

### *Shifting focus through a small lens: Discursive and introspective perspectives on the emergence of L2 study emotions*

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#### Abstract

While perennial in the research landscape, empirical work investigating second language (L2) study emotions has proliferated in the past ten years (Dewaele, 2019). Nevertheless, this article argues there is space for more holistic yet detailed, social yet individual perspectives when conducting such research. As one avenue, the paper explores the potential of a “small lens” approach (Ushioda, 2016) to delve into particular emotional events *in situ* from learner-internal and learner-external points of view. It details an example of such an approach put into practice, in which the author examined the emergence of emotionally significant episodes for English as a foreign language undergraduates in Japan during short conversation sessions. The research explored data from discursive (video-recordings and transcripts of short conversations) and introspective (learner journals) angles. As a result, it was possible to observe the ways in which students’ emotional moves were both afforded by and acted on those of the other through their social interactions, and through interactions with additional aspects of their ongoing psychologies and relationships. The article thus aims to promote further situated L2 emotion research examining the dynamic interplay between various aspects of learners’ psychologies and the co-formed social context.

**Keywords:** L2 study emotions; person-in-context relational view; small lens research approach; discursive and introspective tools

## 1. Introduction

There seems to be a growing emotional charge to our additional, second or foreign, language (L2) classrooms and research, with a sharp spike in published outcomes in the past ten years (Dewaele, 2019). This research has witnessed a remarkable blossoming: Dewaele, MacIntyre and colleagues (e.g., Boudreau et al., 2018; Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016) have expanded their focus to examine relationships between language anxiety and L2 learning enjoyment. Şimşek and Dörnyei (2017) present an intriguing look at anxiety through the lens of an ecological model of personality and other specific emotions such as boredom (Pawlak et al., 2020) are also gaining attention. A handful of studies offer more situated, qualitative interpretations in classroom (Garrett & Young, 2009; Gkonou, 2017; Imai, 2010; Sampson, 2019) and online social contexts (Sampson & Yoshida, 2020). Additionally, there are moves to furnish a dynamic view of L2 study emotions via idiodynamic case studies (Gregersen et al., 2014), as well as research illuminating the “veritable rainbow of feelings perceived by learners” (Sampson, 2020, p. 207; Sampson & Yoshida, 2021).

Notwithstanding, the current paper advances an argument for taking a more holistic yet detailed, social yet individual view of L2 study emotions through a “small lens” (Ushioda, 2016). In line with this stance, I present an overview of one way in which I conducted such a study. In response to calls for more practitioner research (e.g., Ushioda, 2021), I provide a detailed description of my exploration into emotionally significant or critical episodes (Finch, 2010; Ushioda, 2016) by drawing on introspective and discursive data collected from my own classroom setting. In order to illustrate the usefulness of combining such different perspectives, the paper offers an example of one case focusing on the surprising development of enjoyment from a starting point of disappointment during a short conversation session between two L2 learners. As such, the paper aims to promote additional research into the complexity of L2 study emotions. In particular, it is expected to encourage empirical work examining the dynamic interplay between multifarious aspects of learners’ psychologies and the social context which they co-form.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. The complexity of L2 study emotions

Emotions are responses to interactions with the world around us. They are episodes which occur via stimuli from the present (as in the case of anxiety during a presentation), from our memories of past events (such as embarrassment

upon remembering a social failure), or from those imagined (e.g., in anticipation of meeting a cherished friend) (Shuman & Scherer, 2014). Emotions comprise different components, the most often considered of which are perhaps our subjective feelings, “the *perception* of a certain state of the body along with the *perception* of a certain mode of thinking and of thoughts with certain themes” (Damasio, 2003, p. 86; emphasis added). They also involve physiological reactions (such as blushing in embarrassment), expressive behaviors (most commonly witnessed in facial expressions), and tendencies towards action (Cahour, 2013; Damasio, 2003; Shuman & Scherer, 2014). In this sense, emotions are integrally intertwined with motivations through orienting our actions, thinking, and ways of being (Cahour, 2013). In social terms, emotions are shared through emotional intersubjectivity (Denzin, 1984). This process involves “an interactional appropriation of another’s emotionality such that one feels one’s way into the feelings and intentional feeling states of the other,” joining “persons into a common, or shared, emotional field of experience” (Denzin, 1984, p. 130). As such a ubiquitous dimension of the sociality of human life, it goes without saying that emotions will play some role in L2 learning.

As one way to interpret the complexity of L2 learner psychology, Ushioda (2009) has proposed a *person-in-context relational view*. Such an approach calls for a focus on L2 learners as real persons – as thinking, feeling human beings nested within the system of social relations, activities, experiences, and contexts that they form and through which they are formed. Ushioda’s concern with “real persons” with unique psychologies takes a critical stance, arguing that much past research has dissociated the psychological focus of interest from other aspects of the day-to-day lives of research participants and cast them as purely “L2 learners.” Drawing on Zimmerman’s (1998) and Richards’ (2006) explorations of discursal and social identities, Ushioda argues for the expansion of both research and pedagogy to establish the connections between learners’ L2 studies and their “transportable identities.” Zimmerman (1998) defines these as “latent identities that ‘tag along’ with individuals as they move through their daily routines” (p. 90). These are identities held through perceived belonging to a group or being a certain type of person (such as a football fan, music lover, or someone hesitant in talking with unknown others), and remaining with us even when not overtly expressed in a particular context. That is, Ushioda (2009) encourages a consideration of the people in our learning spaces as rounded human beings with numerous identities, only one of which may be their L2 identity.

The people in our classrooms will naturally *feel* something in their L2 studies. These emotions emerge through expressions of (or constraints on) their personalities, identities, motivations, and so on (whether directly related to L2 studies or not). Their emotions will also play a part in co-forming the (social) context

for interactions, just as they will feed back into understandings of experiences in social context and their evolving psychology (Lemke, 2000; Prior, 2019). In this sense, “which emotion surfaces is neither determined solely by the context nor by an individual’s psychological tendencies, but by the organismic interplay of the two” (Boiger & Mesquita, 2015, p. 383).

## 2.2. Investigating the emergence of L2 study emotions in social context

One pertinent tool for unearthing the socially-grounded emergence of L2 study emotions through language might be a form of discourse analysis known as discursive psychology (DP). As Wiggins (2017) describes, DP is “a theoretical and analytical approach to discourse which treats talk and text as an object of study in itself, and psychological concepts as socially managed and consequential in interaction” (p. 4). Through a detailed, line-by-line analysis of interaction transcripts which include additional contextual information such as prosody, facial expressions, and particulars of the evolving situation, such approaches aim to demonstrate that interlocutors orient themselves to some features of a conversation as emotional (Ruusuvuori, 2012). Arguing the benefits for L2 research, Prior (2019) urges that:

[t]aking up emotions in this way makes visible, as publicly observably and analytically available conduct, the forms they take, the communicative resources they require, the functions they serve, and the social practices they support. What emotion ‘is’ and ‘means’ therefore depends on how it is socially shared and grounded in situ. (p. 519)

Divisively perhaps, DP takes a strong position in considering psychology to *only* be “visible” through social interactions: it does not “try to ‘get inside’ people’s minds” but instead interprets people’s psychologies “by their practices and social interactions rather than their individual thoughts or experiences” (Wiggins, 2017, pp. 4-5). As such, DP has also been criticized for being too focused on the direct social context, and thus neglecting other aspects of people’s experiences, cognitions, cultures, and so on (Turner & Stets, 2005; see also Prior, 2016).

Taking somewhat of a middle ground, in our own field, Ushioda (2016) has recently suggested a small lens approach. In alignment with the situatedness of DP, Ushioda (2016) argues the necessity of “a more sharply focused or contextualized angle of inquiry . . . in relation to particular classroom events or to evolving situated interactions” (p. 564). As such, the small lens approach zooms in on significant or critical episodes in learning (however these are defined – see the analysis section for further discussion). Yet, a small lens approach does not confine itself purely to the examination of interactions with others in social context during such significant events, but concurrently strives for insights into the sense-

making of each unique person (Ushioda, 2021). As Phelps (2005) adds, no-one is better positioned to reflect upon the complex significance of certain experiences than the individual. In practice then, a small lens approach to research would suggest combinations of introspective (such as interview and reflective tools) and external observatory methods (such as analysis of video-recordings and conversation transcripts in a fashion similar to DP). Indeed, in outlining research in general education, Reizenstein et al. (2014) contend that such blending of tools might ideally illuminate from different angles the complexity of emotions, which straddle intrapsychic and social contexts. In other words, “we shuttle between learner-external and learner-internal contextual processes, as our analytical lens shifts from looking globally at particular learners engaging with the surrounding environment, to homing in on particular psychological or behavioral processes within the person” (Ushioda, 2015, p. 53).

A handful of research projects examining L2 study emotions have been carried out in a way consistent with the small lens approach (Ushioda, 2016). Imai (2010) concentrated on the collaborative preparation of three Japanese undergraduates towards a group presentation for their English as a foreign language (EFL) class. Data were collected during sessions outside of lesson time by numerous means including video recordings of the discussions (which were conducted in Japanese), emotion logs and questionnaires, and stimulated recall of participants’ own interpretations. The analysis converged on a particular event in one of these discussions, drawing on Denzin’s (1984) conceptualization of emotional intersubjectivity. During the event of interest, participants’ initial understandings of the pedagogical task were adapted via emotional intersubjectivities embedded in verbal cues. Through a detailed analysis of predominantly the discourse of the discussion, Imai showed that these co-formed, emotional understandings prompted group members to renegotiate their goal for the presentation and shun the teacher-intended pedagogical outcome. Imai (2010) concluded that there is a need to consider the ways in which the social emergence of emotions mediates learning and language development.

Another study with echoes of the small lens approach is that conducted by Sampson and Yoshida (2020) in the context of an online L2 text chat exchange. The research was carried out with undergraduate EFL students in Japan and their Japanese as a foreign language peers in Australia. The study collected introspective reflections and text-chat dialogical data to explore perceptions of feelings over seven chat sessions. Out of a total of 21 pairs, the researchers used a narrative approach to center on the feeling trajectories of one particular chat dyad, chosen as their highly divergent feelings across sessions appeared to be an outlier among the experiences of other participants. The combination of data in a narrative form uniquely illuminated the emergence of the participants’ varied

emotional trajectories over time – the introspective data allowed glimpses of emotional sense-making from (sometimes mistaken) perceptions of seemingly trivial occurrences evident in the dialogic data. The findings showed that the individual chatters' feelings were heavily impacted by their interactions in social context that in turn was co-formed via their perceptions of each other and other ongoing psychological processes (Sampson & Yoshida, 2020).

### 3. The study

#### 3.1. Research question

Few studies of L2 learner psychology take interpersonal interactions over time as their focus (Prior, 2019; Ushioda, 2009), despite the manifestly social environments in which L2 learning and use occur. The current paper thus draws on a selection of data from wider practitioner research in an EFL classroom setting to investigate the following question:

*In what ways does a “small lens” focus on the perceptions and interactions of learners in classroom groupwork provide insight into the dynamic emergence of L2 study emotions?*

#### 3.2. Participants and context

One class of Japanese undergraduates ( $N = 28$ ) participated in the study. These students were first-year science and technology majors at a small university north of Tokyo. Participants consisted of 22 male and six female learners, with an average age of 19 years (five students turned 20 over the course of the semester; the remainder were all 19). Students' English levels oscillated between high basic and low independent according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001). Their Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) Listening/Reading scores averaged 518, (minimum 370, maximum 620,  $SD = 71$ ). Around one third of the class (10 students) had visited English-speaking countries for travel (none for extended living experiences). All of the participants had attended public schools in Japan, at which they commenced formal EFL study from junior-high school (12 to 13 years old). Hence they had six years of formal study before entering university. Unfortunately, other detailed data regarding individuals' previous EFL (study) experiences were not collected.

All participants were members of the same class, studying a compulsory EFL listening/speaking course (one semester, 14 weeks, one 90-minute lesson

per week). I was the facilitator of this course. Lessons were conducted in a communicative fashion, with a mix of skill-based exercises from a set listening textbook alongside interactive discussions and tasks. Students were randomly grouped to work together for two to three lessons, then reassigned to new groups. While data were collected about lessons in their entirety, the current paper centers on students' emotions during short conversation sessions held each week. At the start of the semester, I distributed a sheet to students with a selection of 12 different conversation prompts. Students were given time to confirm the content of each prompt in pairs, before checking with myself as the teacher. Over the semester, groups chose from the prompts and continued increasingly longer conversations.

### 3.3. Data collection

Data were collected from multiple sources, although the present paper draws primarily on two tools. In the required curriculum, students had to submit reflective journals after each lesson. The journal was introduced as a reflective pedagogical task: After each lesson segment (including the short conversation sessions), learners were encouraged to take notes about their perceptions of feelings and then collate them as a reflective journal entry emailed to me directly following each lesson. Part of student assessment was based on how many entries they submitted, and whether entries were over a minimum of 100 words. Hence I asked students to allow me to use their journal entries as data. As journal-writing was required anyway, I judged that this form of data-collection would not overburden participants nor would it overly interrupt normal classroom action, yet it would have the capacity to furnish contextualized, dynamic, personal and candid perceptions of learning experiences (Gilmore, 2016). Learners wrote in English, although occasionally using some Japanese expressions (see also the conclusion of the article for a discussion of the limitations due to such an approach). Overall, 343 entries were obtained (an average of 26 per lesson), with a total corpus amounting to just over 38,000 words. Videorecording of small-group activities was additionally used to supply dialogical and observational data. Student interactions were recorded using 360-degree video cameras placed in the middle of each group. The short conversation sessions were recorded on seven occasions across the semester, coming to around 270 minutes of footage. Rather than initially transcribing all recorded data, after each lesson I watched the video recordings and wrote basic notes with regard to student behaviors, interactions, and first impressions of what I interpreted as visible aspects of an individual's emotions and "emotional climate" in groups (Cahour, 2013).

### 3.4. Analysis

Analysis worked in a dialectical fashion between data sources, as I focused my analytical lens over several stages on only the transcripts and learner journal references to short conversations:

1. Learner journals were initially subjected to thematic content analysis following Saldaña (2016), through which both overt and implied references were used to uncover the variety of emotions, foci, and action tendencies of learners. In other words, as I read participants' entries, I asked myself what particular emotions were represented or could be understood from their writing; how these instances were connected to some focus (past, present, future or imagined); and what actional function the emotion suggested. As I developed these codes, I compared instances across students to refine my understandings, sometimes resulting in amalgamation or further division of codes.
2. Taking my cue from Imai's (2010) entreaty to look at "the sense that each learner interactively constructs, negotiates, and appropriates regarding an emotional experience" (p. 288), this first pass through the data drew my attention to the writing of certain students. Through reference to specific incidents during the short conversations, these entries seemed to suggest emotional significance. As Finch (2010) describes, "critical events cannot be objectively identified, measured, or predicted, but are dependent on the awareness and willingness-to-observe of the observer" (p. 423). Numerous researchers from our own field (e.g., Pinner & Sampson, 2021; Ushioda, 2021) have argued that classroom practitioners are uniquely placed to note such events. Although unaware of it at the time, my own selection criteria for these critical episodes were similar to those expounded by Halquist and Musanti (2010), in that each held some degree of conflict and surprised me in some way – they piqued my interest to further explore. At this stage, incidents involved such diverse experiences as feelings of resilience and growth in the face of a partner's denigration and anger, nervousness to speak giving way to enjoyment, and seemingly sudden proclamations of progress in a personality goal.
3. While these occurrences were intriguing by themselves, I needed to understand more about the interactive, relational context (Boiger & Mesquita, 2015; Ushioda, 2009, 2016). Hence I examined the journal entries for all group members involved in what had been marked as significant episodes on the days in question. Through looking at the emotional qualities of the entries of all interlocutors, certain events shifted further

into focus from these different perspectives. At other times, due to a lack of reference to the focal incidents, these cases were set aside. Through this process, I reduced the number of potential focal cases in consideration of the quality of data of all group members.

4. In light of my aim of investigating the usefulness of the small lens approach to “shuttle between learner-external and learner-internal contextual processes” (Ushioda, 2015, p. 53), I next consulted the video recordings and notes I had made about interactions for these particular cases, and transcribed the participants’ conversations. Although not applying a strict DP process, I used Wiggins’ (2017) three steps in transcription: (1) creating a rough orthographic, time-stamped transcript; (2) adding more detail about the ways that things were said through an adapted form of Jefferson transcription (Jefferson, 2004; see Appendix for transcription conventions); (3) adding extralinguistic and contextual details in a column to the right of utterances. A number of more precise comments are perhaps necessary here. First, conversation analytic approaches typically stringently follow standards for transcription, such as the use of line numbers instead of times, a large quantity of notations, and no use of standard punctuation. However, as a practitioner I wanted my representations to be accessible to other practitioners – such standards at times make transcripts look more like computer code than conversations between real people at real times. Second, while DP does not admit the inference of emotion (Prior, 2016; Wiggins, 2017), a key aspect of my adding extralinguistic and contextual details involved observations about the visible dimensions of emotions. In doing so, I utilized the intuitive judgment method, which makes use of people’s folk-psychological competence to construe emotions from behavior and context (Reisenzein et al., 2014). Such a system of observation has been found as reliable as formal emotional coding systems for it allows observers “to use any available cue (facial, vocal, situational context, etc.) or cue combination,” which “maximally exploits the available information and best approximates the process of multicue emotion inference in everyday life” (Reisenzein et al., 2014, p. 595). This stage thus involved watching the video-recording multiple times whilst transcribing, then reading and re-reading the transcription to add extra details.
5. Reminding myself of the significant episodes identified from the introspective data, I next took notes about different parts of the transcriptions as I worked to show “what actions were accomplished through discursive practices, how they were accomplished, and how psychological business was managed in the process of doing these actions” (Wiggins,

2017, p. 121). I endeavored to interpret the ways in which what students said and how they said it in the context of the ongoing conversation, along with what I interpreted as their observable emotional orientations to each other, came together in the emergence of the event of interest. As I zoomed in on certain micro-events in the course of the conversation, I also connected them with particular dimensions from the journal writing of focal participants. Through this discursive process, I was able to notice the interplay of not only interlocutors' emotions, but also their identities, personalities, motivations, and beliefs as they interacted over the course of short conversation sessions.

#### 4. Interpretations and discussion

In what follows, I look at one specific example of the value of using a small lens approach to research L2 study emotions. The "particular classroom event" (Ushioda, 2016, p. 564) upon which I focus revolves around the conversation session of two male students in the seventh lesson of the semester. Ryoto and Tomohiko (both pseudonyms; data excerpts are presented uncorrected) had elected to discuss a conversation prompt regarding "something which disappointed you recently." Despite the unpleasant emotional valence attached to this topic, what caught my attention in their journals was what I interpreted as expressions of extremely pleasant emotions:

Ryoto: I talked with a new partner. He has a high communication skills, so I talked with him pleasantly. We talked about why you are late for school. I said to him "I watched a YouTube, especially virtual Youtube, and stayed overnight." He sympathize with me. Probably, we have a good chemistry. . . . I enjoyed English class so much.

Tomohiko: In today's class, we changed the partner. It wasn't the first time to talk with today's partner for me. So I could do the pair work with relaxing. Today's my partner is always friendly and earnestly. Therefore we could do the pair works very smooth. He knows many English words so I thought I should study hard English. And I should emulate his attitude to English class.

Recent research has unearthed both the variety of emotions and a predominance of pleasant over unpleasant experiences in classroom settings (Garrett & Young, 2009; MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017; Sampson, 2020). Agreeing with such findings, although the prompt for these learners dealt with "disappointment," their reflections in fact give little sense of such an unpleasant emotion. That said, there are points of seeming tension. Both members of the dyad commence by focusing on the change of partner. Notably, Tomohiko's writing hints at his personality and the potential for anxiety in such a situation when he explicitly

mentions that despite this new arrangement of pairs, “I could do the pair work with relaxing.” Boiger and Mesquita (2012) draw on a variety of past research to argue that “established relationship patterns and meanings . . . may render certain appraisals more salient in a given event . . . and afford particular emotional qualia” (p. 222). While this was the first time for Ryoto and Tomohiko to work together in this English class, these students had an ongoing relationship brought in from other classes at the university. The introspective data suggest that this relationship formed part of the playing field for the emergence of L2 study emotions in this situation. That is, Tomohiko’s feeling of relief is afforded via interactions between past experiences in the form of his developing relationship with Ryoto and the current social context. Further, the journal entries imply that feelings of pleasant affect for Ryoto and Tomohiko emerge through impressions of the other and their beliefs. Intersections between built-up understandings of their partner’s personality as “always friendly and earnestly” and of their “high communication skills” as well as beliefs of what is important for effective classroom learning to enable this dyad to “do the pair works very smooth.” Congruent with my own past research (Sampson, 2019), the learners’ emotional experience involved a mix of “sense-making emergent from the here-and-now as well as longer timescale processes of individualized life experiences, identities, personalities, and beliefs transported into the learning context” (p. 22).

In support of Ushioda’s (2009) push to consider learners as “persons-in-context” participating in and writing about an EFL class, the reflections of these people render the impression that their L2 identities are not foremost in their thinking. They are rounded individuals who happen to be in a (compulsory) additional language classroom. However, as Taylor’s (2013) study of over 1,000 L2 English learners in Romania led her to conclude, “*unless* students are allowed to be themselves . . . and appreciated for what they are as real people, they are unlikely to engage genuinely in class and develop as language learners and social persons” (p. 126 – emphasis added). In the case of the focal participants, the only overt references to L2 identity arrive at the conclusion to their entries, yet this writing reminds of the interplay with other identities and students “allowed to be themselves” (Taylor, 2013, p. 130). It appears that Ryoto used the topic of “disappointment” to introduce an instance of tardiness due to staying up late watching YouTube. Intimating the development of emotional intersubjectivities (Denzin, 1984; Imai, 2010), the shared understandings he felt at this juncture (“He sympathize with me”) come together as his emergent feeling toward the lesson as a whole: “Probably, we have a good chemistry. . . . I enjoyed English class so much.” That is, we can understand that this overall experience of a connection with his partner and pleasant affect toward the English lesson (L2 identity) is grounded in a sharing of transportable identities (Zimmerman, 1998) and

the responses he perceives. Tomohiko's entry closes with more direct reflections on language learning. He observes that Ryoto "knows many English words," suggesting that his own motivation is invigorated through such perceptions: "So I thought I should study hard English. And I should emulate his attitude to English class." It is tempting to consider questions of L2 identity as front and center in such writing. However, the combination of introspective with dialogical data further illuminates the ways in which emotions emerged through interactions with wider psychological context. This interplay between data sources also opens a window on emotional processes involved in the co-constructed discursive context.

By this point in the semester, short conversation sessions had lengthened to around four minutes. After some small talk, Ryoto and Tomohiko settled to discuss the topic of the conversation prompt. Ryoto began (see Table 1).

Table 1 Transcript of the conversation between Ryoto and Tomohiko

Time	Name	Speech	Context/emotion
1:14	R:	<i>Etto</i> (umm) (2.7) I was late for university, recently, because of staying overnight.	
1:24	T:	<i>O::h.</i>	Smiling (sympathizing)
1:27	R:	<i>Etto</i> , I saw, I watched a YouTube, which channel is, <i>etto</i> , which channel is Hikaru. <sup>1</sup>	T laughs in sympathy at 'YouTube'
1:36	T:	<i>Ya:: Really? Hikaru?</i>	Looks surprised
1:40	R:	<i>Ichi=jikan=michatta.</i> (I watched it for one hour)	Looks embarrassed
1:40	T:	((laughing))	
1:42	R:	For one hour, and (1.0) virtual YouTube.	
1:46	T:	Was it interesting, about Hikaru?	Looks slightly incredulous
1:51	R:	<i>Hikaru?</i> (2.3) Eh, talked with <i>Kajisakku</i> .	
1:56	R:	[ <i>Kajiwara.</i> <sup>2</sup> ]	
1:56	T:	[ <i>A:::h, I see</i> ].	Looks interested, nodding (can appreciate choice)
1:56	R:	I saw it for one hour.	Looks confident (relieved?)
2:02	T:	Ah, Kaji-	Gesturing to self (has also seen?)
2:05	R:	Because, I stay overnight.	
2:06	T:	Oh.	Nodding
2:07	R:	It's so funny for me	
2:10	T:	<i>O::h.</i>	Smiling
2:11	R:	to hear it.	
2:13	T:	Eh, I (1.0), I was late for classes (0.5) recently, (0.7) because (0.5) I, I stayed overnight, too.	Pointing to self, laughs when introducing the same situation as R
2:28	R:	<i>O::h.</i>	Smiles
2:29	T:	I watched (1.2) Nogizaka Forty-Six. <sup>3</sup>	Looks a little embarrassed
2:34	R:	<i>Oh, great.</i>	Looks interested (can appreciate choice)
2:35	T:	So, I (0.6) recently, I like read (0.5) about Nogizaka. Very <i>recently</i> , very recently, recently.	Looks at R hesitantly, emphasizes 'recently' with gesture
2:42	R:	Recently, oh, ah.	
2:48	T:	Mmm=	
2:49	R:	What kind of song do you like in Nogizaka?	
2:52	T:	<i>A:::h</i> (1.4) <i>E:::h</i> (1.0) Because it is, er, not common, but, <i>poppypappappa</i> .	Looks relieved at question, smiles, looking into air thinking
3:02	R:	Oh.	Smiles
3:04	T:	((laughing)) Do you know it?	Gestures to R. Smiling
3:08	R:	Eh...	Moves head to show mystified. Smiling
3:10	T:	It is not famous.	T makes a Japanese hand gesture for 'don't worry'

3:12 R:	Ah, I don't know so much.	
3:15 T:	I like Influencer?	Tilts head in a questioning fashion
3:17 R:	Ah= <u>Influencer</u>	Smiles in recognition. T looks relieved
3:18 T:	too.	
3:19 R:	I know a little.	
3:21 T:	Oh, <u>really?</u>	
3:22 T:	(2.3) Mmm. Do you, do you think=	
3:28 R:	Mm?	Tilts head to side, seems surprised
3:29 T:	Do you think, Kajisakku can, Kajisakku can, can Kajisakku=	
3:33 R:	Can reach to one million subscribers?	Nods appreciation of question
3:35 T:	Reach to... <i>un</i> (yes).	Shows a kind of realization and being impressed
3:40 R:	He wanna achieve it, he wanna achieve it so much.	
3:44 T:	<i>Un</i> . (1.1) I think he <u>cannot</u> =	
3:51 R:	A::h.	Seems to be thinking, deciding if he agrees
3:52 T:	He can't.	Makes a waving sign with his hands signaling 'no way'
3:52 R:	He reached, almost, (0.6) <i>eto</i> , (0.5) four-hundred thousand subscribers. Four-hundred thousand?	Looking up and thinking; T counting in air
4:03 T:	Oh. I don't know. I don't know? ((laughing))	
4:08		Chime sounds to mark end of conversation time
4:12 R:	Ah, but I, <i>demo</i> (but), but (0.5) I think he reach one million subscribers.	
4:18 T:	<i>H:::e</i> (Oh). <u>By?</u>	Seems surprised
4:24 R:	Because of <i>korabo</i> (collaboration) with many YouTubers and many comedians.	T nods realization

*Note.* <sup>1</sup>Hikaru is a popular Japanese YouTuber who was somewhat controversial at the time of this conversation <sup>2</sup>Kajisakku is a former Japanese television comedian who became a YouTuber. His real name is Kajiwara <sup>3</sup>Nogizaka46 is a Japanese female idol group consisting of, unsurprisingly, 46 members

As Mesquita (2010) emphasizes, emotions are “afforded by interactions with others or, more precisely, interactions with others as rendered meaningful by cultural meanings and practices” (p. 89). One vital way in which such cultural practices impact the conversation and resultant emotions is through the students’ choice to share stories of disappointment related to the ‘small culture’ of undergraduate life. Ryoto’s introduction of a disappointing event at 1:14 (“I was late for university, recently, because of staying overnight”) is met with expressions of sympathetic understanding from Tomohiko, shown through his elongated “O:::h” and smile (1:24). Moreover, this aspect of the shared culture of being a university student is so relatable for Tomohiko that he reports a similar experience (2:13). In addition, recollecting Ryoto’s remark in his journal, the conversation has meaning and develops its emotional value for these people through their shared understandings of another ‘small culture’ – current popular culture. Indeed, Ryoto’s introduction of the *cause* of the tardiness (watching YouTube featuring Hikaru) rather than focusing on the *result* (the consequences of being late for university classes) seems to play a large role in edging the conversation away from overt discussion of disappointment. Tomohiko’s surprised reaction (1:36) and query about the content of the YouTube (1:46), instead of focusing on the effects of being late, is based in his own understandings of this small culture, and also works to consolidate this conversational direction.

Another clear example of shared sociocultural understandings occurs at 3:22, as Tomohiko changes the topic by attempting to ask a question. While Ryoto at first expresses his surprise at what was indeed a sudden shift in direction through murmuring “Mm?” and tilting his head to one side in a look of puzzlement (3:28), as Tomohiko tries to verbalize, Ryoto predicts and finishes the question (3:33). That is, the continuation of the conversation and resultant emotions are found in the members’ shared understandings of current YouTube culture in Japan. This incident further reminds of Tomohiko’s journal reference to his impression that Ryoto “knows many English words.” Tomohiko’s numerous false starts – “Do you think, Kajisakku can, Kajisakku can, can Kajisakku” (3:29) – prompt Ryoto to quickly furnish the missing verb for which it seems his partner was grasping: “Can *reach* to one million subscribers?” As Machi (2020) has shown, such co-construction is commonplace in Japanese casual conversation, and enhances bonding. Tomohiko then both verbally – “Reach to...*un* (yes)” – and physically – through facial expression – shows his realization and being impressed. In the context of the journal data, it is possible to understand that this is one moment that has clear L2 learning motivational significance for Tomohiko. Yet, it is through their interactions, grounded in the shared understandings of YouTube culture, that this motivation emerges.

Despite the pleasant emotional tone of both the conversation in general and the participants’ reflections, it is also possible to understand the hesitancy with which various transportable identities (Zimmerman, 1998) are interpolated into the conversation. Nevertheless, in congruence with Imai’s (2010) study, the trepidation is mitigated as the pair regularly express emotional intersubjectivities, altering the trajectory of both their emotions and the conversation away from explicit discussion of disappointment. It seems that they build a particular kind of intersubjectivity known as ‘emotional embracement’ (Denzin, 1984), in which “the meanings of their sensible feelings . . . are understood and even vicariously felt by each other” (p. 153). Their observable behaviors and verbalizations show appreciation of the ideas and described actions of their partner.

Even from a very early point in the conversation, such an interaction occurs as Tomohiko laughs in sympathetic understanding of the dangers of losing track of time watching YouTube (1:27). Interestingly, similar patterns of hesitancy giving way to relief are evident as both Ryoto and later Tomohiko share the specific detail of their pop-culture-related transportable identities. First, when Ryoto mentions the YouTuber Hikaru, Tomohiko conveys surprise quite overtly through verbalizing, “*Ya::* Really? Hikaru?” with rising intonation (1:36). In fact, Ryoto’s awareness that Hikaru may be a potentially problematic topic is apparent in the previous line, when he falteringly describes, “. . . which channel is, *etto*, which channel is Hikaru” (1:27). His initial embarrassment (witnessed

through facial expressions and use of the *'-chatta'* verb form in very quick, latched Japanese) upon perceiving incredulity (1:40) gives way to relief as Tomohiko shows appreciation for YouTube involving another popular YouTuber, Kajisakku (1:51). Such a pattern is repeated later in the conversation. Tomohiko also shows embarrassment as he introduces his interest in the female idol group Nogizaka46 (2:29), in particular through his hedged stressing and repeating of the word "recently" (2:35). This hesitancy changes to relief when it seems he understands a sanctioning of the topic by Ryoto asking a question (2:49), and then again as Ryoto expresses recognition of one of the songs of the idol group (3:17). As a point of contrast, Denzin (1984) argues that emotional embracement "can occur only when a recurring, common emotional field of experience is produced and shared" (p. 153), such as through long-lasting friendships and marriages. Despite not having such a depth of shared history, the analysis suggests that the emotions of these two students both support and are supported by the discursive context, in constant interaction with aspects of their ongoing identities. It may be in the context of such relief, especially when connected with personally important identities, that pleasant feelings of relatedness (Ryoto's reference to "good chemistry" with his partner) and enjoyment emerge.

## 5. Conclusions, limitations and implications

In the current paper, I have attempted to demonstrate one way of "shifting focus" via a small lens (Ushioda, 2016), which naturally has some limitations. Concerning data collection, in line with calls for the meshing of research with teaching (Ushioda, 2021), I asked my learners to allow me to use the assessed reflective journals as part of the research data. I did explain to students that I would not assess these items based on their content, but purely their length and number (in line with the department policy). Nevertheless, it is certainly conceivable that some students may have been influenced in what they wrote by knowledge that their teacher would be reading the reflections, perhaps biasing them away from discussing unpleasant emotions. In addition (again, as a pedagogical tool), the journals were written in participants' L2, which entails questions about their capacity to express themselves fully. I would, however, argue that the English level of students was reasonable (as measured by a standardized test), and that the example extracts presented in this article illustrate that they were quite able to detail their emotionality. Regarding the conversation data, as my first attempt at using a small lens, questions may be raised in particular by those who follow a stricter conversation analytical or discursive psychological approach (e.g., Prior, 2016; Wiggins, 2017). Here too, rather than my interpretations, I could have asked participants to watch the videos and interpret their own emotions,

such as in idiodynamic approaches (e.g., Gregersen et al., 2014). While such an activity could also have served a pedagogical purpose, as a classroom teacher familiar with how busy my students are, I did not feel it appropriate to add this extra burden to their already overloaded schedules. Concerning analysis, then, the interpretations of both forms of data are entirely my own, and I did not compare these by employing a second coder. In this I concur with Saldaña (2016), in understanding that qualitative research is always subjective and interpretive, and ideas that additional coders can somehow make analysis more objective are claims towards a “false god” (p. 41).

So, what does the approach described in this paper offer? As illustrated in this article, what is insightful in taking a small lens approach is the understandings we might gain about the processes through which emotions evolve in real time. The merging of perspectives on a single event brings us closer to a more phenomenological understanding of L2 learner psychology. In the current article, analysis of discursive data shone a light on the ways in which students’ emotional moves during a short conversation session were both afforded by and acted on those of the other through their social interactions. Yet, combination with introspective data offered insights into the ways in which their emotions were not only latched onto the here-and-now context of the classroom but emerged and were understood through interactions with other aspects of their ongoing psychologies, relationships, and shared understandings.

Some may wonder as to the significance of any findings generated or implications emergent from centering on only specific, emotionally significant events for particular dyads. The small lens approach is not supposed to be representative of all cases but gives insight into emergent processes in particular cases that might resonate to others (Ushioda, 2016). Through shifting our focus on different angles in a particular case, we might foster a more fine-grained perspective on the emergence of emotions transferrable to other cases. The current paper highlights interactions between L2 study emotions and other aspects of people’s psychologies lost in the lion’s share of past research, such as their transportable identities (Zimmerman, 1998), ongoing, dynamic relationships (Boiger & Mesquita, 2012), and the socially-afforded dimensions of L2 motivation. The analysis moreover adds to Imai’s (2010) findings regarding the vital role of emotional intersubjectivities in evolving the sense that learners take from interactive pedagogical activities and their actions therein.

Importantly for pedagogy, a small lens approach can add valuable qualitative detail to the emergence, content, and functions of learners’ emotions. For example, in the case included in the current paper, the introspective and dialogical data analysis revealed little sense in the participants being “L2 learners” with only L2-specific emotions. They are young people discussing what has meaning

for them and they happen to be doing it through an additional language. As Richards (2006) has cautioned, however, drawing on such transportable identities will also “involve an investment of self, with all the emotional, relational, and moral considerations that this invokes” (p. 72). In the current analysis, students naturally expressed emotional intersubjectivities (Denzin, 1984) that relieved anxiety and hesitancy in broaching personally important identities. However, such a process may not occur spontaneously in all cases. There is clearly a need for caution in encouraging other teachers to create opportunities for learners to draw on transportable identities without discretion. Teachers may be advised to prompt learners to explore their L2 emotions and (social) emotion regulation strategies through means such as the *Managing Your Emotions* questionnaire (see Oxford & Gkonou, 2021). Moreover, a future direction for research utilizing the approach described in the current paper that may prove especially informative for pedagogical practice is to focus our lens on significant cases construed by learners themselves as emotionally constructive or unconstructive. In doing so, we may gain not only a better understanding of fundamental processes in the emergence of L2 study emotions in social context, but also the aspects of activities, materials, and social interactions facilitative in affording shared emotions that learners experience as constructive or unconstructive. Considering the recent expansion of research into various L2 study emotions such as enjoyment and boredom (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Pawlak et al., 2020), the small lens approach could also offer insights into key qualities to the emergence of such emotions via a detailed examination of a targeted, emotion-specific collection of significant cases. I believe the future for such small lens research conducted by practitioners can contribute not only more contextualized understandings to theory about L2 study emotions, but also suggestions for practice grounded in particular classroom contexts.

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## APPENDIX

Transcription conventions (adapted and abridged from Jefferson, 2004, and Prior, 2016)

(1.2)	A pause or silence, measured in seconds and tenths of seconds
=	Latched talk, during which there is no hearable gap between words
::	Prolonged sounds – the more colons, the longer the sound
<u>word</u>	Emphasized words or parts of words
?	Rising intonation (may be a question, but not necessarily)
((description))	Details about additional descriptions
<i>tango</i>	Japanese word (followed on first occurrence by translation in parenthesis)
[ ]	Start and end of overlapping talk