Frustration regulation and language teaching

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Today’s goals

1. To understand what frustration is, and what emotion regulation is.

2. To reflect on some common classroom frustrations for teachers in Japan and how we might deal with them.

3. To analyse some reports of frustration and emotion regulation (Morris & King, 2018).
My assumptions

1. We all feel frustrated when teaching.
2. Frustration is a ‘forbidden’ emotion.
3. We have to have an honest and non-judgmental conversation.
4. There is no magical answer.
Theoretical background
I. What is frustration?
Emotions

- e.g. Schutz and DeCuir 2002; Boiger and Mesquita 2012; Barrett 2014
1. **Situation** - Something happens

2. **Attention** - We notice it

3. **Appraisal** - We appraise it

4. **Response** - An emotion starts

*e.g. Lazarus 1991; Arnold 1959; Moors, Ellsworth et al. 2013; Gross 2014, 2015*
Frustration in the literature

Low-level negative feelings when prevented from achieving goals¹

Leads to annoyance, anxiety, sadness, anger etc.²

In Japan – Both classroom and institutional factors³

Control a salient factor⁴

¹: Kuppens & Van Mechelen, 2007;  
²: Lazarus, 1991;  
³: Cowie, 2011; King, 2016  
⁴: Reyna and Weiner, 2001; Chang, 2013
Is frustration bad or good?

Frustration is stress\(^1\)

Frustration –ve correlates w. Job performance, physical health, absenteeism, turnover\(^2\)

Precursor to burnout\(^3\) with negative classroom outcomes\(^4\)

But a catalyser?\(^5\)

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1: Kyriacou, 2001
2: Ducharme, Knudsen, & Roman, 2007; Feuerhahn, Stamov-Roßnagel, Wolfram, Bellingrath, & Kudielka, 2013
3: Lewandowski, 2003;
5: Golombek, 2016; Golombek & Klager, 2015
2. What is emotion regulation?
Emotion Regulation

Processes through which individuals modify the path of an emotion
1 Situation
2 Attention
3 Appraisal
4 Response

(Gross 2014, 2015)
Change the external world

Split students

(Gross 2014, 2015)
Direct your attention
Ignore students

(Gross 2014, 2015)
Try to understand students’ perspective

Change the way you feel about the stressor

(Gross 2014, 2015)
Deal with the symptoms

- Breath deeply and hide emotion
Situation Selection  

Situation Modification  

Attentional Deployment  

Cognitive Change  

Response Modulation  

Situation  

Attention  

Appraisal  

Response  

(Gross 2014, 2015)
THEORY

PRACTICE

Discussions
1. 7 participants (University EFL, UK, NZ, US, 3F 4M)
   Teaching for mean = 12 years
   Teaching in Japan for mean = 7 years

2. Interviews, observations, stimulated recall

Morris & King, 2018; see also Morris & King, forthcoming
Question 1

Please read the text.

Which of the quotes resonate with you? (which have you experienced?)

Why?
Questions 2

Choose an incident from the list.

Think about a time when this kind of incident happened to you.

Do you think you were able to deal with (regulate) your frustration successfully?

Why?
<table>
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<th>Situation (before)</th>
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<td>If this happens again and I feel frustrated, what can I do to minimise the effects?</td>
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(from Morris, in preparation)
1. Nicole’s excerpt

Student apathy or teacher’s actions?

Success from a two-pronged attack
Point 1 - *Success through changing her cognition*

“It’s been a lot of like discussions that has made me realize this…another teacher told me like ‘teaching is not a one way street’” (Cognitive change - Reappraisal)

Point 2 – Finding a new outlet for positivity

“When students say ‘I've changed this in my life because of what we learned’…. It's really motivating I think to me.” (Situation selection – Job crafting¹)

¹ = Falout & Murphey, 2018
2. Maria’s two incidents of student silence

The motives of silence and ER
Point 1 - Silence as language anxiety
“I’ve spent a lot of time this semester getting them comfortable… “It’s put me back in control…. Everybody’s kind of got to a comfort level again.”
(Situation selection - Proactive coping\(^1\))

Situation 2 – Silence as resistance
“I'm the adult in the room… They’re only 18-19. Still learning this stuff”
(Cognitive change - rationalising\(^2\))

\(^1\) = (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997)
\(^2\) = (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014)
3. Difficult students and classes

Trying to maintain control
Ian

Constantly reactive

Ignored student, tried to engage with him positively, rationalised, used genuine expression:

“I don’t want to be seen as giving him a free ride when other students are trying and working hard”

but

“(after shouting) I feel a little bit guilty to the other students as they’d seen a side to me I don’t like to show”

(Response modulation – Genuine expression)

1 = (Sutton, 2004; Yin, 2016)
A release of frustration to regain control

I let them have it ((bangs desk)). I say “this is how ((bangs desk)) I feel” because basically frustration …. “You need to decide what you want, decide what you think you’re gonna do.” And I left the room. Let them sort it out and then I came back. (Genuine expression – Outpouring!)
4. Frustration at offensive worldviews
Thinking about the incident in a positive light

“I was just a short period of disappointment, but then again caught myself and I thought actually no this is good, because this is the environment I want to create where we can share our thoughts.”

(Cognitive Change – Reappraisal)
General discussion and implications
General discussion

Control a central thread (see also e.g. Chang, 2013).

More success with low-level frustrators (apathy, silence) than large frustrators (student misbehaviour).

Cognitive reappraisal a powerful tool – Empathy

Lack of behavioural management and ER training
Implications for teachers

- Make efforts to resolve issues and take control (e.g. journaling)
- Reappraising stressors can help reduce frustration
- Empathise and engage with students’ lives
- Increase your awareness of ER strategies and their effects – Try to be less reactive
Implications for institutions and training

- Training for behavioural management
- Training for emotional management
- Mentorship systems
# Frustration Journaling – a framework

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