Fear, Despair, Love, Hate, Peace: Riding the COVID-19 Rollercoaster

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Abstract

In this autoethnographic self-study, the author explores the emotional challenges she encountered when teaching online during the COVID-19 outbreak and their impacts on her language teacher identity. Reflecting on her journey in the 2020-2021 academic year, the author discusses her shifting emotions and teacher identity transformation under five chronological but not linear stages: Expecting the Unexpected, Sink or Swim, Am I loving it?, Something is definitely wrong with my teaching and Everybody is right, everyone is a victim. The study highlights the role of democratic institutions in empowering teachers undertaking emotional labor in an effort to enhance the quality of education. It also calls for more self-reflexive opportunities for teachers to help them better make sense of and negotiate emotional challenges and exercise agency.

Keywords: autoethnography, teacher emotions, emotional labor, online teaching during COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

On March 10, 2020 both students and staff in our school received an email from the Campus President's Office announcing that due to the actions taken by The National Ministry of Education and Culture for coronavirus prevention, all in-class face-to-face educational activities would be suspended until March 15, Sunday and that all educational activities would be continued online. Up until that very announcement, in our eyes, COVID-19 was some exotic disease that we saw on the news, something far away from our island. In a matter of minutes, however, it was no longer just a part of small talk, and it became very real, causing our classes to be suddenly dismissed in the middle of the day. On that day, we made some jokes together with our students and said goodbye to each other naively believing that we would meet the next Monday. It has been almost two years now, and that Monday has yet to come...

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The school closures caused by the novel COVID-19 pandemic brought a new wave in teaching and learning both locally and globally. Many teachers had to plunge into new technologies, various online platforms and online education policies without having sufficient time and opportunity to get oriented (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Gao & Zhang, 2020), and they had to employ a new form of pedagogy that posed unique challenges. They were expected to set up classes in the virtual world, keep contact with students online, move teaching content and materials to online space, engage students in tasks and activities while navigating the requisite software within no time (Allen et al., 2020). The new normal also required changes to traditional ways of managing classrooms, organizing teaching tasks, providing feedback, motivating students and making assessments (Sun & Liu, 2021) and English language teaching (ELT) had its share of challenges (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020).

From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, various ELT studies have been conducted focusing on different aspects of online teaching. These mainly investigate the effectiveness of certain online teaching platforms/tools (e.g., Khafaga, 2021; Kholis, 2020), language development (Karataş & Tuncer, 2020), assessment (e.g., Forrester, 2020) and learner perceptions (e.g., Huang et al., 2021; Novikov, 2020) and challenges (e.g., Ariyanti, 2020; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020). Studies focusing on teachers, on the other hand, mainly deal with their perceptions of online teaching (e.g., Chiatoh & Chia, 2020; Gao & Zhang, 2020; Moser et al., 2021) and teaching practices and challenges (e.g., Bailey & Lee, 2020; Yi & Jang, 2020) as well as their coping strategies (e.g., MacIntyre et al., 2020). Although previous research has established that teachers now have to keep teaching in more fragile and unstable educational contexts (Flores & Swennen, 2020), very little is known about teacher emotions and their impacts on teacher identity and in-class experiences during this unprecedented period.

As an English language teacher, my interest in teacher emotion goes back to my master studies where I was introduced to the sociocultural perspective on learning and teaching, critical pedagogy and critically-oriented paradigms such as Global Englishes as well as the study of teacher cognition. This interest kept on growing with my exposure to various research on teacher identity (e.g., De Costa & Norton, 2017; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Tsui, 2007). It is now well established from a variety of studies that teacher identity shapes and is shaped by teachers' feelings about their students, the teaching context, the effectiveness of their own practices and themselves as teachers (Zembylas, 2003). That is, emotions are the "glue of identity" as they provide meaning to experiences (Haviland & Kahlbaugh, 1993, p. 301). As such, they play a crucial role in exploring what makes a good teacher and good teaching.

Thanks to the emotional/affective turn in applied linguistics and TESOL (Pavlenko, 2013; White, 2018), there has been a growing interest in teacher emotion studies in the last 20 years. Shifting the question from what emotions are to what they do, these studies regard emotions not only cognitive but also sociocultural and political (Benesh, 2017; Loh & Liew, 2016). They have shown that emotions are constructed at personal, institutional and societal levels (Wolff & De Costa, 2017). Since teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic gave rise to unique conditions, which may have

required teachers to renegotiate and reconceptualize their teaching values, their commitments and practices for this new modality (Jones & Kessler, 2020), documenting language teachers' emotional experiences during this transition warrants attention. By adopting an underexplored methodology, namely autoethnography, (De Costa et al., 2019), this study aims to contribute to filling this gap in the literature.

Literature Review

Learning and Teaching English Online during COVID-19 Pandemic

Transitioning to online teaching amid COVID-19 pandemic has had certain ramifications for both students and teachers. Many students lost their motivation and interest towards live lessons. With their cameras off, they were less active in online activities (Karataş & Tuncer, 2020). This mainly resulted from language barriers, lack of collaboration with peers, online learning fatigue and inconsistencies between teaching modalities and approaches (Chiatoh & Chia, 2020; Novikov, 2020). Some students also struggled with limited ICT skills and unstable internet connection (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). On top of these, lack of Internet or device access prevented certain groups of students' abilities to receive education, creating further inequalities (UNESCO, 2020).

Teachers faced certain challenges due to the abrupt transition to online education, too. Many experienced worry and anxiety while trying to keep up with this new and unfamiliar form of teaching (Gao & Zhang, 2020). They reported heavy workload and irregular hours as the main stressors (MacIntyre et al., 2020). Online lessons took longer due to connection problems, and teacher talk increased as there was less interaction among students (Karataş & Tuncer, 2020). Moreover, those with low technological literacy struggled even more and had difficulties in managing online platforms (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Huang et al., 2021). Although many were not given any prior training for online education, they were expected to deliver effective synchronous/asynchronous lessons. This caused further stress among them and created self-doubts about their professional abilities (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Moser et al., 2021). Overall, the rapid conversion to online education blurred the boundaries between work and home, and combined with teachers' health-related concerns for themselves and their families, had severe impacts on their wellbeing (MacIntyre et al., 2020).

On the other hand, as the literature suggests, online teaching afforded various opportunities for professional development. Despite the initial challenges, teachers were quick in adapting themselves to the new pedagogy. Those given the opportunity benefited from various professional development activities, which resulted in enhanced professional competence (Gautam, 2020). The transition also increased teachers' digital literacy skills as they ended up using multiple learning management systems, online lecturing tools and instructional software to conduct their lessons (Fitria, 2020). This way, they started to see new possibilities for meaningful instruction (Yi & Jang, 2020) and rediscovered themselves as teachers (Farrell & Stanclick, 2021).

Teacher Identity

First with the social turn in second language acquisition (Block, 2003; Firth & Wagner 1997), then through the recognition of learner identity in language acquisition (Peirce, 1995), language learning and teaching began to be seen as an identity negotiation, a process during which "the teacher too was not a neutral player in the classroom, but on the contrary, her positionality in relation to her students, and to the broader context in which the teacher was situated was vital" (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 22). This inevitably resulted in a keen interest in teacher identity, which has maintained an exponential growth in literature since 2010. Research on this relatively new field has indicated that understanding complexities of language teacher identity is crucial as it has implications for teachers' professional development, pedagogical decisions and practices, interactions with their peers and students as well as their negotiations with power and ideologies (Kayi-Aydar, 2019).

Earlier studies were primarily on teacher's linguistic identities focusing mostly on the native and non-native speaker dichotomy, which yielded valuable insights into the issues of politics, power and inequality in the field of ELT (e.g., Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Pavlenko, 2003). These were followed by research on sociocultural identities of language teachers, which viewed identity development as a socially and contextually informed dialogic process (e.g., Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Tsui, 2007; Varghese et al., 2005). Finally, with the recognition of diverse and marginalized identities such as gender, race and ethnicity, the most recent line of research has become increasingly interested in the interplay between teacher identities and agency as well as teacher identities and emotions (e.g., De Costa & Norton, 2017; Kayi-Aydar, 2015). Drawing from post-structural approaches (Pavlenko, 2002), these studies have drawn attention to the complex, multiple and fluid nature of identity and yielded a productive research base for the investigation of how identities are shaped in the contexts of competing discourses and ideologies.

Taken together, identity research in ELT has established that language learning and teaching is a process that extends beyond linguistic performance that is measured against idealized native speaker norms. Rather, it is a process that encompasses a multitude of social, environmental and affective factors both for the learner and the teacher.

Teacher Emotion

Identity and emotions are inextricably interwoven. While emotions can inform and define teachers' identities, identity can in turn guide and shape teachers' emotional decisions and reactions (Zembylas, 2005). This bidirectional relationship has implications for teachers' instructional practices, their relationships with their students and others as well as their pedagogical transformation.

With insight afforded by sociocultural theory and positive psychology in language teacher emotion research, emotions are now viewed as socially and politically constructed "complex and multilayered experiences" (Zembylas, 2005, p. 18) rather than cognitive/psychological traits only. As such, they are not seen as states but processes which are shaped by various social, institutional and personal forces. Accordingly, the focus of research has recently shifted from teacher emotional appraisal and negative emotions such as anxiety and teacher burnout to post-structural lenses exploring teacher emotions as agency. One key theme emerged from such understanding is emotional labor (Benesh, 2013; Zembylas, 2005), which regard emotions as sources of teacher activism in response to tensions teachers experience between how they feel and how they are expected to feel. In other words, emotions act as signals indicating teachers if certain work situations are favorable or not (Benesh, 2018). This paved the way for studies embracing both negative and positive emotions to be able to foster teacher reflexivity and rewarding language teaching environments.

Previous Research on Teacher Education

Studies on language teacher emotion adopting post-structural lenses have revealed in-depth understanding and professional transformations on the part of the participant teachers in terms of their instructional practices and professional identities. The studies all adopted a qualitative approach, and they were conducted in secondary school and university settings. The ultimate aim of these studies was to gain insights into the interplay between teacher emotions and teacher identity.

Loh and Liew (2016) explored emotional experiences of secondary school English teachers in Singapore. Using interviews and personal narratives, they found that the context-specific factors such as performance-based and exam-oriented teaching environment contributed to their emotional labor, leading them to adapt their teaching practices and reevaluate their expectations.

Focusing on the students rather than the teaching of English as the main catalyst for emotional labor, Song (2016) investigated Korean teachers' emotional reactions to teaching a group of study abroad returnee students. The participants' secret stories, as revealed by the interviews, indicated that they felt emotional discomfort in terms of their own competence when teaching such students. Although they initially argued that these students lacked the desirable English skills within the grammar and test oriented system, they later realized that this was, in fact, their excuse to maintain their own authority as all-knowing teachers. This awareness led to a fundamental change in their understanding of a teacher and teaching.

Similarly, Wolff and De Costa (2017) investigated the interplay between emotional labor and identity development of a non-native English-speaking teacher in a graduate teacher education program in the USA. Data from interviews, observations and journal entries showed that their participant developed a tailor-made pedagogy to meet the needs of her new student audience as she confronted and negotiated with her emotional challenges in her first year in the training program.

Finally, Benesh (2018) reported how English language teachers working at a US university context used emotions as agency and resisted a school policy on plagiarism by developing alternative pedagogies. Their emotional labor caused by the tension between what they felt obliged to do and what they felt they should do led to teacher activism, which further called for a more participatory approach in policy-making in institutions.

Language Teacher Emotion During COVID-19 Pandemic

So far, there has been a small number of studies focusing on language teacher emotion during COVID-19 pandemic. Among these, very few explore emotion from a post-structuralist lens. This section limits itself to those considering the link between the self and the social, cultural and political structures of school contexts when reporting language teachers' emotional experiences in various online teaching environments.

In their autoethnographic self-study, Liu, Yuang and Wang (2021) discussed a wide host of emotions, both positive and negative, experienced by the first author during her online teaching at a higher education institution in Wuhan, China. Using a personal diary as the main data source, the study revealed that the teacher's renegotiation with different emotional rules (implicit or explicit guidelines followed by teachers to evaluate their feelings in a situation) enabled her to improve her relationships with her students and colleagues as well as her attitude towards technology. Thus, the results highlighted the importance of channeling positive emotions to online teaching while embracing vulnerabilities and imperfections with students, colleagues and personal self.

Pham and Phan (2021), on the other hand, examined emotional orientations of seven Vietnamese higher education language teachers and their emotional responses in online teaching environments. Their interviews revealed various negative feelings involving confusion, frustration, and exhaustion, especially at the onset of their online teaching experience. In time, teachers started to develop more positive emotions as they adapted to the new mode of instruction. The way teachers regulated their emotions also varied. Some opted for telling their emotions freely in synchronous sessions to foster empathy with students whereas others tended to hide their negative emotions to maintain professionalism and objectivity. The authors attributed these varying opinions and behaviors to social and power relations embedded in their school culture, which further suggested that online instruction was no different from face-to-face education in terms of displaying teachers' emotional experiences in an intense and extensive manner.

Finally, Farrell (2021) explored adaptation challenges of four novice English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in Costa Rica as they suddenly switched to online instruction. Focusing on the role of emotions in teacher reflexivity, the study identified the following repeated words in teachers' verbal reflections: exhausting, frustrating, angry, struggle, uncertainty and worry. The study called for the need for teachers to engage in reflective practices interviews and observations in this case) to discover more about themselves and better understand the challenges and emotions they felt so that they could successfully adapt themselves to online teaching.

The Study

Building on the positive psychology turn in language teacher emotion research and the existing studies, this self-study conceptualizes teacher emotions as dynamic and complex processes deeply intertwined with teachers' professional identities, which are shaped by social, political and contextual structures. It specifically explores the emotional experiences of an EFL teacher at a university context with respect to teaching online amid COVID-19 pandemic. This study is significant in three ways. First, it investigates how teacher emotions are mediated in an online environment. Since this mode of teaching has its unique conditions in terms of interaction, instructional pedagogies and workload demands, different emotional reactions might emerge in response to this peculiar teaching environment. Second, this study contributes to the existing literature on teacher emotions by making use of an underexplored methodology, autoethnography, to collect and present data. Finally, drawing on post-structural approach to emotions, the study can shed light on the interplay between teachers' emotions and their impacts on teachers' identity by discussing how an English teacher responded to emotional labor in her online classroom practices, which has important implications for teacher educators and policy-makers for the improvement of pre-service teacher education.

The two research questions that guided this study are:

1. What were the emotional challenges an English language teacher encountered during the COVID-19 outbreak?

2. What are their impacts on her language teacher identity and online classroom practices?

Methodology

The Setting

This study presents my online teaching experiences at a reputable English-medium university in Northern Cyprus amid COVID-19 pandemic. The university serves Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot students as well as students from the international community. At the time of the study, I was working at the English Preparatory Program (EPP), which aims to equip students with the necessary language skills and prepare them for their English-medium academic studies. The study presents my emotional challenges and their impact on my professional identity and classroom experiences in the 2020-2021 academic year.

Research Design

Following De Costa et al.'s (2019) call, I adopted autoethnography as a research method because I believe that through my personal narrative story, I could talk about teacher

emotions in a candid and in-depth manner with sufficient details, hopefully yielding valuable insight into language teacher emotions research.

Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) defines autoethnography as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (p. 273). Since it mainly deals with "the cultural connection between the self and the others representing the society'' this research method differs from other self-narrative writings such as autobiography and memoir (Chang, 2007, p. 207). That is, autoethnohgraphers write in a highly personalized style drawing on their experiences, thoughts and interpretations, yet they need to look at their autobiographical data with "critical, analytical, and interpretive eyes to detect cultural undertones of what is recalled, observed, and told of them" (Chang, 2007, p. 209) The "convincing I", as Spry (2001) puts it, is the key element in ethnographic texts since "good autoethnography is not simply a confessional tale of self-renewal; it is a provocative weave of story and theory" (p. 713).

Autoethnography research, as some scholars suggest, is not without its downsides (e.g., Wall, 2008). Chang (2008, p. 54) summarized the five potential pitfalls of this type of research:

> (1) excessive focus on self in isolation of others; (2) overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation; (3) exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source; (4) negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self-narratives; and (5) inappropriate application of the label "autoethnography."

Despite these disadvantages, autoethnography has become a popular methodology in language studies in the past decade particularly due to the increasing interest in different strands of critical applied linguistics research (Yazan et al., 2020). Aiming to contribute to this emerging body of research and overcome possible limitations present in autoethnography, in this article, I acknowledge that my perspectives and experiences are shaped locally and globally and influenced by my personality, education and workplace as well as formal and informal interactions with my colleagues and students. Yet, I believe that when supported by scholarship and empirical research, telling my own story and sharing my experiences can empower not only myself as a teacher by making me an insider in the research and enabling my own voice to be heard, but also others hopefully by helping them reflect on and empathize with my narratives.

Data Sources and Analysis

When constructing my personal narrative, I utilized my text messages, personal comments on shared documents, email correspondences and voice recordings as well as meeting minutes. Detailed description of these tools together with the interlocutors involved is provided in the table below:

Table 1

Data Collected for the Study

Type of Data	Content	Interlocutors
Text Messages	informal messages sent to colleagues from October 2020 to May 2021	Colleague 1 Colleague 2
Group Messages	texts among instructors teaching the same level as well as the group leader encompassing the period between October 2020 and February 2021	Colleague 4
Personal Comments	my personal reflections of our online education experience as an institution on a collaborating tool (December 15, 2020)	-
Email Correspondences	official emails sent by the institution and administration regarding online education/policies/announcements from September 2020 to May 2021	-
Voice Recordings	Informal recordings sent to colleagues during 2020-2021 academic year as well as one collected for a research study conducted in May 2021	Colleague 1 Colleague 2 Colleague 3
Meeting Minutes	personal notes taken during general staff meetings and group (level) meetings in 2020-2021 academic year	-

Interlocutors listed in the table were all teaching online at the time of the study. They are all experienced teachers working at the context of the study for more than 6 years. They are also very close friends who I trust. Therefore, I was quite comfortable when sharing my thoughts and feelings with them using the mediums above. At the time of the study, Colleague 1 (C1) and I were teaching the same class. Colleague 2 (C2) was teaching at a different level, but we were in close contact throughout our online teaching experience. Colleague 3 also had a class from a different level. He was conducting a research study on online education experiences of teachers at the time, and I was one of his participants. Finally, Colleague 4 (C4) was my group (level) leader, who was responsible for addressing our needs and concerns regarding teaching programs and tools.

When analyzing the data, I used a combination of inductive and deductive coding approaches (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). First, I carefully read my data tools to re-remember my experiences that pertain to emotional challenges I experienced as a language teacher during COVID-19 outbreak, and I took some notes. In the second round of my reading, I selected certain epiphanies (Bochner & Ellis 1992) in which I discerned salient patterns of different emotional states through open coding. Then, I put these episodes into a chronological order and organized them under emerging themes. I also had some informal talks with my colleagues about the episodes to better recall my experiences and interpret them, which helped me see how I made sense of these experiences in the first place as suggested by Ellis et al. (2011). After I narrowed my data down to five main stages, I wrote a narrative account of each stage, engaging in critical and emotional self-inquiry and self-reflection (Anderson, 2006). Finally, I analyzed each narrative by comparing and contrasting them against the existing research on teacher emotions and identity studies as well as studies on online teaching and

learning during COVID-19 pandemic to contextualize my personal experience within the broader scholarly literature.

Results

Expecting the Unexpected

After the sudden school closure in March 2020, we first taught asynchronously (over Google Classroom, G-Suite tools, and other AI assisted tools) for some time, and then started live sessions towards the end of the semester. The synchronous sessions (over LMS) were held on three days of the week and supported by office hours on the remaining days. This whole emergency remote teaching experience (from March to June 2020) was not something I would describe with negative feelings. On the contrary, I saw this half-term experience as an opportunity that I could use to improve myself in the integration of technology into language education, which I always intended to focus on one day but always postponed. There were lots of "aha" moments when I uttered sentences like "Ha there is such a platform, waow what a brilliant app, or Aha I learnt one more thing today." I remember feeling quite happy at the time thinking that I improved a lot professionally. I was also quite excited about combining what I learnt with my in-class teaching repertoire when everything would get back to normal.

2020-2021 academic year, however, started with a dramatic announcement. On September 2, we were informed that we would continue teaching online. This announcement meant that our online education adventure, which we thought would end soon, now became the only means to practice our profession. Shaken by this reality, we received another email saying that our program and syllabus would completely be based on a variety of instructional software, some of which were AI-powered. That long email was full of links and encouraging words that aimed to make us feel that we would take advantage of this new journey. Yet, what I remember from that day was the fact that I had felt lost and alarmed for the first time since the start of the pandemic.

The semester would start on October 12, and we got the news about our "virtual coursebook" in a timely manner in September, but we were able to receive training on the other two platforms that we would use for reading and writing skills, including the main instructional software only six days before classes commenced. The training sessions did not go beyond the tutorials or documents that had already been shared by email before. Since we did not have any knowledge of the program and syllabus at the time, we did not understand how the platforms would be integrated into the curriculum. For example, we did not know if certain aspects of the tools would be part of synchronous or asynchronous instruction. Similarly, we had no idea as to how they would be used for online performance evaluation. Therefore, to me, the information presented for the overall design of the whole program was rather limited and superficial. I found the training session for the main platform particularly confusing. This tool was originally designed for one-to-one ESL (English as a second language) classes, and at the end of the session, I was not sure how I would use it synchronously

with 20 students in front of me. Overall, the training sessions created new questions rather than answers.

After the general staff meeting on October 9, I only knew two things for certain: my class level and my teaching partner. We texted right after the meeting as both of us were worried about the fact that we still had no clue about how we would use the online tool. I remember feeling a little relieved after seeing that my colleague had similar concerns. The next day, I sent her the following voice recording: Obviously, there won't be a sample lesson session for the platform. Shall we meet on Saturday over Webex? I really do not want to go to the class without understanding the platform. I do not want to lose face. (October 10, 2020, Voice Recording sent to C1)

We had a 2-hour meeting over Webex the next day during which we went over our meeting notes, tried out the online tools and discussed what we had gathered from the previous meetings and training sessions. We also tried to grasp how to integrate the main teaching platform with online meeting platforms to be able to finally see how we would teach 20 people synchronously over them. Yet, even after watching more than 20 tutorials over the whole weekend, this still remained a mystery to us until the very first day of our classes.

As such, right before the semester, negative feelings like fear and discomfort were dominant. In line with the literature (Gao & Zhang, 2020; MacIntyre et al., 2020), I was caught off guard due to the abrupt shift to online teaching. Similar to the participants of Pham and Phan (2021) and Farrell (2021), I was not properly trained for the new platforms to be used for the execution of the lessons. As a result, I felt lost, distressed and overwhelmed by the uncertainties this new mode of teaching brought.

Sink or Swim

It turned out that those days were good days. With the start of the classes, physical fatigue was added to the pre-existing mental fatigue. Online education was a disaster for someone like me who did not leave the table before the job was done. The problem here was that the job was never completely done. After teaching four 50-minute lessons consecutively each day, I would spend hours in front of the computer reading emails, checking homework, giving feedback, preparing lessons or navigating the platforms. I also suffered from the challenges caused by the nature of online communication. During the lessons, I ended up constantly repeating myself for fear of not reaching out to my students, and this increased teacher talking time to a great extent, as also reported by Karataş and Tuncer (2020). Within a couple of weeks, my body started to fail me. I had pain, stiffness, numbness all over my back, my neck, my shoulders, my arms and legs. Here are a couple of excerpts from text messages and voice recordings I sent to my teaching partner and a colleague in the first two weeks:

Don't ask. I look at the world with empty eyes. (October 14, 2020, Text message sent to C2)

> I feel like I am dying and all I did was just check homework. (October 15, 2020, Voice Recording sent to C1)

> I am crying inside. (October 19, 2020, Text Message sent to C1)

> I feel flames all around my neck. We will all develop neck hernias by the end of the semester. (October 23, 2020, Voice Recording sent to C2)

> I will go blind from reading emails. I am tired of learning something new. (October 25, 2020, Text message sent to C1)

In time, I learned the hard way that the work I started might not be finished and that was totally okay since I would still work in the evening. I started to listen to my body and gave breaks on a regular basis. I even set alarms to remember that. Yet, there were certain things that I could not sort out on my own. Reflecting back on the beginning of the semester, here is what I said to C3:

> We were expected to do a lot in a very short time. I felt like we were thrown into the ocean, but were not given a life jacket. And we were left alone, frankly. (May 26, 2021 Voice Recording)

Another cause of frustration was that we were expected to evaluate and assess student performance online just as we did during face-to-face education, using the same components and procedures. Speaking assessments, writing portfolio procedures, homework assignments and giving individualized student feedback were all part of the curriculum in addition to formal assessment tools. The main problem was not to implement these of course. It was that the platforms used as part of the curriculum were not suitable for the purpose and application of these components. Here is an example below where I complained about the portfolio procedure to our group leader over our Whatsapp group:

> I still do not know why we had to include student writings over … (name of the platform) in the writing portfolio. The tasks of that platform are not synchronized with the curriculum. Students see prompts with unfamiliar grammar structures and have to write paragraphs using them. They end up submitting paragraphs that they did not themselves write. (October 27, 2020, Text Message sent to C4)

I also had concerns about the reading and vocabulary teaching and testing procedures. Our online reading platform, to me, was not enough on its own considering how we tested our students. For example, we had referencing and guessing vocabulary sections in online exams just as we did during face-to-face instruction, but these were the skills that we taught using our books before we tested them back then. With our new platform, that was not the case. Similarly, online exams had gap-fill vocabulary questions before we covered understanding parts of speech in classes.

The counterproductive homework checking procedure was also an issue. We were expected to review each and every student's homework assignments from the main

platform by clicking on their submissions separately (31 students in total for me) every day and correct their mistakes, which was a huge waste of time for me. I spent hours just checking them each day, finding myself in tears a couple of times until I sent a message to our group leader saying that I could not continue doing this.

Due to the heavy workload, working in the evening was an everyday practice for me. To make things even more ironic, we were invited to a care and share session organized by our professional development unit on "work-life balance" at 6 pm. I had to follow this meeting in the kitchen cooking dinner. The meeting was the first and last professional development unit meeting of the whole academic year. I knew that no one wanted to leave us alone, and the meetings may have gained a new meaning amid all the workload, but the source of the helplessness I felt in my own world was a bit of this disconnection with my colleagues. Because I could not get together with my colleagues and share with them as much as I used to, I started to feel that whatever problems I had, I was the only one experiencing them. Little break time chats, visiting offices or casual talks in the kitchen were not a part of the job anymore. Without these, I had no means that could show me that I was not alone having problems on a typical work day.

Looking back, I realized that increased workload and irregular work hours during online education led me to develop certain negative feelings like fatigue, helplessness and frustration, as also indicated by previous research (e.g., MacIntyre et al., 2020). I also experienced intense emotional labor resulting from the mismatches between the materials/tools and student assessment/evaluation. Compared to face-to-face education, I had to spend more time figuring out those mismatches, designing lessons, preparing materials and giving feedback to student work accordingly, which negatively affected my overall perception of this new teaching territory.

Am I Loving It?

Online education had more than blood, toil, tears and sweat of course. My long-time procrastination of delving into the instructional tech tools came to an end with this new mode of teaching. In time, I gained more familiarity with the platforms and AI-assisted tools in our program and became more confident in designing and conducting lessons. This encouraged me to explore new methodologies or practices when teaching online. For example, I learned to give technology-enhanced feedback using screencasting. This gave me the chance to interact with my students in a different mode as a teacher and also eased my writing feedback duties, which became even more frustrating in online education. I incorporated the writing tasks from the main platform into my teaching more as I found them more useful than those in the AI-assisted reading platform. By assigning these tasks as asynchronous group or pair-work activities, I felt more satisfied as a teacher in helping my students improve their writing skills. Positive feedback I got from my students further motivated me to make use of this practice and way of giving feedback more.

I also started to actively use different features of online lecturing tools such as breakout rooms and online polls. I sometimes supported my lesson with Google Suite

products (e.g., Google forms) to bring variety into the class. With these tools and applications, I was able to enhance interaction in my lessons. Moreover, I had a chance to try the methods that I would probably delay using in face-to-face education for fear of not being able to manage them properly. As such, I added new skills to my repertoire when teaching online.

Another factor that made my online education experience more bearable was that the feedback I gave was listened to by the administration and necessary arrangements were made. One of our biggest problems, overambitious syllabus, became more manageable as, in line with our demands, some lessons were either removed from the program or made optional. As such, it became easier to keep up with the program. In addition, based on our feedback, the writing portfolio procedure was adapted, and the tasks from our AI-assisted tools were excluded from the evaluation. This "small victory" had huge impacts on the overall wellbeing of myself and other teachers considering the frustrations the whole process had caused.

I pulled off another "small victory" related to homework check procedures. The trouble of checking each student's homework for hours ended with the alternative solution brought by the administration. In response to the asynch work overload, the administration provided us with a chance to cooperate with 4th year ELT students. As part of EPP - ELT Teaching Practice Partnership, these students helped me check structured homework assignments, and I provided them with guidance related to their School Experience program in return. They observed my lessons, got my feedback and did practice teaching in the end. This whole experience brought a very fruitful collaboration and benefited both parties for the whole first semester.

I also closely collaborated with my teaching partner, which allowed me to maintain my sanity during the first semester. We sent dozens of messages and audio recordings to each other every single day on instructional software, students, syllabus and program, testing and evaluation, and many more, consulted ideas, took joint decisions on almost every subject and learned a lot from each other.

I felt more self-confident and autonomous as the curriculum and asynchronous workload eased, and I gained better command of the instructional platforms and other supporting tools. I started to adapt some of the tasks on the major platform that replaced the coursebook so as to create opportunities for students to produce something. I often assigned my students group projects or group presentations that would require them to meet after the lesson and I used screencasting while giving feedback to them. They seemed to be happy with these opportunities as many of them would later tell me that thanks to these tasks, they had become closer and developed a sense of community as a class, which was something they were missing due to the nature of online classes. Similarly, I felt more satisfied as a teacher thinking that I was actually helping them achieve their goals. What if online education was not so bad after all?

Overall, I started to experience positive emotions as I became more familiar with the online tools and platforms and discovered new ways of teaching (e.g.,

screencasting), which helped me become more resourceful as a language teacher. The positive feedback I got from my students boosted my motivation and enthusiasm towards online teaching. Finally, thanks to collaboration with my colleagues and the administration, I started to feel an increased sense of achievement. This, in turn, helped me enjoy teaching online. These results corroborate the findings of previous studies in that as teachers became more digital literate, explored and actively used new methodologies and cooperated with colleagues and/or administration, they started to develop positive attitudes towards teaching online (e.g., Farrell & Stanclik, 2021; Gautam, 2020).

Echoing the literature (e.g., Benesch, 2018), the study also reveals that teacher emotions are sources of teacher activism. In this particular case, negative emotions acted as a drive for a demand for instructional changes. Emotional labor caused by the discrepancies between the syllabus components and learning objectives as well as testing and evaluation led me to voice my concerns over the issue on several occasions, and these were heard by the school administration. As such, the school did not continue following certain instructional policies and adapted teaching content accordingly. Similarly, emotional labor caused by certain counterproductive practices encouraged me to negotiate with the administration. This exemplifies the role of teacher emotions as a means to promote teacher agency in that by resisting certain instructional practices and procedures, I brought the issues to the administration's attention in the hope of certain changes. In an effort to address the issue, the administration initiated a collaborative practice with the EFL department, which resulted in a fruitful experience benefiting both parties.

Something is Definitely Wrong with My Teaching

Our honeymoon with online learning did not last too long, though. I was hoping to make a fresh start in the second semester in a new level with new students now that I even began to like teaching online, but things did not go as I had planned. As a teacher, what feeds me the most is the feedback I get from my students. I feel satisfied when I consider myself useful in helping them reach their goals. However, it is not always easy to reach students and grasp what they feel when teaching online. For one thing, they need to be cooperative. One way they could show that is to keep their cameras on when possible. I believe making use of the visual cues and facial expressions is an inherent quality of successful communication, and it is a great source of feedback for the teacher. In the first semester, I was able to convince most of my students to turn on their cameras as much as possible, but that became a big issue in the second semester. Here is how I complained about the issue to C3:

> I think the biggest problem I have with online education is that my feedback channels are completely blocked. All I see is a dark screen when I share something with them. When I make a joke, they are unresponsive. When I ask a question, they are uninterested. Cameras are always off. When I ask why, they say 'I did not turn it on in the first semester either.' I feel really really upset. (May 26, 2021, Voice Recording)

As the excerpt shows, I felt so helpless knowing that I could neither force nor convince them to keep their cameras on at least from time to time. It became harder to make sure if I was able to make myself clear as I could not see their aha moments or observe any change in their looks or faces. Therefore, online teaching felt like being in a management crisis all the time. It meant having constant worries like "What I am saying is really important, but are they with me?" I was never sure.

Inspired by some of my colleagues, one day I told my students that I would keep my camera off as well, hoping that this would help them understand the feeling. However, this made me even more unhappy. When it was on, I would at least think that I could reach those who were hopefully following. By turning mine off, that feeling completely disappeared. I felt restricted and immediately gave up on the idea.

To be able to use different channels, I tried to make more use of breakout rooms, written feedback and screencasting to be able to connect with them. I also held individual and group meetings with some to be able to encourage them to participate more in classes. Yet, not much changed. In time, I started to lose my motivation as a teacher. I felt deeply wronged since I thought that no matter how much I tried, my efforts were not appreciated. I also tried to adapt my teaching as much as possible, but I did not like what I ended up doing. I started to use Turkish most of the time and resorted to "textbook methodology" following only the platforms for content delivery with fewer and fewer pair and group work activities. I also reduced the number of assignments requiring students to work together since I realized that there was not much cooperation among them. Here is how I complained to a colleague: I gave up, I am afraid. There is tension every lesson. I only follow the platforms and I hate that. (April 6, 2021, Text message sent to C2)

In this new phase of online teaching, I felt like no matter what I tried, I could not teach a decent language lesson. That decent lesson was inevitably shaped by the teaching ideals in the face-to-face education period, filtered through my formal education, experience and institutional expectations as well as my own beliefs. No matter how hard I tried to attain these ideals, I simply failed.

As such, in my case, certain student behaviors during online education caused negative teacher emotions, consistent with the literature (e.g., Atmojo & Nugroho 2020). Lack of interest, empathy and cooperation on the part of the students in maintaining interactive lessons caused me to develop management concerns and I felt less satisfied with my work as a teacher. My disappointment further influenced my instructional practices, and I started to feel guilty of what I did in the class. This led me to question my teaching abilities and made me feel less of a teacher in time. This clearly shows that deeply rooted beliefs about effective language instruction might lead teachers to undertake emotional labor, which makes them even more vulnerable in times of uncertainty and crisis as in the case of a pandemic in this present study. Such beliefs may include the (alleged) efficiency of monolingual instruction or the (underchallenged) superiority of communicative language teaching.

Everybody is Right, Everyone is a Victim

Towards the end of the second semester, I felt I had enough of this. I was very demotivated for quite some time, and for the first time in my teaching career, I was not enjoying my profession. It was high time I stopped complaining and began reflecting. First, I realized that my perception of a good lesson was the reflection of a face-to-face lesson. I had applied what I considered good teaching in face-to-face classes. Similarly, good student behaviors in my mind were shaped by my previous experiences both as a learner and a teacher in face-to-face classes. Then, was it fair to accuse myself, my teaching practices and my students of not being good enough when teaching online?

Compared to face-to-face classes, it was harder to get to know my students, build rapport and cooperate with them online. It was also hard to understand if they had any academic concerns given that they were unwilling to participate, join the office hours or even have small-talks about their overall performance. However, rather than focusing on the ramifications of these in online classes, towards the end of the semester, I started to focus on discovering causes of such behaviors. What I ended up having as an answer was the fact that my students were lost. They could not develop much understanding of their academic performance since there was no means of comparison. Face-to-face instruction provided students with an environment where they inevitably formed ideas about each others' academic skills and language abilities when establishing personal relationships. In online instruction, this was not easy, and students could not pinpoint where they were academically. Therefore, I realized that what I labeled as students' lack of interest or academic ambition could have different external reasons, and they might not be just about students themselves. With this awareness, I became more understanding and tolerant of my students towards the end of the academic year.

Similarly, I developed a different perspective concerning my own teaching practices as classes were coming to an end. I realized that it was not right to set my standards for online teaching in comparison with face-to-face classes and that it was not the end of the world to adopt certain practices that I would not prefer in the past. For example, regarding my frequent use of Turkish in online classes, I started thinking that it might not necessarily be a bad thing as it was a tool to connect with my students, get some feedback from them or just check their understanding. Similarly, fewer pair or group work activities might not be a catastrophe in a language class if they were causing too much tension among students. With this perspective, I accepted the fact that adapting to the existing conditions did not make me a bad teacher. Here is my reflection on that to C3:

> At first, I got so upset over my online practices, and it was a huge emotional burden. Not being able to teach the way I wanted, but I overcame this. I have different concerns now like if my students can hear me, follow me, understand my instructions and do the tasks I assign. My perception of success is different I suppose when teaching online. (May 26, 2021, Voice Recording)

It took a long time to reach this mindset, though. One might question whether I was lowering my standards when adjusting to this new reality. Here was my answer to that: Good teaching should not mean doing what our background, formal education or experience dictated. It involved evolving and constantly seeking new ways to provide students with an environment where they could feel heard, inspired and safe. My new goal in this unprecedented period as a language teacher was to achieve this.

These reflections show that teacher emotions could serve as means for professional transformation, similar to previous findings (e.g., Song, 2016; Wolff & De Costa, 2017). Emotional labor caused by the discrepancies between what I wanted to do and what I ended up doing in class led me to reevaluate my teaching philosophy. That is, I learned to mediate between my face-to-face teacher-self and my online teacher-self. Similar to Liu et al. (2021), accepting the vulnerabilities of myself as a teacher and those of my students enabled me to adapt my expectations and teaching practices without dwelling on tensions and conflicts. In a way, I found peace in the end adjusting to my new realities rather than constantly resisting them.

Implications

Although this study presents experiences of a single teacher and is limited to an EFL higher education context, it has several implications for teaching and learning English during online education globally as well as for emergency teaching in case of a possible pandemic in the future.

First of all, the results highlight the importance of providing teachers with ample training opportunities on instructional software and other AI-assisted tools before they start actively using them in classes. When teachers are expected to keep teaching during unprecedented times such as a pandemic without much guidance or support, they may find themselves de-skilled and insufficient, as commonly described in previous literature (e.g., MacIntyre et al., 2020; Moser et al., 2021). Therefore, it is crucial they feel confident about their skill-sets new pedagogies require, which will help decrease their emotional burden and prevent possible management crises. To achieve this, institutions need to identify teachers' needs and organize tailor-made training sessions accordingly to be able to provide a healthy learning and teaching environment. Similarly, teacher-education programs should aim at improving student-teachers' technology competence and consider the incorporation of online teaching and learning into their curricula, at least some online delivery of their own programs, as rightfully suggested by Farrell (2021) to reflect this new reality.

It is also important for institutions to ensure that syllabus objectives, instructional software and testing and evaluation are aligned when teaching online. The rapid switch to online education left many institutions without many alternative resources/platforms, and they had to make hasty decisions within a limited time. As such, they may not have anticipated certain problems caused by lack of consistency among these. However, considering that online modes of delivery will likely continue

even after the current pandemic (Farrell, 2021), institutions should learn to delegate to make informed decisions. They should benefit from the valuable experience teachers have gained by making them a part of the decision-making processes. Having inclusive and accountable administrations, as in the case of this study, will enable institutions to empower teachers and enhance the quality of education.

Echoing the previous findings (e.g., Gao & Zhang, 2020; Pham & Phan, 2021), the study also suggests that teachers need more cooperation and collaboration when teaching online. Staff meetings might have taken on a new meaning during the online education transition process due to time constraints, but this should not discourage related units/parties from creating different channels for teacher collaboration. Organizing mini-sessions with small groups on a regular basis might promote solidarity and increase motivation when teaching online. These sessions might also provide teachers with opportunities to renegotiate their emotional labor and support each other in developing new teacher selves in line with evolving pedagogies.

Pedagogically, the results indicate that both positive and negative emotions shape teachers' instructional practices, their relationships with their students and their pedagogical transformation, corroborating the previous literature (e.g., Loh & Liew, 2016; Wolff & De Costa, 2017). In my case, the emotional labor I felt throughout my online teaching experience helped me reconsider my understanding of a good teacher and good teaching. I stopped desperately trying to replicate what I was doing in face-to-face classes, which I considered ideal ways of teaching. I also stopped judging myself based on the unfair comparisons I made between my face-to-face and online teacher selves. Accepting my new reality and adjusting to the new pedagogy helped me develop more empathy and understanding towards my students, which subsequently improved my job satisfaction, similar to Liu et al.'s (2021) findings.

The study also confirms that emotional labor caused by the mismatches between what teachers think they need to do and what they end up doing could act as a catalyst for institutional reforms. Similar to the teachers in Benesh's study (2018), my frustrations regarding what we teach and what we test were a means to reconsider the program and syllabus in our case, leading to certain adjustments and adaptations. Engaging in such dialogue with the administration led to rewarding outcomes both personally and institutionally.

Taking the aforementioned reflections into account, the current study lends support to the previous work (e.g., Farrell, 2021; Liu et al., 2021) reminding the importance for teachers to engage in self-reflective practices so that they can better negotiate emotional experiences and exercise agency. To this end, teacher training programs might create opportunities for self-study and familiarize teachers with reflective tools. Similarly, teacher education programs may consider inclusion of emotional labor in their curricula as this would help student-teachers develop greater understanding of dissonant emotions and better prepare them for possible conflicts between their training and instructional demands of their workplaces (Zembylas, 2005).

Finally, this study exemplifies the potential of autoethnography as a research method in combining theory with life. Narrating personal lived experiences may keep researchers local, but they are also engaged in critical reflections thinking of the global, thus making better sense of their sociocultural contexts. As such, echoing Liu et al. (2021), this study calls for more support in the use of autoethnography as a viable research approach in scholarly writing.

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Korku, Çaresizlik, Sevgi, Nefret, Huzur: Duygusal Covid-19 Gelgitleri

Öz

Bu otoetnografik çalışmada yazar, COVID-19 salgını sırasında deneyimlediği duygusal zorlukları ve bunların öğretmen kimliği üzerindeki etkilerini araştırmaktadır. 2020-2021 akademik yılındaki çevrimiçi eğitim-öğretim deneyimleri üzerine eğilen yazar, değişen duygu durumlarını ve öğretmen kimliği dönüşümünü beş ayrı kronolojik aşamada incelemektedir. Çalışma, eğitim kalitesini artırmak için duygusal emek üstlenen öğretmenleri yetkilendirmede demokratik kurumların rolünü vurgulamaktadır. Çalışma ayrıca öğretmenlerin duygusal zorlukları daha iyi anlamaları ve müzakere etmeleri ile mesleki irade kazanmalarına yardımcı olmak için daha fazla öz-düşünümsel fırsatlar için çağrıda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: otoetnografi, öğretmen duyguları, COVID-19 salgını sırasında çevrimiçi eğitim