

# Dear Diary: An Exploration of L2 Teachers' Emotional Experiences

**Dino Dumančić**, *University of Zadar, Croatia*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8287-5411>

ddumancic@unizd.hr

**Anna Martinović**, *University of Zadar, Croatia*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5756-1165>

amartino@unizd.hr

**Irena Burić**, *University of Zadar, Croatia*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9182-968X>

iburic@unizd.hr

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## ABSTRACT

Studies focusing on affective factors/emotions in learning are a mainstay in second language (L2) research. L2 teacher-focused research has also made advances in this domain and established the importance of affective factors for both learners and teachers. Despite the field's understanding of the emotional complexity of L2 teaching, much remains undiscovered. The aim of this qualitative research was to investigate L2 teachers' ( $N = 21$ ) emotional experiences in the classroom. Specifically, by using a teacher diary we set out to document: (1) the emotions teachers reported in their place of work and during their interactions with learners, (2) the classroom activities teachers were engaged in when they experienced specific emotions, and (3) the regulatory practices they engaged in when dealing with both pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Our findings show that L2 teachers most frequently experienced pleasant emotions such as satisfaction, joy, and pride. In regard to unpleasant emotions, they primarily revealed frustration, irritability, and disappointment. Both types of emotions were mostly instigated by their learners and were related to L2 classroom activities in the areas of grammar, speaking, and reading. The teachers admitted to regulating both pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Finally, teachers revealed that they used down-regulation, reappraisal, deep breathing, and suppression as the most frequent emotion regulation strategies.

*Keywords:* L2 teachers, teacher emotions, causes of emotions, classroom activities, emotion regulation strategies

## INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that emotions are an integral part of the learning and teaching process (Schutz & Laneheart, 2002). Much research focusing on the role of emotions has been carried out in the field of educational psychology. In regard to the field of second language (L2) learning, the research on learner emotions outweighs that of L2 teachers; however, the situation is gradually changing as scholars are making significant scientific contributions in that domain. Regarding learner emotions, the study by Horwitz et al. (1986) initiated a line of research that targeted foreign language anxiety. Other scholars (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991) continued this research by showing that foreign language anxiety is situation-specific and that L2 learners feel anxious when they find themselves ill-prepared to use language in class. While initial research focused on L2 learner anxiety (e.g., Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002), the following studies examined the relationship between learner emotions and different variables, such as self-concept and identity (e.g., Csizér & Magid, 2014), motivation (e.g., Méndez López, 2015), motivation, the learning experience, and comprehensibility development (Saito et al., 2018), and most recently grit (Zawodniak et al., 2021). Teacher-related research was initiated by Horwitz's (1996) study on anxiety. Her findings showed that non-native L2 teachers experience anxiety when they exhibit low levels of self-efficacy in their abilities to use the language in class. This, in turn, impacts the quality of their instruction. Anxiety remains a focal point of research to this day, as scholars, such as Fraschini and Park (2021) and Goetze (2020) explored various facets of language teaching related to this emotion. While Fraschini and Park (2021) employed a holistic approach to examine the shared experiences of Korean language teachers of English and their ties to language teaching anxiety, Goetze (2020) relied on the transitivity and attitude systems to research German language teachers' interpretation of classroom anxiety, as well as cognitive precursors related to it. Barring anxiety, early research also expanded its scope to include teacher stress (e.g., Bress, 2006; Mousavi, 2007), which is a state that entails teacher emotions and impacts not only the teacher, but their learners as well.

In recent years, the scope of scientific inquiry has broadened to include other aspects of L2 teachers'

emotional experiences. Teacher emotions, for instance, have been researched in relation to emotional antecedents (Khajavy et al., 2018), emotion regulation (e.g., Talbot & Mercer, 2018), emotional labor strategies (e.g., Ghanizadeh & Royaei, 2015), and wellbeing and stress (e.g., Mercer & Gregersen, 2020). Despite the increase in research on emotion in the L2 context (Dewaele et al., 2019), this domain still remains insufficiently researched, particularly with regard to L2 teachers. This especially holds true for the Croatian context where little is known about L2 teachers' emotions, regulation practices, and their sense of subjective wellbeing in general. Moreover, little research has been carried out connecting L2 teachers' emotional experiences with what is actually happening in the L2 classroom. This cross-sectional study aimed to explore these research gaps by providing a holistic overview of emotional variables, namely, the pleasant and unpleasant emotions that L2 teachers experience in class, their precursors, the classroom activities involved while experiencing various emotions, and emotion regulation practices used by L2 teachers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Emotions, Appraisal Theory, and Emotion Regulation

Emotions are an essential and a powerful element in learning and teaching. They can either facilitate or deter these two processes (Greenleaf, 2002). In order to conceptualize emotions in the L2 setting, it is important to note two key approaches, namely the basic and the dimensional approach. According to the basic approach, there are six discrete emotions that are believed to be universal, and these are happiness, surprise, fear, anger, disgust, and sadness. This claim is based on Ekman's (1984) universalist view which has not only prevailed in the field, but also impacted subsequent studies. On the other hand, the dimensional approach holds that emotions are multifaceted constructs consisting of the following dimensions: pleasure/valence, arousal/activation, and dominance (Mehrabian & Russel, 1974, as cited in Dewaele & Li, 2020).

Emotions cover a variety of responses, for instance, a teacher may experience joy and pride when their students do well on the final exam, or fear and anxiety when they start losing control over their classroom due to student misbehavior. Emotions are multi-componential (Hall &

Goetz, 2013; Scherer, 2005), meaning they impact different domains of our being. Let us first illustrate the emotion components then support them with an example. Scherer (2005) listed five such components: a “cognitive component (appraisal), [a] neurophysiological component (bodily symptoms), [a] motivational component (action tendencies), [a] motor expression component (facial and vocal expression), and [a] subjective feeling component (emotional experience)” (p. 698). To elucidate, we can take the teacher that lost control over the classroom as an example. The cognitive component takes into account teachers’ appraisals based on their classroom perceptions and their (in) congruence with pre-set goals. A teacher will experience anxiety if they realize that the students are not following directions and are deviating from the plan. The neurophysiological component indicates the bodily processes that are set in motion following an unpleasant emotion, for instance, sweating, dilation of pupils, or muscle contraction. The motivational component describes the behaviors that anxiety or fear trigger. In other words, what the teacher is motivated to do in class. The motor expression component refers to teachers’ facial expressions and body posture that are shown during the emotional episode. Lastly, the subjective feeling component indicates the affective core of an emotion, i.e., precisely what the teacher feels.

In the present research, we used a range of adjectives to capture teachers’ discrete emotions such as joy, anger, enthusiasm, boredom, pride, love and affection, anxiety, satisfaction, sadness, frustration, irritability, disappointment, etc. It should be noted that in most people’s lexicons, emotions are categorized according to a multilevel hierarchy—at the top level, positive and negative emotions can be distinguished, at the middle level, basic emotions such as love, joy, surprise, anger, sadness, and fear can be differentiated, while at the lowest level, adjectives such as affection, nervousness, irritability, enthusiasm etc., are used to describe specific emotional experiences within each category of basic emotions (Shaver et al., 1987). More specifically, both irritability and frustration are adjectives that fall within the anger cluster, sadness and disappointment denote the basic emotion of anger, while enthusiasm and contentment are indicators of joy (Harmon-Jones et al., 2016).

One prominent theory in psychology which attempts to explain the causes of emotions is appraisal theory. For example, Pekrun et al.’s (2007) *control value theory of achievement and emotions* suggests that emotions, specifically achievement emotions, stem from an individual’s appraisal of the classroom events. In other words, emotions are associated with appraisals of what is happening in the classroom (Pekrun et al., 2007). With regard to teachers, they evaluate the progression of an activity and then appraise it according to the goals they have pre-planned for that same activity (Pekrun et al., 2007). The intensity of an experienced emotion will depend on the level of importance a teacher assigns a certain incident or interaction in the classroom (Chang, 2009). According to Frenzel et al. (2009), there are three major themes that govern teachers’ formation of classroom goals and perceptions in the classroom: (1) achievement behavior; (2) motivational engagement; and (3) social-emotional behavior. To illustrate, a teacher’s goal may be that their students engage with the topic and answer some questions (achievement behavior). Regarding motivational engagement, it involves a situation where the students are highly motivated in the topic and want to learn more about it. Lastly, social-emotional behavior implies the students behaving appropriately and respecting classroom rules.

Frenzel’s (2014) *reciprocal model on causes and effects of teacher emotions* rests on the concept of cognitive appraisal. It elucidates the relationship between learner behavior, teacher emotions, and teaching practices. To elaborate, teachers’ appraisals are shaped by the goals they set for themselves, as well as their perceptions of student behavior. They observe what is going on in the classroom and to what extent the situation is congruent with their goals. If they appraise that the classroom situation is in line with what they had planned and that they are able to cope, they experience pleasant emotions. On the other hand, if the teacher’s appraisal of the classroom events is incongruent with their previously set goals (e.g., students are misbehaving and disrupting the class), they will experience unpleasant emotions. In other words, there will be a divergence between what the teacher perceived and what their initial expectations were (Frenzel et al., 2009).

In regard to the valence of emotions, teachers in general frequently experience pleasant emotions, such as enjoyment, pride, joy and excitement, as well as unpleasant ones, such

as frustration, anger, and anxiety (Burić et al., 2018; Jiang et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2016). Both types of emotions have a varying effect on learners and teachers. With respect to pleasant emotions, they have been found to facilitate teachers' use of instructional strategies and affect their teaching style (Frenzel et al., 2009). For example, teachers that experience enthusiasm or enjoyment are more likely to foster their learners' motivation and learning. On the other hand, unpleasant emotions can have a detrimental effect on the learners' conduct and their motivation. Frequent exposure to unpleasant emotions may cause learners to exhibit undesirable behavior and expend less effort in their work. For teachers, unpleasant emotions, such as anxiety, may also be induced by a lack of content knowledge; furthermore, this may reflect poorly on how they manage the classroom. It is worth noting that teacher emotions are quite apparent to the learners and may easily transfer onto them. This phenomenon is also known as emotional contagion (Frenzel et al., 2009). In short, teachers often report experiencing a plethora of emotions within a given day at work. These emotions can be related to different sources, such as learners, colleagues, superiors and parents. Whether they are pleasant or unpleasant in nature, they impact how teachers instruct their learners. For that very reason it is vital that teachers become emotionally aware so they can (1) recognize their emotions, (2) identify them, and (3) be cognizant of their effect and function in the classroom (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020).

Given the above review, it may be stated that emotion regulation is tightly related to teacher emotions. Gross (2002) has defined emotion regulation as the process that helps us shape which emotions we experience, and when and how we display them. Gross' (2002) *process model of emotion regulation* presents five types of emotion regulation processes: (1) situation selection, (2) situation modification, (3) attentional deployment, (4) cognitive change, and (5) response modulation. Situation selection represents the attempt a person makes to increase the likelihood they will end up in a situation that would instigate certain emotions. Situation modification represents a person's efforts to directly modify some situation in hopes of altering its emotional effect. Attentional deployment illustrates one's refocusing of their attention to change the emotional impact. One of the most prominent forms of this is distraction. Cognitive change showcases a person trying to alter the emotional relevance of a situation by attempting

to assess it from a different angle. Response modulation pertains to one's attempts to adjust their behavioral, physiological, and experiential elements of an emotional episode. Deep breathing or exercising are often listed as relievers of unpleasant emotions such as anger. Gross (2002) categorizes the first four strategies as antecedent-focused and the last one as response-focused.

There are clear conceptual ties between Frenzel's model (2014) and Gross's process model (2002). For instance, they both highlight the process of setting goals and relying on appraisals of what is happening around an individual. While Frenzel and colleagues' (2014) model focuses on teacher goals being related to student behaviors, Gross (2002) speaks of individuals in general whose regulation is predicated upon previously set goals and the motivation to engage in regulation to attain them. Appraisal is another element that both models underscore in their respective ways. Frenzel's model posits that certain types of emotions will ensue depending on the (in)congruence between teachers' goals and appraisals. As stated before, Gross claims that individuals have different motives for engaging in emotion regulation. Appraisal can be tied to the notion of up/down-regulation, where a person is aware of how they are feeling at the moment, and whether they either wish to increase or decrease the intensity of an emotion. Additionally, reappraisal is also one of the most frequently utilized regulation strategies that requires an individual to change their focus and observe the situation at hand differently.

A number of studies have focused on emotion regulation among teachers. Several scholars (e.g., Gong et al., 2013; Miller, 2015; Sutton, 2004) attempted to investigate teacher awareness of emotion regulation strategies and the purpose of their use. For instance, the study conducted by Gong et al. (2013) explored the emotion regulation goals and the use of strategies among 34 Chinese elementary, middle, and high school teachers. Their findings revealed that the participants regulated their emotions to offset the negative influence of emotions, to foster their learners' and their own mental health, as well as to preserve positive teacher-learner rapport. Other studies aimed to pinpoint the strategies that teachers use (e.g., Burić et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2016), as well as establish relations between emotion regulation strategies and other pertinent constructs, such as emotional labor and different types of emotions (e.g., Lee et al., 2016).

To briefly illustrate, Jiang et al.'s (2016) study encompassed learners' ( $N = 53$ ) perceptions of their teachers' emotions and regulation strategies, alongside the teachers' reflection on those variables. Following the analysis of data derived from learner surveys and teacher interviews, the authors uncovered that the antecedent-focused strategies were deemed more appropriate and conducive to the teaching/learning process, as opposed to response-focused ones. They also found reappraisal to be positively associated with pleasant emotions and their display in the classroom, unlike suppression, which was tied to unpleasant emotions.

## L2 Teacher Emotions and Emotion Regulation

### *Early Research on Emotions*

Initial L2 research on affect and emotions was marked by the works of Scovel (1978) and Lozanov (1979). They stressed the important role of affect in the L2 learning process. Krashen's (1982) affective filter was another valuable contribution because it underscored the connection between learners' emotional state and their success at acquiring an L2. According to Krashen, if the learner's affective filter was raised their ability to interact with and process the subject matter would be hindered. Therefore, Krashen stressed that teachers needed to strive to reduce their learners' anxiety by ensuring a relaxed and conducive working environment. Affect was also considered an important part of learning strategy use, as shown in O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford's (1990) taxonomies. In addition, affect was an integral component of L2 motivation research, such as Gardner's (2010) *socio-educational model* which highlighted attitudes toward the learning situation, L2 anxiety, and integrativeness. L2 anxiety, as opposed to general anxiety, has been one of the most researched affective factors that was tightly related to specific L2 situations (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002, 2004). Early research on L2 teacher emotions is linked to studies conducted on teacher anxiety. One such study was carried out by Horwitz (1996) which indicated that anxiety had a deleterious effect on the quality of foreign language instruction. This was especially apparent among non-native language teachers whose low levels of efficacy were indicative of their apprehension related to their target

language proficiency (Horwitz, 1996). Scholars (e.g., Bress, 2006; Mousavi, 2007) also exhibited a great deal of interest in L2 teacher stress which can be considered an emotion-related state that has the potential to impact a vast number of learners and teachers. Given the holistic nature of this research, the following subsections will provide a brief overview of studies related to key factors, namely L2 teacher emotions and their sources, classroom activities, and emotion regulation strategies.

### *L2 Teacher Emotions and Their Sources*

There are several scholars (e.g., Cowie, 2003; Dumančić, 2018; Gkonou & Miller, 2020; Khajavy et al., 2018; Ruohotie-Lyhty et al., 2018; Xu, 2013) that investigated L2 teachers' pleasant and unpleasant emotions with respect to different elements, such as learners, colleagues, and institutions they worked in. To illustrate, language teachers' emotions are often evoked by their learners. They can be pleasant, such as the happiness and satisfaction caused by student success (Xu, 2013), or unpleasant, such as the shame and anxiety that a language teacher experiences if they are incapable of providing their students with a satisfactory answer (Khajavy et al., 2018). Gkonou and Miller (2020) gave insight into personal narratives of L2 teachers and their critical incidents, or the "events that mark a significant turning point in one's professional life and are often emotionally charged" (Gkonou & Miller, 2020, p. 131). Their findings showed that the participants' pleasant and unpleasant emotions were directly related to their students. Additionally, the teachers used the following emotionally charged words to express their emotions: "difficult time/situation, frustration/frustrated/frustrating, mad, and anger/angry" (p. 139). Cowie (2003), on the other hand, interviewed nine experienced foreign language teachers of English employed in Japanese universities. The respondents experienced pleasant emotions when dealing with students, and unpleasant emotions when interacting with their colleagues. It is interesting to note that both Ruohotie-Lyhty and colleagues (2018), and Cowie (2003) found that the teachers exhibited warmth and positive emotions toward their students. Conversely, less pleasant emotions, such as anger and frustration, were instigated by their relationship with their colleagues. The root of this problem can be traced to the divergence between their belief systems and values and that of their colleagues.

### ***L2 Teacher Emotions and Classroom Activities***

Not many studies have focused on the relationship between language teacher emotions and classroom activities. A few authors (e.g., Brown et al., 2018; Dumančić, 2018; Jean & Simard, 2011; Oxford, 2020; Tomlinson, 2018) reported on the association between different teacher emotions, language skills, and activities related to them. Jean and Simard's (2011) research focused on language students' and teachers' beliefs tied to grammar teaching and activities associated with it. Their findings showed that both learners and teachers exhibited a somewhat negative stance toward grammatical activities, but they also stated that it was necessary to teach grammar. The fact that grammar, and by extension grammatical tasks, evoke unpleasant emotions such as boredom, was also reported by Dumančić (2018). In his qualitative study, the author showed evidence that Croatian L2 teachers found grammatical tasks induced boredom, alongside certain tasks and activities, such as reading tasks, workbook, drilling, and translating exercises.

Brown et al. (2018) reflected on the process of evaluation and assessment as precursors of diverse language teachers' emotions, such as pride, concern, or anxiety. In their research, they offered a brief overview of three case studies that covered this topic (carried out in Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain). In the Egyptian study in particular (Ferris, 2014), they explored language teachers' emotional responses when providing feedback to written activities. These findings showed that providing such feedback was quite taxing on the teachers (e.g., it caused emotional labor) because they had to walk a fine line between providing positive and negative feedback, while safeguarding their students' language egos. The teachers reported such emotions as frustration when their students refused to take their suggestions seriously. On the other hand, there were teachers that experienced satisfaction after seeing how much their constructive feedback helped their students improve.

Lastly, Oxford (2020) explored various emotional domains of language teaching and presented five case studies illustrating the "well" of teachers' well-being. These five teacher stories revealed a range of pleasant emotions (e.g., excitement, hope, care, happiness, pleasure) and unpleasant emotions (e.g., anxiety, anger, frustration,

sadness). One of those teachers, whose pseudonym was Kathryn, recalled her teaching experience in a community English as a second language (ESL) program. Her goal was to promote her students' fluency through storytelling. Her story unpacked several pleasant and unpleasant emotions. For instance, she was anxious at the beginning because she was unsure if she could provide her students with challenging enough material. Despite being hopeful and excited by working on her students' fluency through storytelling, she experienced disappointment and a feeling of defeat when half of her class failed to show up for their story presentation class.

### ***L2 Teachers Emotions and Emotion Regulation Strategies***

The relationship between language teacher emotions and emotion regulation strategies has been addressed by several scholars (e.g., Chahkandi et al., 2016; Ghanizadeh & Royaei, 2015, Morris & King, 2020; Talbot & Mercer, 2018). Language teachers are known to utilize emotion regulation strategies to reduce the intensity of unpleasant emotions and to promote pleasant emotions to attain different goals. To illustrate, Chahkandi et al.'s (2016) study investigated emotion regulation in relation to teacher emotions and efficacy. They showed that Iranian English language teachers regulated pleasant emotions to maintain authority, as well as to facilitate efficacy. Conversely, unpleasant emotions were regulated to maintain their learners' mental health, to appear as moral guides, and to promote rapport with their learners. Another study that explored the use of emotion regulation and labor strategies in relation to language teacher burnout was conducted by Ghanizadeh and Royaei (2015). This study, which involved Iranian language teachers of English working in different institutes, revealed that emotion regulation and labor strategies had a negative relationship with teacher burnout. Moreover, reappraisal and suppression had a negative correlation with burnout as well.

Having stated that language teachers engage in emotion regulation hoping to attain different goals in their classrooms it is necessary to mention Morris and King's (2020) study which investigated emotion regulation among university English language teachers in Japan. The authors targeted three domains of emotion regulation: (1) goals reported by the teachers, (2) the strategies they utilized to

attain those goals, and (3) contextual factors tied to regulatory behavior. Their findings showed that the teachers' use of regulation strategies was deliberate and aimed at preserving their well-being and creative control of work. Specifically, the authors identified strategies such as proactive coping, attention deployment (distraction), cognitive reappraisal, and response modulation in the teachers' narratives. Talbot and Mercer (2019) explored the relationship between language teachers' perceptions of their well-being and the strategies used to protect it. A total of 12 ESL/EFL tertiary-level teachers from the US, Japan, and Austria took part in 12 interviews intended to gather information on a variety of topics, such as professional challenges and detrimental facets pertaining to their wellbeing. Their results indicated that teacher emotion regulation was executed by means of problem-directed action. The emotional triggers were not described as either positive or negative. In addition, teachers utilized regulatory strategies to offset the deleterious effects of unpleasant emotions and refocus on good aspects of being a teacher.

As indicated earlier in this paper, there is still a dearth of research on emotions and regulatory practices in the realm of L2 teaching, especially in the Croatian context. Bearing this in mind, this qualitative study adopted a holistic approach with the aim of depicting the multilayered nature of teacher emotions, their sources, related classroom activities, as well as regulatory practices.

## METHOD

### Aim

The overall aim of this study was to examine the emotional experiences of Croatian L2 teachers while teaching and engaging with students. The data measurement instrument included a teacher diary that tapped into different emotional facets of teaching a second language, such as emotions experienced, causes of emotions, related classroom activities, and emotion regulation strategies. By keeping a diary, the teachers were able to document and reflect on their classroom experiences. The research attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What emotions do L2 teachers experience most frequently in L2 classes and what are some of the causes of these emotions?

2. What classroom activities were the L2 teachers involved in when they experienced different emotions?

3. What emotion regulation strategies do L2 teachers use in the L2 classroom?

### Participants

A total of 21 English language teachers took part in this qualitative research. The teachers were on average 36.78 years old ( $SD = 5.42$ ) and had an average of 11.78 years of teaching experience ( $SD = 5.40$ ). In addition, 11 teachers were employed in primary schools, while 10 of them taught in secondary schools. With respect to gender, 17 (80.9 %) were female, and 4 were male (19%). The teachers that completed the online diary came from seven counties in Croatia. The teachers were recruited through the network of foreign language teacher associations (such as Croatian Association of Teachers of English – HUPE) and different county councils on teaching English as a foreign language. English language teaching usually takes place two times per week in lower grades, while the number of classes per week can vary from two to four hours in higher grades depending on the school, e.g., grammar schools.

### Instrument

The instrument used was a teacher diary which consisted of five questions pertaining to emotional aspects of L2 teaching (see Appendix for more details). The questions focused on teachers' emotional experiences, including the emotions that teachers experienced in class, an appraisal by teachers of the causes of their emotions, the classroom activities they were involved in while experiencing these emotions, and the emotion regulation strategies that they used. To ensure data triangulation, following the modification of the instrument, the authors involved a group of three independent experts (with backgrounds in language teaching and psychology) to assess the validity of the teacher diary. The instrument was partly based on the teacher diary proposed by Chahkandi et al. (2016); however, it was somewhat modified to fit the current research context. Specifically, the instructions in the instrument were expanded and specified to make it easier for the participants to provide concrete answers. Instead of saying "who created

this emotion in you?”, as was stated in the original version, we opted for “What caused the emotion(s)? If more than one was experienced, please specify the cause for each of them (e.g., Joy was caused by...)”. Moreover, the list of emotions was broadened to include emotions such as shame, excitement, frustration, liking/disliking, irritability, and hostility in order to elicit a more comprehensive range of emotions. In the end, the teacher diary provided a list of a total of 26 emotions. Specifically, 11 of them were pleasant, such as joy, and 15 of them were unpleasant, such as disappointment. The question on classroom activities was also expanded (e.g., Instead of “What were you doing” we put “What aspect of language teaching were you involved in, e.g., a grammar exercise?”). With regard to emotion regulation strategies, the original instrument used the following wording “How did you treat the emotion,” whereas we explained the process of emotion regulation, possible strategies, and up/down-regulation.

## Procedures

The diary was created and presented in an online form. It was designed through Google Forms to allow the participants easier access and ensure transparency and clarity during the entire process. Ethical principles were followed: Prospective participants were informed of the nature of the study, they were informed that their participation was voluntary, and their anonymity was ensured. Once they had given their consent, an invitation-only group was created on Facebook to allow the teachers to receive important notifications instantly. The teachers were asked to keep the diary for 10 working days. Entries

in the diary employed a signal-contingent entry design (Dörnyei, 2007). This indicated that they were notified at the end of each working day via Facebook to make an entry to their diaries. The prompts came in the form of a link to an online version of the teacher diary. Each day the participants received a short message alongside the link, such as “Day 9 – This is to remind you to log in and make an entry.” The teachers in the study were required to make entries in English. Given the dynamic of their profession and the possibility of forgetting to take the survey, this approach seemed most appropriate. It should be noted that the data was gathered prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## RESULTS

This section delineates the findings related to the following aspects of emotional experiences: emotions and their causes, classroom activities, and emotion regulation practices.

### L2 Teacher Emotions and their Causes

As indicated in the Instrument sub-section, teachers were asked to list their emotions, which were categorized according to whether they were pleasant or unpleasant. The emotions were then categorized based on order of frequency and tied to their causes. The most prominent emotions and causes are elaborated on briefly, whereas those less frequent are only mentioned in passing. Table 1 shows the most frequently occurring pleasant and unpleasant emotions in our dataset.

**Table 1.** *Most Frequently Occurring Pleasant and Unpleasant Emotions*

Pleasant Emotions		Unpleasant Emotions	
label	frequency	label	frequency
Satisfaction	34	Frustration	22
Enjoyment	20	Irritability	13
Joy	19	Disappointment	10
Pride	18	Sadness	9
Enthusiasm	15	Anger/Boredom	8

### *Pleasant emotions*

Based on our findings, the following pleasant emotions emerged as most frequently experienced: satisfaction (34), enjoyment (20), joy (19), and pride (18). On the other hand, love and affection (7), excitement (4), liking (4) and eagerness (1) were among the least frequent positive emotions.

In regard to *satisfaction*, the teachers related this emotion to seven distinct causes, such as students' success in class, students' display of knowledge, students' positive feedback, a successfully held class, positive classroom atmosphere, having time to do other things, and student improvement. *Students' success in class*, the most notable cause and reported by 8 teachers, represented students' success in doing a task, acquiring new knowledge, and getting good grades. Teacher joy was also caused by their *students' display of knowledge*, as indicated by 7 teachers. Namely, such a display ranged from a proper usage of expressions for giving advice to production of grammatically sound utterances during an oral presentation. Moreover, 6 teachers felt satisfied when they received *positive feedback* from their students. One teacher recalled getting positive remarks from students who were working on a text they found interesting. The students then started incorporating new vocabulary from the target text into their speech. Another teacher stated that their "Satisfaction was caused by the positive responses and atmosphere in the class."

With respect to *enjoyment*, it was caused by various factors, the most frequent of which were a positive classroom atmosphere, students' success in class, teaching content, and good rapport with students. To exemplify, 7 teachers recalled experiencing enjoyment as a result of a *positive classroom atmosphere*, which was marked by banter between teacher and students, good working environment, as well as notable student participation. *Student success in class*, as reported by 5 teachers, was another cause of enjoyment and was linked to situations in which students gave great presentations on target L2 culture (e.g., food), or showed significant improvement (visible from homework assignments the teacher was grading). Another teacher recalled experiencing enjoyment because a "student who usually isn't that involved started retelling a story during revision for their book report project and she

actually read everything and came prepared a week before the actual test."

*Joy* was another prominent emotion linked to nine distinct causes: students' success in class, positive classroom atmosphere, students' positive feedback, and other less conspicuous examples, such as student improvement, and having time to do other things in class. Regarding *students' success in class*, 5 teachers felt joyous when they observed situations in which their students either properly used conditional sentences during translation practice, or they prepared and executed a workshop on target L2 culture independently. In addition, 4 teachers experienced joy due to a positive classroom atmosphere. To illustrate, one teacher remembered feeling the good working 'vibe' as they were introducing new lexical units, while another witnessed students' cooperation and happiness during a text assignment. In their words, "Joy was caused by the way my students were cooperating and having fun doing an assignment."

*Pride* appeared to be a potent pleasant emotion among the teachers, and it was tied to six varied causes, such as students' performance, display of knowledge, teacher's success in class, having good rapport with students, students' positive feedback, and students' good behavior. *Students' performance*, the most frequent cause, was mentioned by 9 teachers and associated with students' successful use of verb tenses (while doing exercises) or sorting out countable and uncountable nouns related to food (in the case of a student with special needs). *Display of knowledge* and *teachers' success in class* were equal in frequency of occurrence (both mentioned by 2 teachers). In terms of the former, one teacher mentioned feeling proud of one of their weaker students who came prepared for the final oral exam. According to the teacher, "Joy, pride and relief were caused by good answers of pupils, who are usually very bad. Today was their last class in their education for waiters and they had to learn a few lessons for the positive note and they did it. We were both proud, they and me." Regarding the latter cause, another teacher felt proud of themselves for having prepared and carried out their observation class successfully in front of the promotion board.

### *Unpleasant emotions*

When it comes to unpleasant emotions, the participants most frequently experienced frustration (22), irritability (13), disappointment (10) and sadness (9). Conversely, guilt (6) anxiety (5), shame (2), and fear, self-doubt, tension/straining, and dissatisfaction (1) were among the least frequent emotions.

*Frustration*, the most prominent unpleasant emotion, was associated with nine different causes, such as students' inappropriate/disruptive behavior, students' lack of interest, effort, or preparation, the inability to conduct class due to external factors, students' lack of knowledge and understanding, students' negative outcomes, malfunctioning equipment, and overseeing exams. The most frequent notable cause of frustration, *students' inappropriate/disruptive behavior*, was reported by 7 teachers. One teacher recalled feeling frustrated by a misbehaving student who kept interjecting despite the teacher's warnings. Another teacher recalled a similar incident related to discipline when they said "I felt frustration and hostility towards students who were acting and making noises like monkeys. I couldn't calm them down and then it all went downhill as I started raising my voice." The second most frequent cause was *students' lack of interest, effort, or preparation*, as indicated by 6 teachers. One teacher recalled feeling frustrated by a group of inactive students that did not pay attention in class and were unable to grasp the comparison of adjectives. This teacher simply said that their frustration was caused by "students who didn't cooperate."

*Irritability* represented another notable unpleasant emotion that was related to five causes, such as students' lack of effort, motivation, and preparation, students' disruptive/inappropriate behavior, students' lack of knowledge and understanding, teacher's inability to conduct classes due to external factors, and teachers' lack of preparation. *Students' lack of effort, motivation, and preparation* was the most prominent cause according to 6 teachers. For instance, one teacher became quite irritable when a group of students came unprepared for a previously arranged oral exam. *Students' disruptive/inappropriate behavior* was mentioned by 4 teachers and one of them distinctly recalled a class of senior students who started exhibiting crazy behavior while working on a letter of complaint. According to one of the teachers, they felt

frustrated and irritated because "...seniors are crazy today and will be even more so tomorrow, they are singing and whistling all the time, making it impossible to do anything substantial with the 2nd graders." The other causes were equal in their frequency and were only mentioned once.

*Disappointment* was another frequently experienced unpleasant emotion and was linked to four causes, such as students' lack of effort, motivation, or preparation, students' disruptive/inappropriate behavior, students' lack of knowledge and understanding, and students' lack of empathy. *Students' lack of effort, motivation, or preparation*, mentioned by 4 teachers, represented the most notable cause of feelings of disappointment. One teacher felt quite disappointed in her students during the final class when she announced the final grades. She could not comprehend why the students cared so little about their success and failed to see the importance of studying during the entire school year. Another teacher experienced the same emotion because their "students didn't really put effort into writing a good introductory paragraph for a for-and-against essay." *Students' disruptive/inappropriate behavior*, as introduced by 3 teachers, was exemplified by a teacher that was disappointed in their student's behavior. The student tried to cheat by claiming that the teacher had corrected their exam incorrectly (which was not the case).

*Sadness*, the final frequently experienced unpleasant emotion, was connected to six distinct causes, such as teacher's lack of preparation, students leaving school, students' disruptive/inappropriate behavior, teacher perception of students not living up to their potential, students' success, and students' unfortunate predicaments. *Teacher's lack of preparation*, raised by 3 teachers, represented the most notable cause of sadness. One teacher explained that their emotion ensued from them "...not preparing well beforehand for my lessons so there was some 'free time' during the lessons when pupils tend to do the things their way." In terms of *students leaving school*, 2 teachers recalled feeling sad because their senior students were leaving school and were about to face new life adventures. One teacher admitted feeling "Some sadness because I know the challenges they are about to face." The remaining causes were singular in number, that is, they were mentioned once by a single teacher.

## Classroom activities and their relation to emotions

The teachers in this study were asked to provide various classroom activities they were engaged in at the time of experiencing different emotions. English as a foreign language instruction in Croatia is based on the Communicative Language Teaching approach with a particular emphasis on developing communicative competence and language skills. Language skills include reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, as well as the development of grammar and vocabulary. Classroom activities in this study referred to any activities organized by the teacher that involved the development of these skills. Here, the activities are presented in regard to both pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Similar to the previous section, the most frequent examples are discussed, while least frequent ones are briefly listed.

### *Classroom Activities Related to Pleasant Emotions*

Among the most frequently referenced classroom activities were grammatical activities (29), speaking activities (27), reading activities (13), and vocabulary activities (12). On the other hand, exam analysis (5), class observation (5) and content revision (4) were among the least frequently occurring activities. *Grammatical activities*, which involved exercises such as gap filling, comparison of adjectives, reported speech and tense usage, were tied to satisfaction, enjoyment, joy, pride, enthusiasm, love, and affection. To briefly illustrate some of these, 3 teachers were quite satisfied with their students' proper use of grammar and 5 of them felt joy after witnessing their students' success in translating 2<sup>nd</sup> conditional sentences from Croatian to English. Regarding *speaking activities*, they encompassed class discussions, storytelling, oral reports and various oral games. The teachers in this study related them to satisfaction, enjoyment, pride, enthusiasm, empathy and love, and affection. For instance, many teachers felt quite satisfied having observed their students' verbal prowess and proper use of language, as well as students' interest in certain topics (e.g., dangerous situations). They also felt proud of their students' ability to organize a workshop on their own or felt empathy toward students who experienced family hardship—which came out during one of the class discussions.

With respect to *reading activities*, they involved examples such as reading comprehension tasks, matching paragraphs with titles provided, and text genre analysis. The teachers tied these activities to satisfaction, enjoyment, pride, enthusiasm, relief, excitement, and liking. Satisfaction, for instance, was experienced when the students gave positive feedback on the topic being covered or when new vocabulary was deemed interesting. Moreover, one teacher felt proud after a successfully completed group work activity during a formal observation class (the students were asked to cover different parts of the text in groups). Several teachers were enthusiastic about their students' desire to learn more about some topic or read another similar text. When it comes to *vocabulary activities*, the participants recalled engaging students in brainstorming, word games, introducing new vocabulary and using certain phrases in class (e.g., expressing likes and dislikes). Such activities were associated with satisfaction, enjoyment, joy, enthusiasm, empathy, excitement, and liking. To briefly exemplify, several teachers reported enjoying the participation and experienced interest in a vocabulary warm-up activity (involving brainstorming). They also experienced excitement while partaking in whole-class guessing games that both teachers and students enjoyed. Figure 1 shows the connections between classroom activities that were related to both pleasant and unpleasant emotions.

### *Classroom activities related to unpleasant emotions*

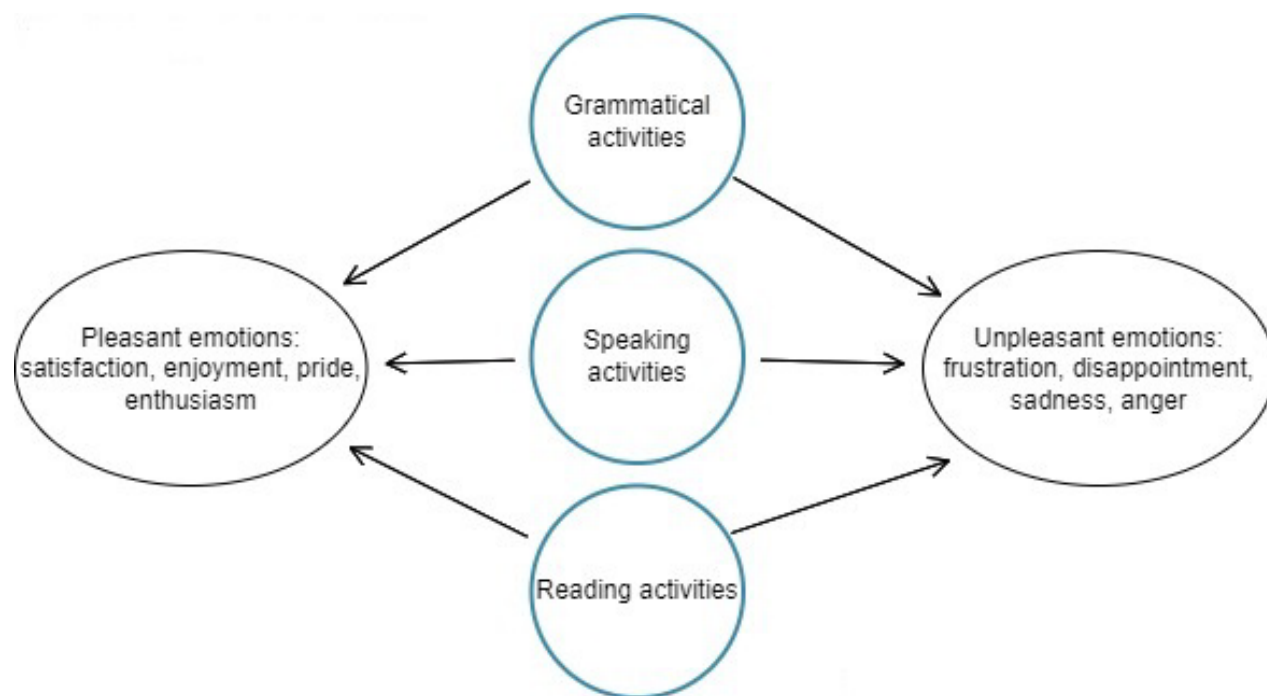
In regard to classroom activities and review process associated with unpleasant emotions, the teachers stated they were engaged in grammatical activities (19), speaking activities (11), testing (11) and oral exams (9) most frequently. Contrary to this, the least frequently occurring activities encompassed student projects and workshops (4), reading activities (3), vocabulary activities (2), and classroom observation (2). Many teachers mentioned *grammatical activities* and tied them to various unpleasant emotions, such as frustration, disappointment, sadness, irritability, anger, and boredom. To elaborate on some of these emotions, several teachers reported being frustrated because their students did not pay attention or show interest in comparison of adjectives. Some teachers felt sad after an unsuccessful class. They realized they could have prepared and managed their class better (e.g., avoided rowdy student behavior) while working on grammatical tasks. In brief, the

unpleasant emotions were evoked by the participants' observations of what was taking place in their classrooms, as well as their appraisal of student behavior and performance.

Regarding negative emotions in response to speaking activities and testing, they were equal in frequency. *Speaking activities* were related to frustration, disappointment, irritability, anxiety, and fatigue. Several teachers experienced frustration and disappointment due to misbehaving students that would not pay attention to their classmates' presentations. Some of them were frustrated because their grammar school students could not master the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular of the present simple tense. In terms of *testing*, the teachers experienced frustration, sadness, anger, boredom, powerlessness, and guilt. For instance, several teachers were angry at students who attempted to cheat during an exam by using their phones. One teacher reported

two unpleasant emotions related to testing. Namely, they said that "Sadness and guilt and empathy were caused by not preparing tests for one grade (4) appropriately in advance, so students got a bit frustrated, and it took them some time to do it." Some felt powerless because their young learners (grades 1-4) exhibited low levels of motivation, effort, and appreciation for learning English. *Oral exams* were connected to frustration, disappointment, irritability, anger, and powerlessness. To illustrate, a couple of teachers admitted to feeling irritated, frustrated, and angry when several weaker students came unprepared for their oral exam that was previously announced. One teacher attested that "Irritability occurred during an oral exam in another class. I was irritated because some of the students were not prepared despite the exam being announced." Another teacher felt powerless to accommodate the parents' and students' demands to rectify the bad grades.

**Figure 1.** Diagram Showing Connections between Classroom Activities and Different Emotions



### Emotion Regulation (ER) Strategies

The emotion regulation strategies reported by the teachers in this study are discussed with respect to their association with pleasant and unpleasant emotions, their causes and

classroom activities. The strategies used by teachers are presented in order of frequency (see Table 2); moreover, the most prominent examples are explained, and the less notable ones are simply listed.

**Table 2.** *Frequency of Emotion Regulation (ER) Strategies and their Relatedness to Different Emotions*

ER strategies tied to pleasant emotions		ER strategies tied to unpleasant emotions	
strategy	frequency	strategy	frequency
down-regulation	7	viewing situation from a different perspective	14
real display of emotions	4	taking deep breaths	13
suppression/thinking about something else/talking to a colleague	3	suppression	12
viewing situation from a different perspective	2	talking to someone	5

### ER Strategies Related to Pleasant Emotions

The teachers reported the following seven ER strategies related to pleasant emotions: down-regulation (7), real display of emotions (4), suppression (3), talking to a colleague (3), thinking about something else (3), up-regulation (3), and observing a situation from a different perspective (2). It should be stated that suppression and down-regulation are joined and discussed together considering that down-regulation is not a strategy per se, yet it represents a person's desire to reduce the duration and intensity of an emotion (Gross, 2015). Down-regulation was a strategy observed in response to satisfaction, joy, enthusiasm and empathy. To exemplify, teachers mainly suppressed their pleasant emotions in class because they wanted to maintain their professional demeanor. One participant experienced satisfaction while they were observing another teacher-in-training in class. The emotion was evoked because the participant had more time to do other things; however, they chose to hide it. Another teacher felt empathetic toward their students because they did not prepare all the copies of the test on time and that reflected negatively on the students (i.e., they did not have enough time to complete it when the teacher finally showed up). The teacher decided to suppress the emotion, keep calm, and assure the students they would have time to finish the test the following period.

When it came to *real display of emotions*, the teachers related it to satisfaction, enjoyment, and enthusiasm. One teacher, for instance, felt satisfied and enthusiastic with their students' positive responses during a brainstorming activity. The teacher bolstered the students' efforts and showed pleasant emotions by using the expression 'Great job!'. Another teacher enjoyed their students' presentations and openly showed how they felt by praising their hard work and verbal proficiency. The last examples to be addressed together are *talking to a colleague* and *up-regulation*. While neither of them is a strategy per se, they are related in that they focus on increasing the intensity of a pleasant emotion. Talking to a colleague, specifically, can be viewed as a form of up-regulation when a teacher shares something positive that happened with another teacher, thus prolonging the positive affect they are in. This example is reminiscent of the one illustrated by Gross (2015, p. 9), namely "sharing great news with close friends." This strategy was linked to various emotions, including enjoyment, pride, relief, empathy, and love and affection.

To briefly illustrate, one teacher reflected on imaginative and creative personal stories that students shared in class and their desire to share this experience with another colleague to express pride. Another teacher shared with their colleague the good news of their struggling student who finally grasped conditional sentences. In their words, "I felt relief while I was giving some additional

explanations to a student. I realized that she'd understood the conditionals and can use them properly. And that was a student that usually has problems with grammar.”

### ER Strategies Related to Unpleasant Emotions

This section on unpleasant emotions presents a total of 13 different strategies. The most frequently used by teachers were viewing the situation differently (14), taking deep breaths (13), and suppression (12), while the less prominent responses entailed remaining positive (2), listening to music (1), and offering students an explanation (1). *Viewing the situation differently* represents the most prominent ER strategy related to unpleasant emotions and the least frequent in connection with pleasant emotions. This strategy was linked to the emotions of frustration, disappointment, sadness, irritability, powerlessness, and guilt. For instance, one teacher who was disappointed by their students' underdeveloped speaking skills (during an oral exam) told themselves these students must have a talent for other subjects, like vocational ones. According to them, “I regulated the emotion of disappointment by trying to convince myself that the students who are weak in English are for sure much better at their vocational subjects. I cannot see their other grades, only the grades from the subjects I teach.” Another teacher tried to regulate their sadness after noticing their students' poor learning habits and low motivation. The teacher reminded themselves that the students were in their first year and had time to improve (during their schooling). In terms of *taking deep breaths*, teachers used this strategy when they experienced frustration, disappointment, irritability, anger, anxiety, powerlessness, and guilt. Several teachers recalled breathing deeply when they observed a group of misbehaving students interfering with others that worked on grammatical tasks. One teacher felt guilty for a student mishap that took place during a student workshop on target L2 culture. The teacher breathed deeply while thinking there was nothing that they could have done to help the students out. Another teacher recalled resorting to two types of emotion regulation strategies, i.e., response-focused (breathing, counting) and cognitive reappraisal, as exemplified in the following statement: “When I'm frustrated, I usually sit down and breathe deeply and try to look at the problem from a different angle. I try to instill

love of my language in my students, so I calm down, count to ten, and continue teaching.”

*Suppression* was tightly linked to down-regulation, and related to sadness, irritability, guilt, tension, disappointment and frustration. The teachers strived to reduce the intensity of the said emotions to ensure their classroom productivity. One teacher, for example, tried to suppress sadness after a student's rude outburst during class observations (a teacher in training was giving a lesson) by keeping a professional and calm attitude. Another teacher felt irritable when a notably clueless student was called out during a book report activity (retelling) and refused to admit they were absent-minded. The teacher tried to remain calm and thought about the good times they shared with this student.

### DISCUSSION

We turn now to a discussion of the findings obtained from the teacher diaries in the same order as they were represented in the previous section.

#### L2 Teachers' Emotional Experiences

Regarding pleasant emotions and their causes our findings revealed that satisfaction, enjoyment, joy, and pride were the most frequent pleasant emotions experienced by L2 teachers. With respect to the causes, we found that the majority of teacher emotions were instigated by student behavior, while a smaller portion was tied to the teachers, or the teaching content. To elucidate, students' good performance, display of knowledge, positive feedback and good classroom atmosphere were related to many pleasant emotions, such as pride and enjoyment. Other scholars, such as Cowie (2003), Khajavy et al. (2018), Taxer and Frenzel (2015), and Xu (2013) reported similar findings. For instance, Xu (2013) noted that the teachers experienced pleasant emotions, such as happiness and satisfaction, and related them to student success. Cowie's (2003) findings also showed that the teachers' pleasant emotions were primarily evoked by their interaction with the students. Khajavy et al.'s (2018) findings go in line with the findings of this study. Namely, they revealed that teachers often experience pride and enjoyment at their place of work, and that the majority of teacher emotions were instigated by

students, while a smaller portion was tied to the teachers or teaching content.

When it comes to unpleasant emotions, our findings showed frustration, irritability, disappointment, and sadness to be among the most prominent among our participants. Akin to pleasant emotions, they were mainly tied to students and less frequently to the teachers. Causes of these negative emotions were mainly linked to students' inappropriate behavior (discipline) and lack of motivation. Unpleasant teacher emotions were also discussed by Lee et al. (2016), Pekrun et al. (2018), and Taxer and Frenzel (2015) in a non-L2 context, whereas Dumančić (2018), Gkonou and Miller (2020), Khajavy et al. (2018), Martinez Agudo (2018), and Oxford (2020) reported these emotions in the L2 setting. For instance, while Khajavy et al. (2018) did not single out the same frequently experienced unpleasant emotions as in our study, they found that teacher anxiety, anger, and boredom were mostly tied to their learners. To elaborate, anger was caused by student misbehavior, whereas boredom was evoked by students that refused to collaborate. Dumančić (2018) who related the emotion to different sources, one of them being language learners, also reported boredom. While boredom was not among the most notable teacher emotions in this study, it is important to state that other unpleasant emotions were associated with the students. Gkonou and Miller's (2020) study on language teachers' critical incidents can also be related to our findings. In their research, teachers recollected critical incidents that were challenging, and evoked unpleasant emotions related to their students. The teachers in that study used emotionally charged words to express how they felt, for instance, anger/angry, frustration, frustrated, betrayed/ betrayal, yell and mad. Some of these emotional states do resemble those reported by our participants (e.g., frustration and anger).

In regard to classroom activities, different examples intersected pleasant and unpleasant emotions the teachers experienced. It should be noted that we were not able to relate all findings in this section to previous research due to the small number of existing studies investigating language teacher emotions and classroom activities. Grammatical activities appeared in relation to both types of emotions (e.g., satisfaction, enjoyment, frustration, and disappointment). The language teachers felt proud of their students' adequate use of language rules, as well as irritability with their students who had not yet grasped some elementary rules. Jean and Simard's (2011) study on L2 students' and

teachers' beliefs regarding grammar similarly showed that they have mixed feelings toward it. While students and teachers understand the importance and necessity of grammar, their emotions tend toward the unpleasant emotional spectrum. This was also indicated by Dumančić (2018) in his study of language teacher boredom. According to his findings, the teachers believed that grammatical activities induce boredom the most. Speaking activities transected both types of emotions as well. The participants often felt proud of well-executed student oral presentations, but they also experienced disappointment due to other students interfering with their classmates' presentations. Similar to our findings, one of Oxford's (2020) participants (Kathryn) also reported experiencing various emotions in regard to speaking. Namely, she first felt quite excited and hoped to engage her students through telling their personal stories. Later she was quite disappointed and felt defeated when she realized the students did not share her initial enthusiasm and that half of them did not attend the class when they were supposed to present in.

The teachers also reflected on reading activities related to pleasant emotions. They mentioned that comprehension tasks, cloze text, and genre analysis, for example, were tied to satisfaction and pride. Some teachers were satisfied with having observed high levels of student interest in some topics, while others felt proud seeing how successfully their students completed their reading tasks in groups. While not specifically connected to this particular finding, Bensch (2012) referenced the experience of one of her interviewees and the emotion surrounding reading in class. Specifically, the participant in question realized that lower-level proficiency students were not interested in reading, or writing. However, upon seeing the teacher's enthusiasm (for reading), the learners' disposition toward it changed; namely, they wanted to start reading the text. This example shows how the L2 teacher's display of pleasant emotions related to a specific activity, such as reading the text, can be beneficial for the language learning and teaching process. While not stated in the example, we can theorize that the teacher in question, having observed the students' change of heart and their newfound desire to engage with the activity, might experience other pleasant emotions, such as personal satisfaction or pride.

Regarding emotion regulation, the findings showed that different strategies cut across both types of emotions. Furthermore, the goal of such strategy use was to primarily

regulate unpleasant emotions, but also at times, pleasant ones. To elucidate, the participants mostly engaged in down-regulation, which is a form of suppression, when they felt both pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Gong et al. (2013), Jiang et al. (2016), and Chahkandi et al. (2016) found similar results. Gong et al. (2013) revealed that in their study 74% of Chinese teachers suppressed unpleasant emotions, while they expressed (up-regulated) 65% of pleasant emotions. Jiang et al. (2016) found a similar situation in their study. Chahkandi et al.'s (2016) findings are similar to this study such that Iranian teachers also regulated both pleasant and unpleasant emotions. With respect to the pleasant ones, the participants displayed positivity and engaged in laughter to keep their students' concentration and enthusiasm up. It is interesting that both the Croatian and Iranian teachers admitted to down-regulating pleasant emotions to keep a semblance of authority. In addition, participants in this study showed a real display of positive emotions when interacting with students, as well as when seeing students succeed. Besides down-regulation, our participants also engaged in up-regulation when they talked to a colleague. This can be equated with what Talbot and Mercer (2018) describe as "savoring". In essence, it is a strategy that allows language teachers to share and reflect on pleasant experiences. Thus, talking to a colleague might have allowed our teachers to express their emotions, but also process them through the said conversation.

In terms of unpleasant emotions, our participants used reappraisal, deep breathing, suppression, and talking to someone as a means of regulating their emotions. Viewing a situation differently (or reappraisal) was among the least used strategies tied to pleasant emotions and most frequently used when teachers faced unpleasant ones. This strategy was used to help deal with students' poor performance. For example, some teachers reappraised the situation by focusing on different facets of their students' persona so as to diminish the detrimental effects of anger or disappointment. If a teacher got disappointed by the students' poor display of knowledge, they reminded themselves that the students were young, and had time to improve. Different non-L2 studies (e.g., Burić et al., 2016; Gong et al., 2013; Gross, 1998; 2015; Yin, 2012), as well as L2 scholars (e.g., Chahkandi et al., 2016; Ghanizadeh & Royaei, 2015; Morris & King, 2020; Talbot & Mercer, 2018; Tejada et al., 2016) have discussed strategies with regard to

emotion regulation. The teachers in our study used reappraisal strategies when they experienced emotions such as frustration, disappointment, or sadness due to their students' lackluster success, behavior, learning habits, and motivation. Iranian language teachers in Chahkandi et al.'s (2016) study reported the use of the same strategy that our teachers used. Specifically, one Iranian teacher recalled experiencing unpleasant emotions over student misbehavior. They reappraised the situation by attributing student misconduct to their age and puberty. Talbot and Mercer (2018) also described the use of this strategy when one of their respondents felt the need to catch up with the students that missed out on schoolwork. Later the teacher in question stopped to rethink his actions and reassessed the situation.

The emotion regulation strategy of deep breathing was also used to retain composure and alleviate the intensity of frustration or anger caused by discipline problems and students' performance. In brief, Croatian L2 teachers resorted to both suppression and deep breathing when faced with unpleasant emotions and situations (e.g., dealing with difficult students) which are classified as response-focused by Gross (1998; 2015). Other scholars divulged examples of response-focused regulation strategies of a different type. To illustrate, while the Croatian participants in this study mainly used deep breathing, the Iranian language teachers in Chahkandi et al.'s (2016) study had a propensity for frowning, yelling and scolding their learners. Moreover, Tejada et al.'s (2016) research showcases how novice English language teachers in their foreign language context used different response-focused strategies when faced with the challenge of teaching. For example, one novice teacher acted calmly, while another pretended to be confident. The results of this study appear to suggest that Croatian L2 teachers attempt to control their negative emotions and maintain their composure despite being faced with challenges that may affect their professional and personal well-being.

### Limitations of the Study

While this qualitative study does yield interesting findings related to the emotional experiences of the Croatian teachers of English, it is not without its limitations. To further our research and widen the scope of the study, we would need to modify its design from cross-sectional to longitudinal. This would allow us to observe the dynamic nature of

teachers' emotional experiences and their relationship to both teaching and regulation practices. Additionally, future qualitative—possibly diary—studies would benefit from a larger sample of diverse teachers (e.g., involving language teachers of different age groups and working backgrounds, such as university teachers and pre-school teachers). Conducting follow-up interview sessions might augment and deepen our understanding of the educational context language teachers work in, their decision-making processes, classroom appraisals, and emotional experiences. Emotion regulation strategies could be further explored alongside other elements that comprise language teacher wellbeing, such as resilience, stress, and grit. Lastly, given the relevance of students' proficiency levels in the process of shaping language teachers' expectations for student performance, future research should account for the differences in grade levels as well.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this diary study offer a better view of language teachers' emotional experiences tied to their interactions with students, as well as their instructional practices. This qualitative research used a holistic approach to investigate the emotions Croatian foreign language teachers of English experience in their classrooms, the causes of their emotions, the classroom activities they were engaged in, as well as the emotion regulation strategies they employed to cope with various emotions. The results presented have several important implications for scholars in the field as well as L2 teachers. Language teaching is replete with various emotions. Despite the fact that emotion research in the L2 domain has been student-focused, more experts have begun to devote their time to the study of teacher emotions and related concepts. This research has attempted to expand the research agenda in this area by including a focus on the connection between teacher emotions, classroom activities, and emotion regulation strategies. In regard to teacher emotions, personal accounts revealed the presence of various pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Pleasant emotions were associated with student success and a positive classroom atmosphere suggesting the importance of both interaction and successful language learning for L2 teachers. On the other hand, unpleasant emotions were tied to students' inappropriate behavior and

lack of motivation. These results confirm that Frenzel's (2014) contention regarding the connection between learner behavior and teacher emotions can be extended to an L2 setting. Namely, negative emotions will arise if there is incongruence between the teacher's appraisal of the goals they intended to achieve in the lesson and student behavior.

Another interesting result from this study is the mixed emotions experienced by teachers while teaching grammar. Teachers felt satisfaction, joy, and pride when students used grammar appropriately; on the other hand, they also felt frustration, irritability, and boredom when students were unable to use grammar properly. This suggests that grammar teaching is very much related to teacher emotions and learner behavior in L2 teaching. Moreover, the results indicate that the concept of boredom needs to be further studied given its association with grammar teaching. With regard to emotion regulation strategies, the results indicated that teachers used down-regulation while experiencing positive emotions to maintain authority, as well as real-display of emotions when interacting with students and experiencing students' success. This may indicate a democratic style of teaching, but also one that maintains the role of teachers as authoritative figures in the L2 classroom. On the contrary, negative emotions were regulated by taking different perspectives of the situation at hand, deep-breathing and suppression indicating teachers' desire to maintain control of their emotions. In short, these findings showed that Croatian EFL teachers resort to different coping strategies with the aim of ensuring the quality of teaching, rapport with students, teaching efficacy, and their professional and personal well-being.

Language teachers are the backbone of the language teaching process, and it is vital that they possess the appropriate emotional competencies that enable them to perform efficiently and effectively to safeguard their physical and mental health. Promoting their emotional awareness (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020) is crucial, as is informing them that both pleasant and unpleasant emotions are an integral part of the teaching profession, and that they should accept them without judgement. Now more than ever, the role of language teacher well-being has become paramount as teachers encounter many challenges, such as language anxiety, stress, and burnout (MacIntyre et al., 2019), and all teachers need to be well-equipped to combat them.

### Authors' contributions

Design of work: DD, AM, IB. Data collection, analysis and interpretation: DD. Drafting the article: DD, AM, IB. Revision: AM, IB. Final approval: DD, AM, IB.

### Ethics Approval & Consent to Participate

The authors followed all ethical guidelines and principles of scientific research and informed all the participants of their right to anonymity, voluntary participation, and the right to opt out of study at any point. Participants were also notified that by partaking in the study they were giving their informed consent.

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## APPENDIX

### Teacher Diary

The present questionnaire is designed to investigate your emotions and emotion regulation in relation teaching English as a foreign language. Teaching vocation is replete with various emotions, and they have an impact on teacher achievement, interest, engagement and personality development. They are also based on an individual's cognitive interpretations and appraisals of specific situations. The impact of emotions can be positive or negative in nature and emotions can be

characterized as activating or deactivating. For instance, enjoyment, pride and hope are positive-activating emotions, while boredom, hopelessness and disappointment are negative-deactivating.

Emotion regulation can be explained as teachers' attempt to affect which emotions they experience and how they express them. Regulation also enables teachers to avert/avoid negative emotions and enhance positive emotions. Emotions can also reflect on teacher's self-concept, i.e. the way they see themselves and the beliefs they have in their own capabilities to execute courses of action required by their profession.

Please fill this questionnaire out after each day at work. Your contribution will provide invaluable insight into emotional experiences of Croatian teachers of English. Please note that the answers you provide will be used for research purposes only and by agreeing to partake in this survey you are giving your informed consent. Your responses are completely anonymous, so try to answer the questions as honestly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. Thank you!

1. Which of the following emotions did you experience during your day? Multiple answers are possible.

Check all that apply.

Joy Anger Enthusiasm Disgust Boredom Pride Love and affection Anxiety Satisfaction Powerlessness Enjoyment Relief Sadness Guilt Surprise Shame Empathy Excitement Frustration Liking Disliking Irritability Fear Hostility Disappointment Other.

### *Instructions*

In the following section each item needs to be answered with regards to the emotion(s) experienced. In other words, if you experienced more than one emotion, the answer will need to cover all of them individually. For instance, in the case of emotion regulation, if you experienced sadness and anger, emotion regulation strategies for both will need to be provided.

2. What caused the emotion(s)? If more than one emotion was experienced, please specify the cause for each of them (e.g. Joy was caused by..., anger was caused by..., etc.).
3. What were you doing when you experienced the emotion(s)? What aspect of foreign language teaching were you involved in (e.g. grammar exercise, working on a text, etc.)? Specify classroom activity for each of the emotions provided.
4. Emotion regulation is a process by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express them. Did you do something to regulate it/them? Mark only one – Yes No.
5. If you answered 'YES', please describe how you regulated the emotion(s)? Did you resort to a certain strategy or technique (e.g. deep breathing, counting to ten, changing the way you think about a situation, talking to someone, thinking about something joyful, etc.)? Note that a person can up-regulate (increase the intensity or duration), down-regulate (reduce the emotion experience), or not regulate an emotion at all. Please state how you regulated each emotion.