we agree that it takes time to build trust between co-researchers if they agree to share their diaries via a shared document system, such as Google Docs or Dropbox. While it is true that it may take time for colleagues to build a trusting relationship, the idea of a "collegial friendship" is not new. As Farrell (2018) points out this term was first discussed in 1975 by Stenhouse when he suggested that teachers consult with colleagues to develop their own reflective abilities. In the case of a collaborative diary, like ours, the writers share their diary entries with other teachers and may or may not provide verbal or written feedback in the way of comments or discussions. Farrell (2018) states that collaborative journal writing serves various purposes, such as encouraging reflective inquiry, challenging, supporting, and monitoring each other's thinking, asking questions, and analyzing development, to name a few.

When starting a collaborative journal, like many researchers, we recommend that collaborators agree on some fundamental rules and guidelines, such as how often to write, where to keep the journal, what format to use for writing entries, and how to share and provide feedback. In our case, we agreed to write once a week and to read each other's entries the following week, providing support, insights, and questions via the commenting function.

### **Common Factors of Negative Emotions for Teachers**

Emotions are complex and difficult to define due to their subjectivity. Cowie (2011) cites Winograd (2005) who observed that though teachers are encouraged to avoid expressing their negative emotions within their teaching context, "learning to deal with 'darker emotions' is just as important" (p. 241) for their development. This has been shown in several studies which have explored the causes of negative emotional responses, such as frustration, anger, and anxiety. In addition, of particular relevance to our study is that these negative emotions that teachers experience may not necessarily be related to events inside their classrooms. For

example, MacIntyre et al. (2019) separated stressors into two types. One type of stressor is chronic and includes heavy workload, long/irregular hours, family problems, and loneliness. The other type is life event stressors which include a change in living situation, change in employment, end of a relationship, serious personal illness/injury, elderly parents, and non-specific stress at work.

We agree that triggers of emotions can arise from personal matters, interpersonal issues at work, as well as with management, and problems inside the classroom. Keller et al. (2014) note that language teachers may experience more stress due to concerns about silence and apathy on the part of students along with a lack of support from their institutions. Furthermore, Kyriacou (2001) points out that a lack of motivation on the part of students and classroom discipline are sources of stress and frustration for teachers. What all this means for language teachers is that they experience negative emotions arising from triggers inside the classroom, and it may influence teacher efficacy or at least their perceived feelings of efficacy.

While interactions with learners themselves may lead to stressful situations, researchers have reported on several key factors outside the classroom that also trigger negative emotional reactions. For example, in Cowie's (2011) study, participants in a Japanese tertiary context expressed emotions, such as disappointment and anger, and found that interactions with colleagues and institutions elicited "much more deep-seated and longer-lasting resentments and frustrations" (p. 240) than situations experienced within the classroom. Loh and Liew (2016) found that teachers experienced negative emotional responses from grading student work, performing English-related duties, using the prescribed curriculum, and the ethical demands of teaching itself. In addition to the pressure from institutions or other colleagues, teachers may also suffer from anxiety as shown in the work of Keller et al. (2014) who observed that younger teachers and older teachers experience teacher anxiety for different reasons. We agree with Keller et al. (2014) that for younger teachers, sources of anxiety may stem from uncertainty regarding their own abilities or being liked by the students and that meanwhile, more experienced teachers may experience anxiety when they have difficulties with students, poor work conditions, financial constraints, or lack of resources. In addition, Keller et al. (2014) cites several findings in which teacher anxiety stems from uncertainty about one's own efficacy in the classroom (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003), feeling unprepared or overwhelmed (Chang, 2009; Hargreaves, 2005; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003), and attempting new teaching strategies either due to one's own desires to better reach their students or due to educational

mandates (Darby, 2008). For language teachers, negative emotional reactions may stem from a variety of triggers that occur within the realm of teaching responsibilities and everyday interactions outside the classroom, which could also be mixed with the common stressors inside the classroom. As a result, it is likely that some teachers will experience anxiety, and if that is the case, then reflective practices, in our case teaching diaries, may be useful to better manage these common stressors.

## **METHOD**

The present study examined the relationship between negative emotional responses and how teaching diaries could help mitigate these emotions. The study involved two teachers (the authors) who were new to their teaching context and examined their adjustment period over the course of one year. Therefore, the study aimed to answer the following questions: (1) What situations led to negative emotional responses for each teacher during their first year at a new job?; (2) How did each teacher use their teaching diaries to attend to their negative emotions and improve their situations? In this section, we will introduce the context and the participants along with the data collection and analysis techniques.

### **Context and Participants**

This four-year university, located in the east of Japan, specializes in foreign languages and intercultural communication. The lecturers teach the required 1st and 2nd year English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses along with some elective courses for 3rd or 4th year students. All classes meet 2 or 4 times per week. Since the English lecturers are on fixed-term contracts, the university recruits several new lecturers each year both locally and from abroad.

The authors of this paper, Vanessa and Amanda, who are also the subjects of this study, met for the first time during the two-week orientation that took place prior to the commencement of classes. Because they have had varied life experiences, they understood the potential of keeping a collaborative diary in which they could examine their first year in their new work environment while providing continued support to each other.

Vanessa is an English language teacher in her mid-thirties who was new to Japan at the beginning of the research period. Prior to Japan, though, she had taught EFL for over five years in different countries and educational contexts mainly in Europe and the Middle East. Furthermore, she had a very positive experience teaching Japanese students in the UK,

so she was very excited about the prospect of teaching them in their own country. However, the main reason Vanessa came to Japan was to take advantage of research opportunities so that she could take her career to the next level. Unlike Amanda, she came to Japan on her own with little or hardly any idea of the complexity of the Japanese culture or their education system.

Amanda is a native speaker English-language teacher in her 40s. She has been teaching in Japan for nearly 20 years, first in the secondary context and later moving into the tertiary context. At the commencement of this study, she had begun working as a lecturer at the university that was near her home. She had been dreaming of working at this university for many years because of the location and from the outside, it seemed like an ideal work environment. Since she had sufficient experience teaching in Japan, and she had built a stable family and social life, she was mostly looking forward to meeting new people, teaching motivated students, and being able to focus on her own professional development. She imagined that working close to home would give her the opportunity to achieve it all.

### **Data Collection**

Sharing a diary requires a great amount of trust and a promise of confidentiality (Mann & Walsh, 2017); therefore, we agreed on some ground rules (Farrell, 2018) for our reflective practice. We maintained our diaries in two shared Google Documents so we could access and read each other's diaries. Our purpose for this was to read and make comments that might encourage each other to reflect by asking probing questions (Farrell, 2018).

Our diaries followed the structure of a focused free-write diary as recommended by Stevens and Cooper (2009) whereby specific topics are chosen by the teachers allowing them to explore relevant topics of concern. Therefore, we agreed to focus on four main teaching areas: class management, time management, group work, and student-centered classes. These topics were agreed upon in the beginning because we predicted they would be relevant to our adjustment in the first year. Additionally, there was a general reflection section where we could write about any other topics that were not necessarily related to the four areas. Thus, we could write about topics ranging from personal issues to events that were occurring in and outside the classroom.

### **Analysis of Diary Data**

The first year of our research project was focused on data collection. In the first semester, we each wrote in our diaries once per week. However,

we did not meet often to discuss our diaries as we agreed to read each other's diaries and leave non-judgmental comments which would provide encouragement and insights. Conversely, in the second semester, we wrote once every two weeks due to an increase in our workload. In the end, Vanessa had 28 entries (17,076 total words), and Amanda had 21 entries (26,937 total words).

The second year of our research project was focused on the analysis phase. We read the diaries from beginning to end and attempted to see patterns in our data. In this phase, we noticed that emotions, or references to emotional responses, emerged frequently. Therefore, we opted to use emotion coding as described in Saldaña (2016) in which the researchers "label the emotions recalled and/or experienced by the participant, or inferred" (p. 125). We marked each paragraph for emotions that were either mentioned explicitly or inferred. According to Saldaña (2016), emotions may be inferred by the non-verbal cues or the tone that the writing takes on during an account of an incident. At the beginning of our emotion coding process, we compared excerpts from our diaries to make sure we both understood the process of coding. See Table 1 for examples of how various excerpts were coded as the emotion "frustration" due to non-verbal cues, such as the use of punctuation, capital letters, and idioms.

Emotions themselves may be perceived differently by people, therefore we feel it is important to provide a caveat. Emotion coding can prove to be challenging when defining the emotions themselves. According to Scherer (2005), many researchers have made attempts to define emotions but "emotions are what people say they are" (p. 697). In our case, we sometimes experienced similar situations with our students or colleagues, but we may have experienced different emotions or been led to infer the emotion by our word choice or tone, and then label it with different emotions. The fact is that emotions are very subjective, and we all know of the general, accepted meanings, but we may also have slightly different uses for them in our own lives. Therefore, we focused on coding our own diaries, but met several times to discuss our coding process and how we were interpreting our diaries.

## **REFLECTION**

The data was analyzed based on emotions that emerged from the diaries. Vanessa's most salient emotions were frustration, overwhelm, concern, and stress. Amanda's most salient emotions were frustration, overwhelm,

*Table 1 Example Excerpts from Diaries with Non-Verbal Cues that Indicate Frustration*

Authors	Excerpts	Non-verbal Cues
Amanda	"Still, it took 3 hours per class, and there were STILL a few students' essays that fell through the cracks."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of capital letters tends to indicate frustration.</li> <li>• The use of the idiom, "fell through the cracks", indicates some kind of emotional response.</li> </ul>
Amanda	"I see other teachers who are thoroughly enjoying their weekends, and I am so envious. I spend my weekends (often cancelling outings with family or friends) working and getting NO ENJOYMENT out of my life."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of capital letters to indicate frustration.</li> <li>• The use of the word "envious" denotes frustration.</li> </ul>
Amanda	"Sometimes, I am still so frazzled from the morning activities at my house that my head is just not in the game yet. I always say to myself, 'Tomorrow, I am going to arrive at school at least 20 or 30 minutes before 1st period begins so that I can gather my thoughts.' However, I consistently arrive about 3 minutes before 9AM! What can I do?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of colorful language, such as "frazzled" indicates an atmosphere of frustration.</li> <li>• An example of self-talk displays my state of mind.</li> <li>• The use of exclamation points gives a sense of frustration.</li> <li>• The question at the end provides a sense of desperation.</li> </ul>
Vanessa	"Long (and painful) silences when asked to give their opinions"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of brackets and the choice of words (painful). This adjective indicates a "physical response" to the emotion of frustration.</li> </ul>
Vanessa	1) <i>unnerving</i> silences which are culture related.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of italics for an adjective to emphasize the atmosphere.</li> </ul>
Vanessa	"...but in Japan I have encountered a 4) 'wall of silence' every time I tried to elicit answers or even opinions/arguments. At first, I thought it was me;"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of metaphors ("wall of silence").</li> <li>• The use of inverted commas indicates a sense of emotion ("I thought it was me").</li> </ul>
Vanessa	"If only I had known about the awkward silences in the classroom, or the 'importance' (and questionable usefulness) of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of inverted commas.</li> <li>• Use of adjectives and nouns that indicate frustration ("importance" and "questionable</li> </ul>



	TOEIC, or the impact of their part time jobs in their academic achievements, it would have saved me hours of frustration.”	usefulness”).
Vanessa	“I seriously wonder whether they will be able to complete the assessment next week in just one and a half hours...”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choice of words (“seriously” and “wonder”). They seem to indicate the level of frustration.</li> </ul>

and regret. However, for the scope of this paper, we will focus on two emotions: frustration and overwhelm. These emotions ebbed and flowed throughout the two semesters. By examining the situations connected with our salient emotions, patterns emerged which highlighted the ways we experienced our first year. In Vanessa’s case, her negative emotional responses were commonly associated with situations that related to silence in the classroom and heavy workload. For Amanda, her negative emotional responses were largely connected with time management and overwork. Throughout our second year, while analyzing the data, we agreed to focus on the negative emotions experienced in order to reflect on solutions that lead to both personal and professional growth and development. Through this reflection period, Vanessa and Amanda read several articles and chapters that guided our discussion as we explored their emotions and the connected situations, contexts, and triggers.

The two salient negative emotional responses that Amanda and Vanessa experienced were frustration and overwhelm, as outlined in Table 2 below. In the subsequent sections, we will introduce each emotion with excerpts from our diaries followed by reflections on the situations and our own self-development.

*Table 2 Triggers that Caused Negative Emotional Reactions for Vanessa and Amanda*

Emotion	Connected Situation / Context / Triggers
Frustration	<i>Silence in the Classroom (Vanessa)</i> <i>Time Management (Amanda)</i>
Overwhelm	<i>Workload (Vanessa)</i> <i>Overwork (Amanda)</i>

### **Frustration**

Amanda and Vanessa experienced feelings of frustration during semester one. The frustration Vanessa felt was mainly due to the silence of her

students in her classes. The frustration Amanda felt was mainly due to time management issues outside of the classroom.

### ***Vanessa's Frustration due to Silence in the Classroom***

"What is frustrating is the fact that they don't talk." (*Semester one, Week 5*)

"...but in Japan I have encountered a 4) "wall of silence" every time I tried to elicit answers or even opinions/arguments. At first, I thought it was me;" (*Semester one, Week 11*)

In my experience working with international students in the UK, they were always very enthusiastic, talkative, and motivated. Every time I walked into the classroom, they would greet me and would already be speaking in English. On a few occasions, the language school I was working at in London welcomed young Japanese students (ages ranging from 16- to 18-years-old) for short one-week courses. Even though they were shy at the beginning, they quickly adapted to the group dynamics and soon became more active and engaged despite their low proficiency levels. On another occasion, I worked on a 10-week pre-session course in a British university where a postgraduate Japanese student joined the class. Unlike the younger Japanese students, this postgraduate student had an excellent command of the English language. Even though he was also shy at the beginning, he soon became the most active student. Therefore, the stereotype of shy and introverted Japanese students contradicted my experience at that time.

As a new teacher coming to Japan for the first time, I was expecting Japanese students to behave the same way they did back in the UK. That is, shy at first, but then quickly becoming more open, motivated, and engaged, like their fellow classmates. This change in Japanese students' behaviour is supported in Nakane's work (2007, as cited in Bao, 2013) where she states that Japanese students tend to "question the value of their own academic environment" (p. 75) in overseas institutions, and therefore manage to adapt to a more Western classroom despite the "unfamiliar educational methodology" (Yue & Le, 2009; Arthur, 2004, as cited in Bao, 2013, p. 76).

In my diary, I lamented about my first day in the classroom in Japan. When I set foot in my classroom for the first time, where I was suddenly confronted with a wall of silence. That is, every time I asked a question, I got no response, not even a greeting when I walked into the classroom. Based on my experience, I took for granted that Japanese students would be expressing their opinions and asking questions freely, but they

observed me in silence. Even though silence seems to be “acceptable in social spheres” (Donahue, 1998, as cited in Bao, 2013, p. 71), and “praised as a virtue” (Bao, 2013, p.71), it can be very frustrating for Western teachers, to the point it can “trigger a negative emotional response” (King, 2016). In my case, I felt I was failing as a teacher and even questioned my own teaching skills at some point. Besides, I was feeling that my students were not motivated and disinterested both in me and the subject. Bao (2013) agrees that this type of behaviour can lead foreign teachers to think that their students have a “lack confidence and learning engagement” (p.72). Unfortunately, I was completely unfamiliar with Japan's education system, its culture, and how it shapes students' behaviour and engagement. Little did I know that Japanese students perceive interfering with silence “as a sign of discourtesy”, and therefore engaging in conversation with the teacher can be considered poor manners and disruptive (Kato, 2010, as cited in Bao, 2013). As a result, I was unaware that the silence in the classroom from a Western teacher perspective can be a serious concern in any Japanese educational context, which in turn, tends to affect the whole group dynamics and the teacher-student relationship. Furthermore, it can lead to an increase of teacher talk time (TTT), making the lesson more teacher-centered instead of student-centered. However, “silence is a pragmatically deep-rooted feature of the Japanese society” (Bao, 2013, p.71) that Western teachers should be aware of, but it does not mean they should take it “as a sign of disinterest and unintelligence” (p.71). Furthermore, it seems that this issue regarding the silence in the classroom and its consequences have been widely debated and shared amongst most Western teachers who are already in Japan, but not necessarily shared with other Western teachers who are new to the country and culture.

After reflecting upon this persistent issue in my diary, I talked to some senior and veteran teachers who shared their own experiences and recommended a range of chapters and papers which address this topic. In addition, reading Dat Bao's book *Understanding Silence and Reticence (2013)* helped me to get a better understanding of the classroom culture and the Japanese education system. Likewise, it even helped me to reflect on strategies to push my students further to make the classes more student-centered and, in turn, decrease TTT. It was comforting to know that I was not alone in facing this problem.

### ***Amanda's Frustration due to Time Management***

“Sometimes, I am still so frazzled from the morning activities at my house that my head is just not in the game yet. I always say to myself, ‘Tomorrow, I am going to arrive at school at least 20 or 30 minutes before

1st period begins so that I can gather my thoughts.” (Semester One, Week 7)

In my first year of working in this new context, I was excited because the location was close to home, and I would no longer need to commute three hours a day. In the mornings, I would leave home shortly after my spouse and children left. The mornings with children were chaotic, and within a short time, I was at school teaching first period and trying to give the appearance of calm to my students. Inside, I often felt frustrated. I believed that teachers should be calm, cool, and collected at all times, and I worried that my students could sense my frustration in the atmosphere and that this would affect their motivation to learn in my class.

A common belief in the EFL industry is that teachers should appear cheerful and enthusiastic in front of students. King and Ng (2018) explain that no matter what a teacher is going through emotionally at work or in her personal life, it is believed that she should appear cheerful in order to keep her learners motivated despite the fact that there is no research indicating that students really expect this. This “hidden socio-cultural rule” (King & Ng, 2018, p. 152) is connected to the major theme of “time management” in my diary. I often worried about how my personal struggles with time management affected the atmosphere, and in my diary, I tended to admonish myself for failing to manage my own life. This continual worry led me to reflect on ways to improve both my home life and my time management.

The theme of work-life balance also comes into play here. Upon reflection, I realized that most of my personal struggles related to my lack of work-life balance and my ongoing issues with time management. As a working mother who is used to juggling ever-changing schedules, household tasks, and children’s needs along with work responsibilities, I was surprised that working close to home was so challenging. I considered ways that I could improve my lifestyle in order to accommodate my new work schedule and to manage my home life better. If it had not been for the diary, which brought about the realization that this was indeed a serious issue for me, it is likely that I would have continued showing up to work “frazzled”. In my case, I put effort into creating and sticking to habits that would eventually become automatic. Self-help books and podcasts which discuss the formation of good habits abound. Meanwhile, Lally et al. (2011) demonstrate that “with repetition, the behaviors become more automatic and less effortful” (p. 487), which is an insight that can inspire people to attempt to incorporate new habits since they will become progressively easier. In addition, Lally et al. (2011)

suggest that habit formation can be optimized if it is linked with other small habits. In my case, I decided to ride my bicycle to work rather than drive so that the time on my bike allowed me to contemplate the day ahead, which meant that I had to leave the house earlier and change my clothes at work. This change in lifestyle forced me to rethink my morning and evening routines in order to manage my time, and it gave me more time to calm down after the morning chaos while getting some fresh air. This cascade of new habits had a positive effect on my family too. Finally, arriving at my classes in a more relaxed and calm mood helped me to create a good atmosphere for my students, which despite the lack of research to tell us otherwise, I still believed was important in my job.

### **Overwhelm**

Both Vanessa and Amanda experienced feelings of overwhelm at several points in their first year. Although the feelings peaked in the first semester and dissipated considerably in the second semester, they both noticed that this negative response occurred mainly because of overwork.

#### ***Vanessa's Overwhelm due to Workload***

"It is a LOT of work. I spend most of my lunch breaks working in my office and leaving work after 6:30 most days." (*Semester 2, Week 4*)

"The material available for unit 6 (Ethics) seems not to be sufficient for the purpose of the unit so that's why I am looking for texts and creating activities to go with them." (*Semester 2, Week 2*)

In our center we do not use textbooks. That means teachers have to create their own materials. Even though most of these materials are shared in a folder on Google Drive, these materials tend to be highly tailored for a specific group of students, making them unsuitable for general use/practice. Furthermore, if a teacher wants to use these materials, they need to be adapted for their own groups of students, which is time-consuming. In addition, all teachers working in this department must join a curriculum development task group where they are assigned different tasks, such as creating lesson plans and materials for specific subjects and class-based assessments. My curriculum development task consisted of revising an existing unit about "ethics" for an academic reading course because most of the texts and activities were outdated, mismatched, or incomplete. Therefore, I had to search for texts and make handouts with activities that focused on lexis and specific reading skills, as well as create mid-term and final exams.

In my diary, I wrote about how busy I felt in the second semester, especially because I taught not only reading classes, but also academic

writing classes on top of developing the Ethics unit. I was constantly working and hardly had any breaks during my day. I was leaving my office very late most days and working through the weekends as well. This situation was affecting my eating habits and disrupting my sleep at night. Unlike Amanda, I had no one waiting for me at home. Due to the time difference, I could not communicate with friends and family, so I tended to continue working when I got home. As a result, I was unable to set boundaries to help me lead a healthy and balanced lifestyle. In fact, I was feeling exhausted and moody most of the time due to the lack of sleep and poor diet. I was not skipping meals, but I was having meals at unreasonable times so that deadlines were met. As Talbot and Mercer (2018) argue, the workload that teachers handle can be considered a powerful trigger that leads to negative feelings and emotions affecting their well-being. The frequency of diary entries related to workload and working overtime made me realize that I had to tackle this situation before it got worse. I knew I needed to manage my time effectively. The “single-tasking method”, proposed by Posen (2013), is the practice of allocating a specific amount of time to accomplish specific tasks without any distractions getting in your way. For example, in order to feel the pressure of a deadline, I would set a timer for 30 minutes. This way, I could accomplish a task, such as creating a handout within the allocated time. This strategy proved to be very helpful for time management. Regarding the tasks for my curriculum development group, I implemented efficient techniques such as simplifying, omitting, adding, and re-ordering (Tomlinson, 2005), when creating my handouts. It took some time to set a schedule and stick to it, but it dramatically improved my stress levels.

### ***Amanda’s Overwhelm due to Overwork***

“It takes hours upon hours to provide feedback per cycle in the writing process, so I am spending a lot of time outside of school and on weekends doing this.” (*Semester One, Week 14*)

“I don’t think the workload [here] is any bigger than other schools. One colleague said that other classes were not as time-consuming and that I should think about what I want [for my life]. I love writing, and I enjoy teaching it, but these academic essays are killers.” (*Semester One, Week 14*)

I have spent years developing my ability to teach writing, which is something I am proud of even though it is one of the most time-consuming areas of teaching. I believe that I should spend time providing my students with valuable feedback to keep them motivated. I often lamented the time I was spending on feedback. However, I noticed that other courses taught by teachers in my department were not so

time-consuming. I was surprised when a colleague asked if teaching writing is something I really want to be doing or not, and I reflected on it in my diary in the following weeks.

The themes of work-life balance and time management emerged frequently, especially in relation to writing classes. It had never occurred to me that I could do the following things: First, avoid providing extensive feedback to students on their writing. Second, avoid teaching writing classes altogether. Was either an option for me? Through reflection, I realized that I could be more efficient in my feedback methods. By the end of my first year, I resolved to experiment with some efficient methods, which included being stricter about deadlines and scheduling more one-on-one consultations with students. I was happy that I had spent time reflecting and considering new ways to provide feedback.

In the end, I decided that I do want to teach writing because I enjoy it, and I love seeing the end results. Christopher Day (2012) states that teachers may experience many factors of stress, such as heavy workload, but they “remain skillful, knowledgeable, committed, and resilient regardless of circumstance” (p. 7). In order to continue being a writing teacher, I would have to figure out better methods for feedback so as not to negatively affect my lifestyle. I realized that my identity is connected to being a writing teacher. According to Day (2012), in the early years of their careers, “teachers have a developing sense of efficacy leading into a strong sense of self-efficacy” (p. 12); however, in their later years, teachers experience work-life tensions. Their increased motivation stems from career advancement and they are able to sustain their motivation and effectiveness, but they are also dealing with heavy workloads and competing tensions, perhaps research, family, and life outside of work. I did not want to give up my writing classes because I had invested time and effort into them over the years.

Although I decided to continue teaching writing classes, the notion of reprioritizing one’s life and attempting to design the kind of “teaching” life I want was a new concept for me. Had I been new to teaching, perhaps the concept of designing my life would have been welcome though it is unlikely that teachers at the beginning of their careers have many choices regarding which classes they will teach. In this phase of my teaching career, I found myself in a place where I have the agency to choose which classes I would like to teach. Day (2012) discusses this “sense of identity and agency” (p. 19) to be vital to a teacher’s motivation and wellbeing. My decision to continue teaching writing was my own choice, after much reflection, and I entered my second year with much more motivation and desire to be the good teacher that I was meant to be. Day (2012) cites

several researchers who agree that good teaching requires the connection between emotions and self-knowledge. The diary helped me to reflect on the perennial issues of time management and effective feedback. It allowed me to connect my negative emotions to some viable solutions rather than just wallow in self-pity and resentment. I was able to come to terms with my identity as a good writing teacher.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this paper, we attempted to answer two research questions that explored what situations led to negative emotional responses during the first year at a new job, and how each teacher used their teaching diaries to examine and reflect on their experiences in order to improve their situations. Both Vanessa and Amanda experienced negative emotional reactions in connection to a variety of situations that occurred both inside and outside the classroom. No matter what stage of their careers, teachers experience negative emotions both in the classroom and in their work environment. It may have been assumed that Vanessa, as a younger teacher who is brand new to Japan, would have experienced a lot of hardship in her first year. On the other hand, it may have been assumed that Amanda, an older and experienced teacher in the Japanese context, would have adapted smoothly to her new environment. It is clear that all teachers, no matter what their age or past experience may be, require some time to adjust to their new work environment. However, this study shows a need for institutions and supervisors to provide more support in terms of curriculum development, classroom management, and teacher wellbeing.

Both Vanessa and Amanda commented that though keeping a diary was difficult in terms of time management and content, they found that the diary allowed them to vent their frustrations, take time to reflect on them, and figure out strategies to overcome issues and improve their situations. In this analysis, they highlighted several ways in which they used the diary to reflect on a situation, connect it to emotions, and then attempt new approaches to their classroom pedagogy, self-awareness, and professional development.

Both teachers agreed that institutions are not classrooms and books, brand names, reputation, or enrollment numbers. They are people. Hence, without teachers, there are no institutions. This is why teachers and their emotional wellbeing matters; therefore, in their teacher training and teacher development sessions throughout their careers, teachers should be invited to openly discuss their struggles in a safe and non-judgmental environment. However, it is not just up to the institutions



to make this happen. Teachers must be more forthcoming with their emotions and the situations that are connected to them while acknowledging the fact that many people lack time for or feel uncomfortable with keeping a diary. It is strongly recommended that teachers engage in some form of reflective practice, whether it is a diary or not, where they can explore their emotions in depth, which would allow for growth and self-development.

## REFERENCES

Bailey, K. M. (2001). Why my EFL students taught me. *The PAC Journal* 1(1). 7–31.

Bao, D. (2013). *Understanding silence and reticence: Ways of participating in second language acquisition*. Bloomsbury.

Cowie, N. (2011). Emotions that experienced English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers feel about their students, their colleagues and their work. *Teaching And Teacher Education*, 27(1), 235–242.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.08.006>

Day, C. (2012, Winter). New lives of teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 39(1), 7–26.

Farrell, T. S. C. (2015). *Promoting teacher reflection in second language education: A framework for TESOL professionals*. Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315775401>

Farrell, T. S. C. (2018). *Reflective language teaching: Practical applications for TESOL teachers (2nd edition)*. Bloomsbury.  
<https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350021389>

Hiver, P. (2018). Teachstrong: The power of teacher resilience for second language practitioners. In S. Mercer & A. Kostoulas (Eds.), *Language teacher psychology* (pp. 231–246). Multilingual Matters.  
<https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783099467-018>

Keller, M. M., Frenzel, A. C., Goetz, T., Pekrun, R., & Hensley, L. (2014). Exploring teacher emotions: A literature review and an experience sampling study. In P. W. Richardson, S. A. Karabenick & H. M. G. Watt (Eds.), *Teacher motivation: Theory and practice* (pp. 69–82). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203119273-5>

King, J. (2016). "It's Time, Put on the Smile, It's Time!": The Emotional Labour of Second Language Teaching Within a Japanese University. In C. Gkonou, D. Tatzl, S. Mercer (Eds.) *New directions in language learning psychology*, (pp. 97–112). Springer.

[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-23491-5\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-23491-5_7)

King, J., & Ng, K-Y. S. (2018). Teacher emotions and the emotional labour of second language teaching. In S. Mercer & A. Kostoulas (Eds.), *Language teacher psychology* (pp. 141–157). Multilingual Matters.

<https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783099467-013>

Kyriacou, C. (2001). Teacher stress: Directions for future research. *Educational Review*, 53(1), 27–35.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131910120033628>

Lally, P., Wardle, J. & Gardner, B. (2011). Experiences of habit formation: A qualitative study. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, 16(4), 484–489.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2011.555774>

Loh, C. E., & Liew, W. M. (2016). Voices from the ground: The emotional labour of English teachers' work. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 55, 267–278.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.01.016>

MacIntyre, P. D., Ross, J., Talbot, K., Mercer, S., Gregersen, T., & Banga, C. A. (2019). Stressors, personality and wellbeing among language teachers. *System*, 82, 26–38.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.02.013>

Mann, S., & Walsh, S. (2017). *Reflective practice in English language teaching: Research-based principles and practices*. Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315733395>

Mercer, S., & Kostoulas, A. (2018). *Language teacher psychology*.

Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783099467>

Posen, D. (2013). *Is work killing you? A doctor's prescription for treating workplace stress*. House of Anansi.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). SAGE Publications.

Scherer, K. R. (2005). What are emotions? And how can they be measured? *Social Science Information*, 44(4), 695–729.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018405058216>

Stevens, D. D., & Cooper, J. E. (2009). *Journal keeping: How to use reflective writing for effective learning, teaching, professional insight, and positive change*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Talbot, K., & Mercer, S. (2018). Exploring University ESL/EFL Teachers' Emotional Well-Being and Emotional Regulation in the United States, Japan and Austria. *Chinese Journal Of Applied Linguistics*, 41(4), 410–432. <http://doi.org/10.1515/cjal-2018-0031>

Tomlinson, B. (2005). *Materials development in language teaching* (8th ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Yin, H., Huang, S., & Wang, W. (2016). Work environment characteristics and teacher well-being: The mediation of emotion regulation strategies. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 13(9), 907. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph13090907>

Zembylas, M. (2003). Interrogating “teacher identity”: Emotion, resistance, and self-formation. *Educational Theory*, 53(1). 107–127. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.2003.00107.x>