The impact of game-based teaching on language teachers' emotions

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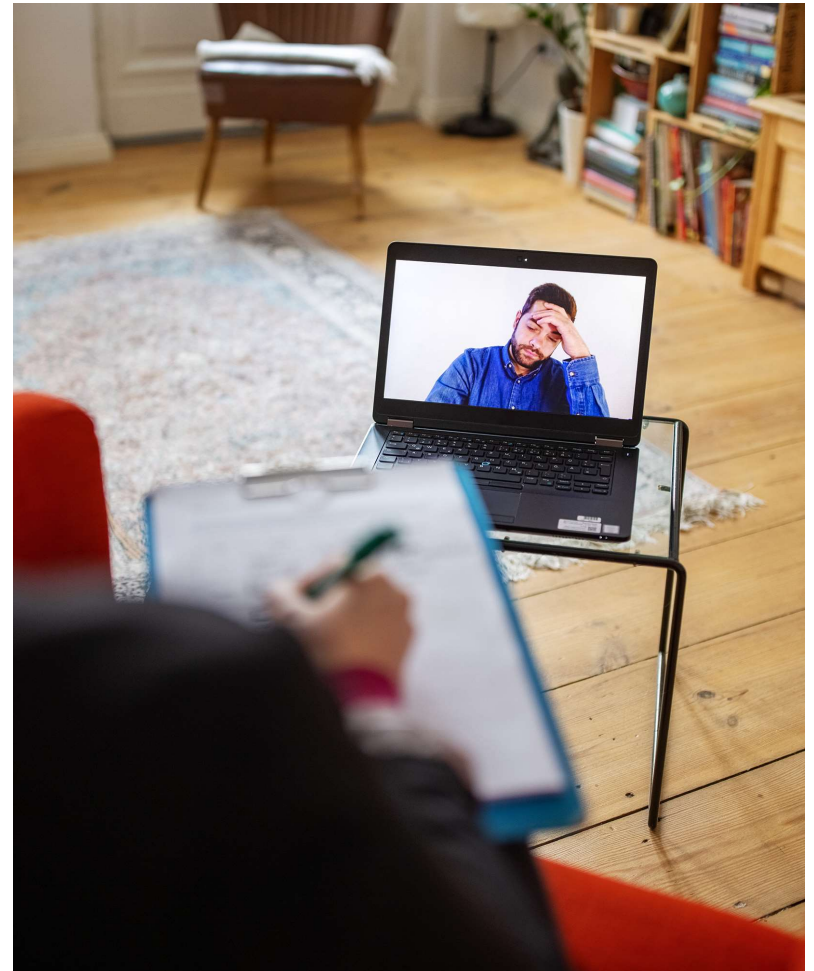
Why games? Why teachers' emotions?

Covid-19 times: a new era of teaching

- The need for engagement and social interaction is more relevant than ever given the transition to online teaching and consequences of covid-19 (Dubriel, 2020)

- Teacher burnout: new challenging environments (unknown territory for some), new instructional approaches, shifted classroom dynamics

Why games?

- Games can strengthen student motivation/performance/engagement

- Games can engender powerful emotions in the classroom

- Games can foster social interactions

- *What is the impact on teachers' emotions when asked to employ and deliver games in the classroom?*

Why is it vital that we look into teachers' emotions?

- Games are mostly researched through the eyes of the students (York et al., 2021)

- Language teaching is laden with emotions, given the interpersonal and social nature of language communication (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017).

- Teachers' emotions are influenced by and influence students' emotions (Frenzel et al.,2018, p.630)
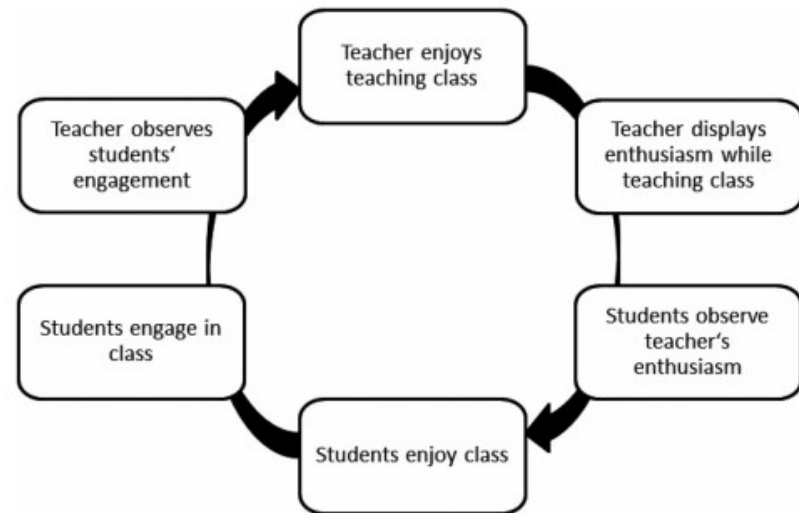
Research Design & Participants

Research Sample & Research Design

- 10 language teachers working at private English language institutions in Greece

- Co-designed & applied gameful interventions for online English language classes

- Classroom observations of designed lesson plans and post-interviews reflecting on delivered classes

- Analysis is underway

20 emotions as in Zembylas, 2005; also Miller & Gkonou, 2018

Happiness	Frustration
Sadness	Disappointment
Irritation	Disillusion
Anxiety	Guilt
Disgust	Despair
Fascination	Caring
Pride	Love
Enthusiasm	Powerlessness
Loss	Satisfaction
Boredom	Awe

Participants

Acronym	Gender	School	Years of Teaching Experience	Frequency of use of games in class	Student's level (participating classes)	Number of iterations
Teacher 1	Female	School 1	20+	Sometimes	A1-A2	2
Teacher 2	Female	School 2	6-10	N/A	B1	3
Teacher 3	Female	School 2	1-5	Daily	Pre-A1	2
Teacher 4	Female	School 2	6-10	Daily	Pre-A1	4
Teacher 5	Female	School 2	6-10	Rarely	A1-A2	4
Teacher 6	Female	School 3	11-19	N/A	A2	2
Teacher 7	Female	School 4	11-19	Sometimes	A1-A2	4
Teacher 8	Female	School 4	6-10	Rarely	A1-A2	4
Teacher 9	Female	School 5	20+	Never	C1-C2	3
Teacher 10	Male	School 2	1-5	N/A	C1-C2	2

Language teachers' emotions before applying games in class

Emotions before delivering a game-based lesson

Emotions	Reason
Happiness, Enthusiasm, Fascination, Care	Teacher Innovation
Happiness, Disappointed, Fascination, Worried, Anxiety	Student participation
Happiness, Excited	Reciprocity of emotions
Happiness, Enthusiasm, Excitement, Fascination, Love, Satisfaction, Anxiety	Teachers like to play
Frustration, Anxiety/Stress, Pressure, Powerlessness	Teacher performance

Teachers like to play!

- "*The first thing that comes to mind is **enthusiasm** because I feel happy when I'm involved in a game even as an adult so let alone when you're a teenager*" [Teacher 1, pre-interview 1]

- "*I'm feeling very **excited, enthusiastic** about Taboo because I really love when kids trying to mime and describe the words it's very, very nice and it's very nice isn't game, I really like it as a game.*" [Teacher 4, pre-interview 4]

- "***Happiness** and **satisfaction** are the strongest ones. **Enthusiasm**. And **fascination** and **love** (laughs). Love always… Okay generally playing games and using them in class and. I don't know they make the atmosphere lighter both for us as teachers, but also as the students so*" [Teacher 2, pre-interview 1]

Teacher Performance

- "*The second (emotion) is **a little bit** of **anxiety** in what sense; I know that preparing a game takes a lot of effort and you have to be very meticulous in that sense a little bit stressful because it needs very good organization and preparation- that's the only thing.*" [Teacher 1- pre-interview 1]

- "*Yeah. I yeah well okay I guess I better say that **frustration** is also **a possibility** (laughs). If things don't go smoothly. That's also possible. Yeah. […] And it's, it's likely that I might feel powerless uhm because I won't be able to get out of them what I want to be getting out of them. And let's see. I guess I guess my ultimate goal will be for me and them to feel enthusiastic. I hope that this will happen*" [Teacher 9, pre-interview 1]

Teacher Innovation

- "*I **care** about delivering it in a relaxing way and in a fun way and in an effective way because language is our goal after all, far from all the other things like having fun interacting*" [Teacher 4, pre-interview 1]

- "*I think that caring also; it shows that you care about the students **when you don't want just cover the book and go home** [...] I think **it makes me more active**; I felt more active when I design things like that and having you talking to me about this sharing ideas it was quite satisfactory- not satisfactory- satisfactory is a little bit you know ehm **exciting** definitely*" [Teacher 1, pre-interview 1]

- " *I think they'll be very pleased that we're not doing regular exercises or taking a quiz or doing dictation or testing or any of the **normal crap** that we do. I think that'd be happy about that.*" [Teacher 9, pre-interview1]

Reciprocity of Emotions

- Teacher 4 feels happy "*because They, **they are happy** students are happy when they play a game. So **I think that's, that's enough**. I mean, for a reason to be happy for that.*"

- Teacher 10 is excited for designing games because: "*it's something [the game] that makes my job easier, first of all because it's something that students enjoy Okay, and because you can see that, when you manage to give them something that appears like even appears like again like a quiz, for example, **they're extremely excited, and so I am excited as well**.*"

Student Participation

- *"I want to see how it plays out. Maybe they will get hooked a by the premise of the game, this is my the most- what would make me **make me happier** because, for example, I have one student who is very silent Okay, and **I would love him to participate**, to feel okay."* [Teacher 10, pre-interview 1]

- *"I'll probably say **enthusiasm**, because I know they're gonna like it, because I know these kids. **fascination** because I'm interested to see what answers they'll give. **I might be a little bit disappointed** actually if some people don't participate. That there's two people in this group that usually you know they don't talk much. And if they talk it's always like "I don't know; I don't care". yeah so they're good kids but. I don't think I've won them over. (laughs) we'll see tomorrow with this."* [Teacher 2, pre-interview 2]

- *"I admit that **I have a little bit of anxiety**. Not too much, but a little bit because I want the students to enjoy this."* [Teacher 9, pre-interview 1]

Language teachers' emotions after applying games in class

Emotions after delivering a game-based lesson

Emotions	Reasons
Happiness, pride, satisfaction	Student performance
Happiness, enthusiasm, fascination, frustration	Student engagement
Happiness, care, fascination, frustration, disappointment, powerlessness, anxiety	Teacher performance & Innovation
Happiness, satisfaction, enthusiasm	Student emotions

Student performance

- "**satisfaction and pride** *for my students actually. [laughs] Okay, because* **it's difficult for them again** *it was. Maybe too much for one lesson."* [Teacher 1, post-interview 3].

- *"Did you see Student 1 who used her hands to; this means that she does remember that we have done this, a couple of times, or three times four. and she used it in the game, which was* **very satisfying for me to see that you found another way to also help herself**. *very satisfying that moment, I felt proud of her."* [Teacher 4, post-interview 3]

- "*I can say probably my overwhelmingly, most intense feeling was* **pride** *I really was genuinely proud of their of all of the of the way they handled themselves, I thought it was really just admirable and* **I was especially proud of their use of the language**. *[...] So yeah, pride. You know, you know, you don't have enough positive adjectives here but what you have is good; pride enthusiasm happiness. All of that* **Even awe**! *I could actually say at how far they've come because I know some of these kids were here, so Yeah.*" [Teacher 9, post-interview 1]

Student engagement

- *"(I feel) **enthusiasm**; they were very you know **passionate and excited to play**."* [Teacher 2, post interview 3]

- "*I was **very happy** obviously because they were having fun, while using English, while in a classroom **a lot of them participated**"* [Teacher 10, post-interview 2]

- "*I feel happy because it was an **experience,** I guess. **And I think the kids had fun**. And it was not embarrassing.*" [Teacher 7, post interview 2]

More on student engagement

- "*they were they were they were just totally...it seemed to me that they were almost all of them focused on the content not at all, the technicality, or just that they that it was in English or anything like that. **They were just like, I mean it was as if this wasn't a class** and we were having a discussion on, you know, personality traits character traits, sex differences and responses...whereas **I was focused on their use of the language** and responses and interaction and time management and all that stuff. They were just completely fine. I don't think they realize that...not that they didn't realize I don't think they saw it as a class per se at all. **It was more real-world kind** of, you know, upper class kind of discussion, you know, something that you might have at a college coffee shop or something, which made me happy. Now I'm really glad about that.*" [Teacher 9, post-interview 1]

Teacher Performance & Innovation

- "*I'm not saying **powerlessness** as an negative emotion per se [...] they (students) started to communicate in you know dialect between English and Greek and **I couldn't stop them but that's good, in my opinion if you get them to be engaged** in and have fun and discuss with one another it's okay to be powerless.[...] They are young learners were acting, a bit like kids do when they have a game in their hands, they lost control of it, but I was, I was fine with that and I didn't want to have the power in my hands know not at all I generally don't want that… so it was okay for me.*" [Teacher 10, post-interview 2]

- "*I don't know if I would call it frustration; **maybe it's anxiety** I don't know because I do, I cannot tell if I handled it correctly. I keep replaying the game part of the lesson and then I'm always wondering okay was that fun enough, but was it educational as well? Did it work? Was it just a game to the kids do they also learn what happened. **And maybe a little powerless.** Maybe a little because I still don't know how exactly to work with the games unless it's-it's something I've done before or well*" [Teacher 7, post-interview 2]

Teacher Performance & Innovation

- "*I'd say **caring** maybe because when you have prepared all these things and when you have planned a different lesson beyond the textbook I think it shows caring for the students. And the students realise that; they like the cardboard, they like the colors, they like the idea, they like that their teacher had prepared something quite different, I think. So that's why I think caring is the strongest **emotion- enthusiasm is you know as you prepare the whole thing, but as you deliver it it's caring**"* [Teacher 1, post-interview 1]

- "*And I was also a little; I was kind of **happy with myself,** because normally I get incredibly irritated and disappointed when they make grammar mistakes or vocabulary mistakes or anything like that in a normal class. But during that class **I was very forgiving** and probably it's because the scale was just heavily on the side of their accomplishment. I thought they were really good*" [Teacher 9, post-interview 1]

Reflections

Emotional Contagion

- **Playful teacher → playful students**

T4 "*I don't know Maybe it was my mood of play more than do that so maybe it was me projecting what I was feeling. So, the story was the least interesting part today.*"

- **Happy students ⇔ happy teacher**

T4 "*Happiness because…students are happy when they play a game. So, I think that's, that's enough. I mean, for a reason to be happy for that.*"

T10 "*when you manage to give them something that appears like even appears like a game, like a quiz, for example, **they're extremely excited, and so I am excited as well**.*"

Game-lesson balance

- Teacher 1 "*Of course it is not always feasible to conduct a lesson with the all the lessons based on gaming. **If I could, I would**.*"

- Teacher 9 "*I'm enjoying the opportunity **to be allowed to go outside the book** because then I don't allow myself to go outside the book until I finished the whole everything I'm supposed to do and then near the end of the year*"

The power of games

- Teacher 9: "*Instead of my normal doom and gloom advice and even my positive commentary about the fact that they're ready and they're flowing. All of that I think is inferior to this to the game thing because* **the game will actually prove to them and in practice that they're capable**. *And that they know a lot. Better than words, this is action,* **this is an affirmation in action**."

- Teacher 4: "*Today I told them to write some words they hear so that I can check spelling. So, I thought about using a game to do that, but then I thought, no, I want to do that seriously and now I'm thinking about it, I*__, I know that students play seriously and I'm thinking why didn't I do that__"

Final words

Overflow of emotions

Happiness

Enthusiasm

Care & Love

Feeling proud

Satisfaction

Anxiety

Frustration

Disappointment

Powerlessness

Post-structuralist approach to interpreting emotions

- Avoid dichotomy (positive-negative)
- A "negative" emotion on its own does not equal a negative experience or implications

Positive Psychology

- Positive emotions: plethora of positive emotions

- Engagement: creative practice

- Relationships: sense of community, team-based environments

- Meaning: moving away from gamified quizzes

- Accomplishment: students' progress/teachers' professional development

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Thank you!

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