EFL Teachers' Emotions Toward Online-Merge-Offline Teaching Mode in University

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Abstract—The Online-Merge-Offline (OMO) teaching mode has emerged as a prominent new approach in language education reform with the expansion of online teaching in China. Due to the emotional complexity involved in educational reforms, this study explores the emotions expressed by Chinese EFL teachers in OMO classes, investigates the situational causes, and examines emotion regulation strategies in English Language Teaching. A questionnaire was distributed to 48 Chinese EFL teachers teaching General English (GE) using OMO mode across three normal universities, followed by semi-structured interviews for deeper insights. After collecting and analyzing data from questionnaires and interviews, the findings revealed a spectrum of emotions were experienced by EFL teachers, with positive emotions prevailing, particularly in GE classes. Love, surprise, and joy were prominent across different settings. Situational triggers encompassed classroom dynamics, institutional factors and social influences; reflecting teachers' beliefs and identities, students' learning engagement, behavior and academic achievements, colleagues and administrators' work support and emotional support, policy makers' reform mandate, and the Confucian heritage cultures. To regulate positive and negative emotions, Chinese EFL teachers primarily employed appraisal, followed by situation modification and selection. This study underscores the importance of emotional awareness for both students' learning achievement and teachers' professional development in ELT. It encourages Chinese EFL teachers to recognize the significance of their emotions in teaching effectiveness and offers insights for educators and administrators into supporting teachers' emotional well-being and professional growth.

Index Terms—emotions, Chinese EFL teachers, Online-Merge-Offline (OMO), situational causes, strategies of emotion regulation

I. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, English is considered a pivotal global language that plays a vital role in many countries (Ly, 2023). According to Kachru's (1992) tripartite of ENL-ESL-EFL, English speakers can be roughly divided into three categories: native speakers, speakers of English as a second language, and speakers of English as a foreign language (Pennycook, 2017). English has developed globally throughout human history, driven not only by commercial reasons but also by cultural, religious, diplomatic, and administrative convenience. It has served as a medium for the exchange of information among scientists and scholars of diverse nationalities (Gordin, 2015).

China, a nation in the expanding circle, has witnessed the largest and fastest-growing number of EFL learners in the past four decades (Shadiev & Yang, 2020). However, test-oriented learning and teacher-centered instruction remain prevalent in English language teaching (ELT) practices. Although English has been taught in the Chinese educational system for many years, starting from kindergarten to junior and senior high school, or even at the university level, the primary focus of English learning is still on the skills being tested (Zhao, 2023). For instance, the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), a standardized college entrance exam, is held annually in China. As a major subject in NCEE, English is learned not only for personal advancement but also as a promise of an individual's brighter future. For Chinese university students, even though professional knowledge has become more important and English study seems to have lost its status, they must take compulsory English courses in the first two years and prepare for the College English Test 4/6 (CET4/6) to meet future job requirements.

In order to cater to the goal of test-orientedness, the traditional teaching mode combined with multimedia equipment is still the common approach for Chinese EFL teachers (Wang, 2021). The English proficiency of learners is not as high as expected in China, despite all learners being diligent and putting in great effort. According to the ranking of the international educational organization named EF or Education First, China was ranked 82nd among 113 countries in terms of learners' English proficiency (EF, 2023), lower than some developing countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam.

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Under this circumstance, driven by multiple factors such as advanced technology, post-epidemic stimuli, and national policies, the Online-Merge-Offline (OMO) teaching mode, including the learning environment, teaching platforms, organizational structure and teaching approaches, has gained extensive attention in China. This mode not only addresses the limitations of the traditional English teaching mode in ELT, but also aligns with the learning characteristics of college students (Wang, 2021).

The OMO teaching mode is a mixed teaching mode between online teaching and offline teaching, relying on high integration between online teaching platforms and offline classrooms with information technology (Tran, 2023). In the OMO teaching mode class, students are free from time-space limitations during the English learning process; their comprehensive language learning ability is ensured (Wang, 2021). In addition, the OMO teaching mode further stimulates students' learning autonomy, and transfers the position of students from passive to active in the learning process (Xu, 2017). Meanwhile, the OMO teaching mode enhances the interactivity between students and teachers, and cultivate students' thinking ability, autonomous learning ability, and so on (Bai, 2024). Under this circumstance, Chinese EFL teachers are also expected to actively adapt their teaching roles, improve their information literacy, and have the ability to design and use informative media in the OMO teaching mode class.

Given the pros and cons of the OMO teaching mode, diverse and dynamic emotions may arise as this teaching mode is implemented in ELT practices. The transition in instruction is not merely a technical process but also requires teachers' emotional engagement, without this, the reform cannot continue (Heath & Heath, 2017). If teaching and change are full of emotional activities, it will be detrimental to ignore emotions (Hargreaves, 2012). Teachers are supposed to avoid expressing too strong or too weak emotions in a pool of daily experienced emotions; emotion regulation is crucial for them to succeed in teaching (Chen & Cheng, 2021). The Arnold 's (2011) vivid metaphor compares positive emotions to fuel and negative emotions to cold water dousing the emerging flames, which is certainly appropriate for both teaching and learning processes and applicable to all educational contexts. Consequently, the study tries to address the following research questions:

1) What emotions do Chinese EFL teachers experience in OMO teaching mode classes?;
2) What situations cause fluctuations in Chinese EFL teachers' emotions in the OMO teaching mode classes?; and
3) What strategies of emotion regulation do Chinese EFL teachers employ in OMO teaching mode classes?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Radcliffe's (2009) Pedagogy-Space-Technology (PST) theory has been developed for the design and evaluation of active learning and teaching in OMO teaching. The pedagogy in the PST framework is usually regarded as the key way to effectively facilitate teaching, learning, and evaluation in education, which relates to the teaching methods, teaching strategies, and so on. Likewise, Bieleke et al. (2023) also emphasize that a wide range of emotions are triggered by academic settings in ELT practices, relating to teaching, learning, and evaluation. In the three academic settings, emotions are ubiquitous, and they offer convenient conditions for researchers to explore emotions in pedagogy (Bieleke et al., 2023). The space in the PST framework includes online teaching platforms, offline physical environments, facilities, equipment, space layouts, and so on (Radcliffe, 2009). The resources available online or offline are vital for teachers' teaching and students' learning. For instance, online teaching platforms reside in the online space, while teaching equipment and the classroom environment belong to the offline space. The technology in the PST framework is another crucial factor in teaching and learning (Radcliffe, 2009).

Teachers' emotions refer to teachers' feelings from judgments related to the interactions with students, colleagues, principals, administrators, parents, or others in different teaching situations (Wu & Chen, 2018). Schacter and Curran (2000) define teachers' emotions as a positive or negative experience that is associated with a particular pattern of teachers' physiological activities in the process of teaching. Sutton (2005) views teachers' emotions as the various feelings teachers experience that cannot be fitted into the process of teaching. Teachers experience different emotions that are tied to their teaching professions, and these emotions can be categorized about teachers' cognition (Sutton, 2004), efficacy beliefs and goals (Kaplan et al., 2002) motivation (Pekrun et al., 2011), immunity and autonomy (Noughabi et al., 2020), self-regulation (Heydarnejad et al., 2021), and social well-being (Richards, 2022).

James (1890) classifies four basic emotions initially, love, grief, fear and rage. Six basic emotions are further identified by Ekman (2004), which include surprise and disgust in addition to the other four. Plutchik (2001) develops the "color wheel of emotions" based on Ekman's biologically and culturally driven perspectives, and suggests that the eight primary emotions are grouped on a positive or negative basis: joy versus sadness; anger versus fear; trust versus disgust; and surprise versus anticipation. Another influential category is Parrott's (2001) tree structure of basic emotions, which classifies human emotions into primary emotions, secondary emotions and tertiary emotions. Each level refines the granularity of the previous level, in which the secondary, and tertiary emotions further elaborate on the abstract primary emotions, making them more concrete and detailed.

Day in and day out, teachers constantly experience their emotions from students, colleagues, parents, administrators, and others in the emotional arenas of classrooms, institutions, and society (Cross & Hong, 2012). The interaction with different people and the effort to meet the requirements of different constituencies often provoke teachers' emotions (Godar, 1990). Moreover, Zembylas et al. (2011) highlight the intricate connection between teachers' emotions, their individual experiences, and broader social, cultural, or political frameworks. Specifically, teachers' emotions can be

embedded in the concrete events and social contexts that teachers encounter in their professions. Therefore, teachers need to have the ability to regulate their emotions in teaching to create an excellent atmosphere for students.

According to Lee et al.'s (2016) statements, regulating various emotions teachers experience in their daily teaching life is pivotal not only for students' learning outcomes, but also for teachers' professional development. In educational settings, emotion regulation is the instructors' response that is related to physics, psychology and cognition, which could be used to up-regulate or down-regulate their emotions in the process of teaching (Gong et al., 2013). Among various emotions that teachers experience in their work, they are expected to exhibit positive emotions in order to create an excellent atmosphere for students, such as joy, anticipation, and love. Teachers also are expected to be aware of the negative emotions affecting students' learning and down-regulate unpleasant emotions such as anxiety, or anger (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000). Dewaele et al. (2018) rightly illustrate that the establishment of a good atmosphere in teaching and learning mostly relies on EFL teachers' positive emotions and their ability to regulate emotions to counteract negative emotions.

Emotion, as Swain (2013) cited, is the elephant in the room, an understudied and under-explored research area. De Costa et al. (2020) consider that the investigation of how language teachers perceive and experience their emotions is a central concern of language researchers. Richards (2022) points out emotions are something fuzzy, which is difficult to study. About the research on emotion regulation, it is still in the early stage in ELT (Greenier et al., 2021). Many researchers state that it is still in its infancy to study the EFL teachers' emotional regulation and continuously call for more attention from researchers (Burić et al., 2020) Although prior research shows that teaching is relevant to emotions, and underscores the importance of emotion regulation as a key indicator of teacher competence (Gkonou & Mercer, 2018), it remains unclear what emotions teachers experience, how emotions emerge, and how such emotion regulation manifests in EFL teachers' teaching practices. Therefore, this study aims to explore the emotions expressed by Chinese EFL teachers in OMO classes, investigate the situational causes and regulation strategies in ELT.

III. METHODS

A. Participants

According to Yamane's (1973) formula in random sampling and stratified sampling, 48 full-time Chinese EFL teachers teaching GE classes with OMO teaching mode were selected for the questionnaire survey in three normal universities. Based on the results of the questionnaire analysis, a purposeful sampling approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) was implemented, 15 focal interviewees were carefully selected to represent the maximum variability in case characteristics, encompassing gender, age distribution, years of teaching GE courses, and representation from each of the three normal universities. This selection criterion was aligned with Patton's (2015) recommendation, which advocates for selecting a diverse range of cases to document the breadth of diversity and identify significant commonalities across that diversity. The sample demographics in the questionnaire and interview are listed below:

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC OF PARTICIPANTS IN QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEW

Tools	Demographics	Details	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaire	University	A	18	38
		B	16	33
		C	14	29
	Gender	Male	13	27
		Female	35	73
Interview	University	A	6	40
		B	5	33
		C	4	27
	Gender	Male	1	7
		Female	14	93

As shown in Table 1, the Chinese EFL teacher participants were from three normal universities with proportion of 38%, 33%, and 29% respectively. The female teachers outnumbered the male teachers. Likewise, in the interviews, 15 Chinese EFL teacher interviewees from each university were willing to be interviewed about the OMO teaching mode in GE classes. The distribution of interviewees was almost similar to the proportion of 40%, 33%, and 27% from each university, respectively.

B. Research Instruments

The questionnaire was adapted from Radcliff et al.'s (2009) PST theory for the OMO teaching mode. Chinese EFL teachers' emotions were explored from pedagogy-related settings, space-related settings and technology-related settings. Meanwhile, the eight basic primary emotions, including secondary emotions, and tertiary emotions, that were adapted from Plutchik's (2001) and Parrott's (2001) classification of emotions, were adopted to classify Chinese EFL teachers' emerging emotions. The Cronbach's alpha was calculated using SPSS Statistics 26, and the result was revealed to be almost 0.96, indicating high reliability since it was higher than the standard score of 0.70 (George & Mallery, 2019).

Based on the questionnaire results, the interview questions were designed to ask about emotions of Chinese EFL teacher interviewees, the situations that cause their emotions, and the strategies in OMO classes. In the semi-structured interview, the specific information was tailored to all the respondents with more open-ended or flexible-worded questions, which allowed the researcher to respond to the situation at hand. The research validity was also evaluated relying on the index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC), five experts who are proficient in social sciences and emotional areas in ELT practices were asked to evaluate the items in the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, each expert was informed of the objective of the study and was told to assign +1 to items meeting the criteria, 0 to items causing uncertainty, and -1 to items falling short of the criteria, 0 to the item that they were unsure of, and -1 to the item that did not reach the criteria. Each item must have item-objective congruence (IOC) greater than or equal to 0.5. The items that had a score of less than 0.5 were then revised according to the suggestions of the experts. Those revisions were repeated in the process until the IOC for each item reached at least 0.5.

C. Research Procedure

Generally, two main phases will be included in the process of data collection. The questionnaires were filled in by Chinese EFL teachers who taught General English using OMO teaching mode during the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024, followed by the semi-structured interviews. The developed question items in the questionnaire were uploaded onto the online crowd-sourcing platform (provided by www.wjx.cn) firstly, which is an online crowd-sourcing platform in China where questionnaire can be edited. The edited questionnaires were sent through generating links and QR codes, which also can be embed We-Chat official account to send groups or private accounts that provide functions equivalent to Amazon Mechanical Turk. The quantitative data were collected. Based on the questionnaire responses, 15 focal interviewees were carefully selected to represent the maximum variability in case characteristics, encompassing gender, age distribution, years of teaching GE courses, and representation from each of the three normal universities. This selection criterion was aligned with Patton's (2015) recommendation, which advocates for selecting a diverse range of cases to document the breadth of diversity and identify significant commonalities across that diversity. The qualitative data were obtained through interviews with 15 Chinese EFL teacher interviewees.

D. Data Analysis

Before data analysis, data probing was conducted in order to make sure that the data obtained were reliable, and then the data analysis was divided into three steps.

Firstly, the collected data in the questionnaire were mainly analyzed via SPSS Statistics 26 combined with the online platform (powered by www.wjx.cn). The descriptive statistics of percentages were computed to calculate participants' demographic information. The mean and standard deviation (SD) were calculated by the SPSS to rate the scores of participants' emotions about the OMO teaching mode in ELT. Secondly, the semi-structured interviews aimed to obtain deep insights into Chinese EFL teachers' emotions related to pedagogy, space and technology. According to Flores-López et al. (2009), emotionally recalled experiences can be labeled by emotion codes. These emotion codes are forms of descriptive coding. The first step was to divide emotions into positive emotions and negative emotions and contain codes labeling the range of concrete teacher emotions (e.g. annoyance, sadness, joy and happiness). This second step of the analysis was driven by the question: what situations cause the teachers' emotions? How did teachers regulate the emotion in a specific setting? Then the themes about the causes of teacher emotions, and the strategies of emotion regulation were concluded through analysis of the data. Finally, the emerging categories or themes were presented in the findings, and the teachers' significant utterances were sometimes quoted in the categories or themes for the conclusion of findings and discussion.

IV. RESULTS

A. Questionnaire Results

In the questionnaire, the mean and standard deviation (SD) were calculated using SPSS 26 to assess participants' emotional scores toward the OMO teaching mode in ELT practices. The results from the questionnaire are shown in Figure 1 below:
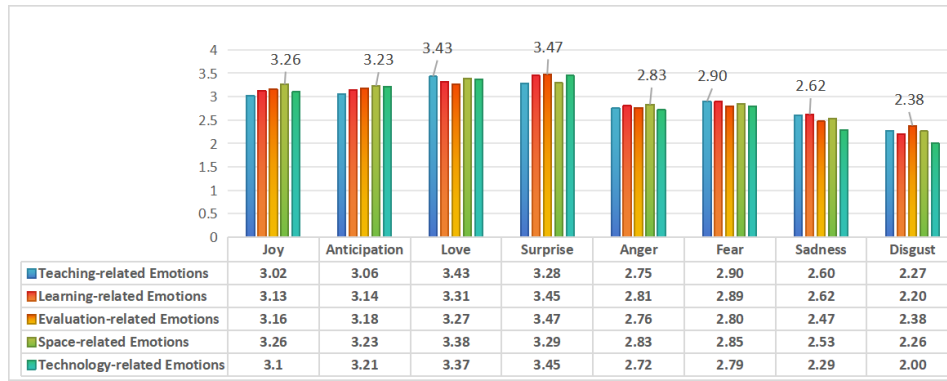
Figure 1. Chinese EFL Teachers Basic Emotions in the OMO Classes

As shown in Figure 1, Chinese EFL teachers experienced diverse and dynamic emotions, in which positively dominated emotions (M=3.26, SD=1.00) surpassed negative emotions (M=2.90, SD=1.16) when they adopted the OMO teaching mode in general education teaching. The positive emotion of love (M=3.43, SD=1.02) appeared mostly in teaching-related settings, and surprise (M=3.47, SD=0.93) emerged in learning-related settings and evaluation-related settings. Joy (M=3.26, SD=0.96) emerged frequently in the space-related settings, and anticipation (M=3.23, SD=0.96) was experienced by Chinese EFL teacher participants in technology-related settings.

In addition to the positive emotions Chinese EFL teachers experienced, the negative emotions were also revealed in the conduct of OMO teaching mode classes. Fear (M=2.90, SD=1.16) and anger (M=2.83, SD=1.05) were the most emotions that emerged in each setting, followed by sadness (M=2.62, SD=1.00). Regarding the negative emotion of disgust, Chinese EFL teacher participants didn't experience that at all.

B. Interview Findings

Following the results of the questionnaires, 15 Chinese EFL teacher interviewees were then interviewed based on their voluntary participation and convenience to obtain deep insights into their emotions, the situational causes as well as the strategies for emotion regulation they adopted. The following are the findings from the semi-structured interviews.

(a). What Emotions Do Chinese EFL Teachers Experience in OMO Teaching Mode Classes?

During the interview, 15 Chinese EFL teacher interviewees were asked to express their feelings in pedagogy-related settings, space-related settings, and technology-related settings. Most of them indicated that they experienced a spectrum of emotions with different causes, and they also employed some strategies to regulate their emotions in the OMO teaching classes. In Pedagogical settings, Chinese EFL teachers' emotions were explored from teaching-related settings, learning-related settings, and evaluation-related settings, which are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
THE CATEGORIES IN PEDAGOGICAL SETTINGS

Settings	Primary Emotions	Secondary Emotions （Participants）	Tertiary Emotions （Participants）
Teaching-related Settings			
	Joy		Satisfaction (T2, T3, T8); Enjoy (T8)
	Love	Longing (T8, T10)	Like (T3, T9); Passion (T11) Pride (T6); Happy (T3, T4)
	Anticipation	Expectation (T6, T13)	Interest (T12)
	Anger		Frustration (T4, T11, T12)
	Disgust	Boredom (T1)	Stress (T3, T4)
Learning-related Settings			
	Joy	Relief (T2, T10) Cheerfulness (T7, T9, T13)	Satisfaction (T2, T3, T8); Enjoy (T8) Pleasure (T3, T13)
	Love		Like (T3); Pride (T6); Happy (T3, T4)
	Anticipation	Expectation (T5, T13)	Interest (T2, T8)
	Anger		Frustration (T4, T5, T8, T11)
Evaluation-related Settings			
	Joy		Satisfaction (T9); Pleasure (T3, T13)
	Anticipation	Hope (T8，T9); Expectation (T8)	Hope (T8，T9); Expectation (T8)
	Surprise	Surprise (T1, T3, T6, T8，T9, T11, T13, T14, T15)	Amazement (T10, T13, T15) Astonish (T1, T7)
	Anger		Frustration (T12)

As shown in Table 2, the Chinese EFL teachers' emotions mainly emerged in teaching-related settings, learning-related settings, and evaluation-related settings in pedagogy-related settings. It can be found that the emotions Chinese EFL teachers experienced were basically in line with the findings in the questionnaire.

In teaching-related settings, love was the most common emotion that exists in teaching-related settings for Chinese EFL teacher interviewees. They were longing for the OMO teaching mode used in English language teaching, and they were happy and expressed their liking of it. Meanwhile, they were passionate about conducting the OMO teaching with pride. In learning-related settings, joy was the most frequent emotion Chinese EFL teacher interviewees reported; it can be seen that they are satisfied with the OMO teaching mode, and enjoy it because of the relief they would feel when they teach English language combined with online teaching platforms and online teaching resources. In evaluation-related settings, dynamic emotions, such as surprise and anticipation, coexist in Chinese teachers' emotions. They carried hope for their students' outcomes in evaluations; some of them felt satisfaction with their students' results in evaluation, while others may have felt frustration when they saw the outcomes of their students' tests. Different emotions and dynamic emotions appeared in different settings, which brought Chinese EFL teachers various reactions to their ELT.

In space-related settings, the emotions Chinese EFL teacher experienced were investigated from their attitude towards online teaching platforms, including the use of Zhihuishu and Unipus, and the offline equipment and environment in their own university. Chinese EFL teachers expressed diverse emotions facing the online and offline teaching platforms, which are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3
THE CATEGORIES IN SPACE-RELATED SETTINGS

Settings	Primary Emotions	Secondary Emotions （Participants）	Tertiary Emotions （Participants）
Online Teaching Platform			
	Joy	Relief (T5, T7)	Proud (T4, T9, T13); Satisfaction (T7, T13, T14); Excitement (T12, T4)
	Anticipation		Interest (T2, T5)
	Anger	Envy (T10)	Jealous (T3, T6)
Offline Equipment and Environments			
	Joy		Satisfaction (T3, T7, T13)
	Anger		Frustration (T8, T11)
	Fear	Nervousness (T1)	Worry(T1)

As shown in **Table 3**, it can be seen that the most common emotions Chinese EFL teacher interviewees experienced were joy, anticipation, and anger, respectively. Chinese EFL teachers felt proud of the online teaching platforms, which are prevalent in online teaching. They were satisfied with these teaching platforms and were excited to adopt them in their ELT practices. Interestingly, a few Chinese EFL teacher interviewees felt jealous and envious of the online teaching platforms, as they were afraid that the online teaching platforms would replace traditional teaching or be more advanced than teaching in offline classrooms. As for the offline equipment and environments provided by the institutions, some Chinese EFL teacher interviewees felt anger and fear, even though they also experienced joy.

The emotions that appeared in the technology dimension were divided into two categories: Big Data-assisted teaching and the operation of technology, as shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4
THE CATEGORIES IN TECHNOLOGY-RELATED SETTINGS

Settings	Primary Emotions	Secondary Emotions （Participants）	Tertiary Emotions （Participants）
Big Data-Assisted Teaching			
	Joy		Pride (T12); Satisfaction (T1, T4); relief (T9)
	Anticipation	Hope (T8, T13)	Curiosity (T2)
	Surprise	Surprise (T1, T3, T5, T6, T8，T9, T11, T12, T15)	Amazement (T10, T13, T15) Astonish (T1, T7)
	Anger		Frustration (T14)
	Fear		Anxiety (T2)
Operation of Technology			
	Joy		Satisfaction (T6, T10, T12); Enthusiasm (T2, T7)
	Love		Like (T11, T13)
	Surprise	Surprise (T1, T4, T6)	Amazement (T3, T4), Astonish(T12)
	Sadness	Disappointment (T5, T15)	Annoy (T3, T10)
	Fear	Anxiety (T10); Nervous (T8, T14); Worry (T9)	

As shown in **Table 4**, surprise, joy, anticipation, and love were the main positive emotions experienced by Chinese EFL teachers in technology-related settings. It was found that they were proud of big-data-assisted teaching and also satisfied with it. They felt relief when they used big-data-assisted teaching in their ELT practices. Meanwhile, they were

curious about big-data-assisted teaching and full of hope for it. Importantly, they were surprised and felt amazement when using big-data-assisted teaching. Few of the Chinese EFL teacher interviewees felt anxiety or frustration due to this type of teaching. From the aspect of technology operation, positive emotions also dominated the teaching process. Many Chinese EFL teachers were filled with satisfaction and enthusiasm when operating the technology, and they liked doing it during the teaching process. Meanwhile, they were surprised and felt amazement when operating the technology. However, some other Chinese EFL teacher interviewees felt annoyed and nervous when operating the technology in the OMO teaching mode class. They were anxious and worried about operating the technology and felt uneasy doing so. Therefore, some Chinese EFL teacher interviewees were disappointed and annoyed with the operation of technology in the OMO teaching mode class.

(b). What Situations Cause Chinese EFL Teachers' Emotions to Fluctuate in the OMO Teaching Mode Classes?

During the interview, 15 Chinese EFL teachers talked about the situational causes that led to the emergence of their emotions when they adopted the OMO teaching mode in GE teaching and pointed out that their lives interacted with teachers themselves, students, principals, colleagues, policymakers, and even culture, all of which would lead to their various emotions. Figure 2 presents the findings of the situations that cause Chinese EFL teachers' emotions when they encounter the OMO teaching mode in GE teaching.
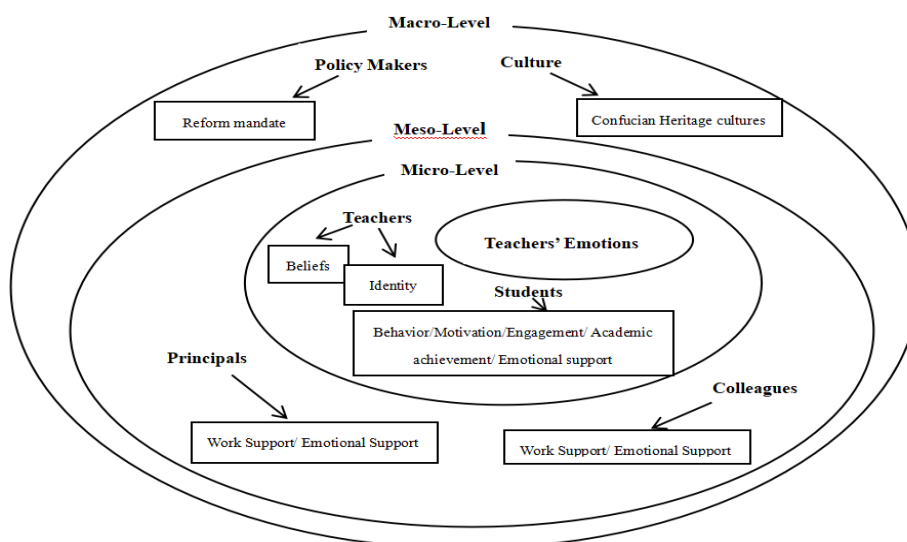

Figure 2. Summaries of Situational Causes for Chinese EFL Teachers' Emotions

As Figure 2 shows, the situations that cause Chinese EFL teachers' emotions can be categorized into three levels: the micro-level in the classroom, including teachers' professional identities and beliefs, as well as students' learning engagement, and academic achievements; the meso-level in institutions, such as work support and emotional support from colleagues and principals, and the macro-level in society, including policy makers' reform mandate and cultural factors, such as the exam-oriented culture and Confucian heritage culture in China.

1. Situational Causes From Teachers and Students

The overarching finding was that all Chinese EFL teachers who participated in this study pointed out their emotions were mostly triggered by students and themselves in teaching and learning situations. Teachers' identities and beliefs were crucial factors contributing to their positive or negative emotions. T3 reported that her identity as a facilitator drives her to be highly responsible and committed to her job regardless of the teaching mode. For example:

"*As a facilitator of language teaching, I strongly identify with my role... However, my role is not merely to deliver content but also to inspire, motivate, and guide students toward their learning goals... (silence a moment) ...for the Online-Merge-Offline mode, I believe that it's my responsibility to adapt my teaching style and strategies to meet the needs of students, regardless of the teaching mode*" (T3- teachers' identity and belief).

On the other hand, students' motivation, learning engagement, academic achievements, and emotional support are also vital factors that trigger Chinese EFL teachers' emotions. T8 mentioned that students' high motivations inspire him more engaged in his teaching.

"*Some students showed high level of motivation and excitement for learning English with the new teaching mode(excited)... it fills me with enthusiasm and energy...*" (T8-students' learning motivation)

However, T10 was the opposite, she thought students were disinterested in English learning regardless of the teaching mode, it can be challenging for her to maintain her own excitement and momentum:

"*Students seem disinterested or unmotivated in English learning regardless of teaching mode, it can be challenging for me to maintain my own excitement and momentum*" (T10- students' learning motivation)

Most Chinese EFL teachers discussed how students' learning engagement also influenced their emotions in various ways. For instance, students' engaging in discussions, asking questions, offering their opinions, and participating in role-plays could lead to positive emotions. Conversely, students' unsatisfactory behavior was a direct factor in triggering negative emotions. For example:

"*In OMO teaching mode class, some students positively ask questions, offer their opinions with me in online platform, or engage in role-plays in offline class, it fills me with a sense of satisfaction and excitement.*" (T11-students' learning engagement)

Additionally, students' academic progress and achievement not only provoked EFL teachers' emotions but also provided emotional support. For instance:

"*When they express appreciation for my efforts, share their personal stories, or seek advice and guidance, it makes me feel valued and connected to them*" (T5-students' emotional support)

In summary, teachers' beliefs and identities, students' behavior, motivation, learning engagement, academic achievements, and emotional support have profound impacts on Chinese EFL teachers' emotions in OMO teaching mode class. From the micro perspective, teachers' emotions were triggered by themselves and students in their daily teaching and learning activities.

2. Situational Causes From Principals and Colleagues

In addition to interacting with students who play the main roles in teachers' lives, Chinese EFL teachers also intersect with their colleagues and principals. Most of the interviewees viewed that their emotions were also derived from work support and emotional support from their colleagues and principals in institutions. T6 expressed that the principals' work support was vital for her to implement the new teaching mode, such as teacher training and development, curricular and pedagogical guidance, principals' recognition and appreciation, understanding, and encouragement. For example:

"Receiving *acknowledgment and appreciation for the efforts put into teaching in this new mode is extremely motivating. It reminds me that my work is valued and makes me feel more engaged and committed to my role.*" (T9- principals' emotional support)

Furthermore, work support and emotional support from colleagues are other factors influencing Chinese EFL teachers' emotions. This work support from colleagues can be concluded as sharing teaching resources and teaching materials, as well as peer feedback. As one teacher addressed:

"*Colleagues who are willing to share their materials and resources can greatly ease the burden of finding and preparing content... This support would allow me to focus more on teaching and make me feel relief.*" (T7-colleagues' work support)

At the same time, the emotional support from colleagues was also an invaluable spiritual solace for Chinese EFL teachers, if they were willing to share experiences and demonstrate solidarity, as well as having a positive outlook and encouragement, and so on. Likewise, T2 elaborated:

"Having *colleagues with a positive outlook and encouraging attitude would be contagious...this would rub off on me, keeping me motivated and optimistic even during difficult times.*" (T13-colleagues' emotional support)

In conclusion, both work support and emotional support from principals and colleagues are crucial for teachers utilizing the new OMO teaching mode, and they trigger various emotions in teachers. They help create a supportive and collaborative environment that promotes teachers' well-being and enhances their ability to deliver effective and engaging lessons to students.

3. Situational Causes From Policy Makers and Confucian Culture

From the macro level, Chinese EFL teachers' emotions could be triggered by the reform mandate from policymakers, and the Confucian heritage culture. Teachers viewed the reform policy from different perspectives, and various emotions emerged based on their understanding of the educational policy. For example:

"*From past teaching mode to the new teaching mode, it emphasizes innovation and the integration of technology into education; it could inspire excitement and anticipation within me*" (T4-Policy makers' reform mandate).

However, some Chinese EFL teachers had the opposite viewpoints about the OMO teaching mode; they were worried and felt frustrated about it.

"Reform *mandate feel imposed from the top down, without consideration of the practical realities and challenges faced by teachers...this could lead to feelings of frustration.*" (T1-policy makers' reform mandate)

Noticeably, the Confucian heritage culture, which is hidden in each Chinese person's heart, including Chinese teachers, influences their behavior and thoughts deeply, in this culture; Chinese EFL teachers all have the characteristics of patience, calmness, harmoniousness, unity-mindedness, and cooperation. When they encountered difficulties, those characteristics manifested themselves in regulating their emotions. T13 commented,

"Harmony *promotes a positive classroom environment where students and teachers work together to achieve common goals. This sense of unity and cooperation foster me to create a positive emotional atmosphere that is conducive to teaching and learning.*" (T13-Confucian heritage culture)

Overall, Chinese EFL teachers' emotional response to the new teaching mode can be triggered by their understanding of reform policies. Additionally, the Confucian heritage culture has had an impact on Chinese EFL teachers' emotions, since their emotions are shaped by their interpretation and experiences, as well as the specific cultural context within which they operate.

(c). What Strategies of Emotion Regulation Do Chinese EFL Teachers Employ When They Encounter the Emotions in ELT Practices?

Through the in-depth interviews and analysis of the interview content, it was concluded that all the Chinese EFL teachers (n=15) focused on using self-regulation and others' assistance to regulate their emotions when facing various emotions in the OMO teaching mode classes. Findings identified a series of emotion regulation strategies in different settings, including teaching-related settings, learning-related settings, assessment-related settings, space-related settings, and technology-related settings which are shown in Table 5 as follows.

TABLE 5
STRATEGY AND SUB-STRATEGY OF EMOTION REGULATION IN OMO CLASSES

Primary Strategy	Sub-strategy	Participants (Settings)
Situation Selection	● Selecting the OMO teaching mode	(**T15**: Teaching-related Settings)
	● Selecting a hierarchical but friendly relationship	(**T3**: Learning-related Settings)
	● Avoiding conflict with students	(**T9**: Teaching-related Settings)
	● Selecting modes of class interaction	(**T4**: Teaching-related Settings)
Situation Modification	● Reflecting and Improving	(**T3**: Teaching-related Settings; **T6**: Evaluation-related Settings)
	● Consulting with students	(**T1**: Teaching-related Settings;
	● Negotiating with principals	**T12**: Technology-related Settings)
	● Consulting with Colleagues	(**T14**: Learning-related Settings)
Attention Deployment	● Diverting attention to other things	
	1) Internally diverting attention	(**T13**: Evaluation-related Settings; **T14**: Learning-related Settings)
	2) Externally diverting attention	(**T5**: Teaching-related Settings)
Reappraisal	● Reappraising students' misbehavior	(**T9**: Learning-related Settings; **T2**: Evaluation-related Settings; **T15**: Learning-related Setting; **T7**: Teaching-related settings; **T8**: Teaching-related Setting; **T1**: Evaluation-related Settings)
	● Reappraising students' unsatisfactory performance	(**T6**: Evaluation-related Settings; **T10**: Technology-related Settings; **T11**: Learning-related Settings)
Suppression	● Inhibiting negative Emotions	(**T11**: Learning-related Settings;
	● Faking	(**T2**: Teaching-related Settings)
	● Masking	(**T1**: Technology-related Settings; **T15**: Evaluation-related Settings)
Seeking Social Support	● Outpouring negative emotions to others	(**T6**: Learning-related Settings)
	● Seeking help from other Colleagues.	(**T7**: Teaching-related Settings)

As shown in **Table 5**, in the strategies of emotion regulation, Chinese EFL teacher interviewees most often adopted reappraisal to regulate emotions they encountered in the OMO teaching mode class. These strategies of emotion regulation were usually adopted in all settings except for space-related settings. EFL students' misbehavior and unsatisfactory performance were the two factors that prompted Chinese EFL teacher interviewees to reappraise their emotions so that they could teach positively. By changing their previous cognition, they would feel better and serve the teaching procedures better. T9 pointed out:

"*I know some students copied other's assignments, it was not right. However, I was wondering if they didn't give up themselves. I had to comfort myself and save the face for students, so I didn't name and criticize them...*" (T9: learning-related Settings)

Additionally, situational modification was also frequently employed by Chinese EFL teacher interviewees as an emotion regulation strategy. It was usually used to reduce negative emotions evoked in evaluation-related settings and learning-related settings. T6 expressed:

"*I also reflect myself and change my tactics about the students' low scores in assessments...maybe it was only my high expectation for them.*" (T6: evaluation-related Settings)

Moreover, Chinese EFL teacher interviewees also employed situation selection to manage their relationships with students and cope with the negative emotions caused by EFL students' learning results, whether in online or offline classes. T3 commented:

"*Even though I am an instructor in the OMO teaching mode class, we could be friends in private, students are willing to share their learning experiences and happy moments with me, which makes me comfortable.*" (T3: learning-related Settings)

Chinese EFL teachers selected a hierarchical but friendly teacher-student relationship in their daily teaching, which could make their teaching and learning go smoothly. As Chinese EFL teachers, suppression was also the usual emotion regulation they employed in the process of the OMO teaching mode. They inhibited, masked, or faked their negative emotions in order to make their teaching proceed smoothly. T11 pointed out:

"*Anyway, I should maintain stable emotions, as a university teacher, I shouldn't lose my temper easily for students' behavior.*" (T11: learning-related Settings)

In addition, attention deployment and seeking social support were also part of the strategies that Chinese EFL teacher interviewees employed for emotion regulation. T6 also commented:

"*Students' cheating on the assignments makes me angry, I would rather talk about this with my colleagues, and ask whether the same situation happened in their class, the complaining makes me feel better.*" (T6: learning-related Settings)

Therefore, findings identified a series of emotion regulation strategies in different settings, including teaching-related settings, learning-related settings, assessment-related settings, space-related settings, and technology-related settings. Reappraisal and situation modification were the most commonly employed emotion regulation strategies by EFL teachers when they encountered emotions, and seeking social support and attention deployment were the least adopted strategies by EFL teachers in the OMO teaching mode class.

V. DISCUSSION

Based on a holistic analysis of the emotions experienced by Chinese EFL teachers in OMO classes, it was found that they predominantly experienced a wide range of positive, diverse, and dynamic emotions. This aligns with previous research indicating that numerous internal or external factors- such as teaching conditions, facilities, resources, equipment and teacher-students interactions-can influence EFL teachers' emotional states (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Tsang and Jiang (2018) further demonstrated that different teaching and learning contexts could create either favorable or unfavorable conditions for teaching, which in turn affects the emotional experience of teaching. It is true that teachers can experience different types of emotion, mainly falling into the dimensions of positive emotions and negative emotions: positive emotions, such as happiness, excitement, satisfaction, and pride; and negative emotions, including sadness, disappointment, anger, anxiety, and fear, are part of the teaching and learning process (Day & Lee, 2011). Gkonou and Mercer (2018) reported that teachers experience a mix of negative emotions alongside some positive emotions, and Richards (2022) showed that the experience of teaching can involve both positive and negative emotions.

Firstly, Chinese EFL teachers were found to be prone to experiencing diverse emotions in various settings. In teaching-related settings, love was the most common emotion that emerged in Chinese EFL teachers; they were filled with love in their teaching. This aligns with Lanas and Zembylas' (2015) conceptualization of love as praxis for EFL teachers, suggesting that love involves understanding others and a willingness to connect with students. According to Fredrickson (2013), these micro-moments of love can enhance mutual care and empathy between teachers and students. Thus, by engaging in building positive emotions, both parties develop rapport and a close social bond with each other in the teaching and learning process. Surprise was the most common emotion Chinese EFL teachers had in students' learning-related settings, evaluation settings and technology-related settings in the OMO teaching mode class. This diverges from the perspective that joy, a deeper feeling than happiness, should characterize the learning and teaching experience when goals are met (Ayob & Omidire, 2021). This highlights the complex interplay of emotions in the modern emotional landscape and underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of how such emotions influence teaching and learning.

In addition, the situational causes triggered Chinese EFL teachers' emotions vary from micro level to macro level, which is consistent with Schutz et al.'s (2006) statement, emotions are socially constructed, and emerge with conscious or unconscious judgments in the social-historical contexts. As educators, most Chinese EFL teachers reported that they were committed to their teaching and students' learning regardless of the teaching mode. Teachers' emotions were also triggered by students' behavior, learning engagement, and academic achievement, just as showcased in Mckellar et al.'s (2020) study, teachers' emotions could be influenced by students' engagement, individualized feedback, and classroom interaction. Furthermore, Chinese EFL teachers' emotions also originated from work support and emotional support from principals and colleagues, which aligns with (Cross & Hong, 2012) statement that teachers constantly experience their emotions from students, colleagues, parents, administrators, and others in the emotional arenas of classroom, institutions and society. Chinese EFL teachers' emotions were also influenced by their educator identity, which features an awareness of lifelong learning and a strong sense of responsibility towards students. These beliefs and identities were from the Confucian heritage cultures in China, in which teachers are regarded as sages who are "insatiable in learning" (xue er bu yan) and "tireless in teaching" (hui ren bu juan) (Mei et al., 2016). This is also in line with Xiao et al.'s (2023) statement that the Confucian heritage cultures influence the construction of teacher identity.

Moreover, Chinese EFL teachers employed different emotion regulation strategies in the OMO teaching mode class, in which reappraisal can mostly regulate teachers' emotions by reshaping their conceptions of teaching and learning, which aligns with earlier findings that reappraisal was more frequently used than attention deployment to regulate emotions towards student misbehavior and performance (Taxer & Gross, 2018). Reappraisal in this study indicated that Chinese EFL teachers reappraised students' misbehavior or students' unsatisfactory performance in learning, which joins Gross's (2015) definition of altering the emotional impact of a situation by changing an individual's appraisal of the situation and Sutton's (2004) statement that teachers use reappraisal to reinterpret the relevance of student misconduct. Chinese EFL teachers also diverted their negative emotions externally by going out to have some delicious food or doing exercises, doing yoga, and even sleeping, which is consistent with Bennett et al.'s (2024) finding that distraction has been found to lead to muted emotional responses to negative emotion eliciting stimuli.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study explored the emotions Chinese EFL teachers expressed in OMO classes, investigated the situational causes of the emergence of these emotions, and strategies for emotion regulation that EFL teachers employ in their ELT practices. A spectrum of emotions were experienced by teachers, with positive emotions prevailing, particularly in GE classes; the situational triggers encompassed classroom dynamics, institutional factors, and social influences; Chinese EFL teachers primarily employed appraisal to regulate their emotions, followed by situation modification and situation. This study underscores the importance of emotional awareness for both teachers' professional development and students' learning achievement in ELT practices; it encourages Chinese EFL teachers to recognize the significance of their emotions in teaching EFL and offers valuable insights for educators and administrators into supporting teachers' emotional well-being and professional growth.

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