Exploring Emotional Preparedness of Novice English Teachers Using Grounded Theory in China

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Abstract

Evolving educational paradigms and cultural expectations present distinct challenges for novice English teachers. This study explores the crucial role of emotional preparedness in novice English teachers, particularly in China, where gaps in understanding and support are evident. Employing a qualitative grounded theory approach, the study identifies key emotional management skills and institutional support factors via in-depth interviews, incorporating a psycho-social framework to explore how emotional regulation and self-awareness are crucial for teacher resilience and effectiveness. The findings underline the importance of personal emotional management skills, such as self-awareness and emotional regulation, alongside institutional support mechanisms, including professional development and peer networks. The research underscores the need for targeted training programmes that enhance personal and organisational support to boost teachers' emotional resilience. These insights are pivotal for developing interventions that improve novice teachers' emotional capabilities, promoting a more supportive educational milieu in China.

Keywords: emotional preparedness; novice English teachers; grounded theory; psychosocial framework

Introduction

Investigating the emotional preparedness of novice English teachers in China gains urgency as the number of English learners worldwide, as seen in Figure 1 below, is currently at approximately 1.5 billion. Specifically in China, where English language learners are estimated at 400 million, the contrast between the vast number of learners and the country's low English proficiency—categorised as "Low" by the English Proficiency Index with less than 1% of the population considered proficient—underscores the need for enhanced instructional efficacy. Additionally, the shift towards understanding the emotional preparedness of novice English teachers represents a significant evolution in English language teaching (ELT), transitioning from focusing solely on linguistics (Nguyen 2024; Yan 2023). Furthermore, pedagogical skills (Liu, Yan, and Fu 2022; Zhou and Thompson 2023) incorporate emotional intelligence (Pan, Wang, and Derakhshan 2023; Zhi and Wang 2023) and psychological resilience (AlGhamdi 2024; Xin and Zhang 2024). This development is evidenced by a surge in scholarly work, with a remarkable increase in research, articles, and books dedicated to this area. This broadening of focus reflects the field's adaptive response to the multifaceted challenges of global language education, highlighting the importance of emotional competencies alongside traditional teaching skills.
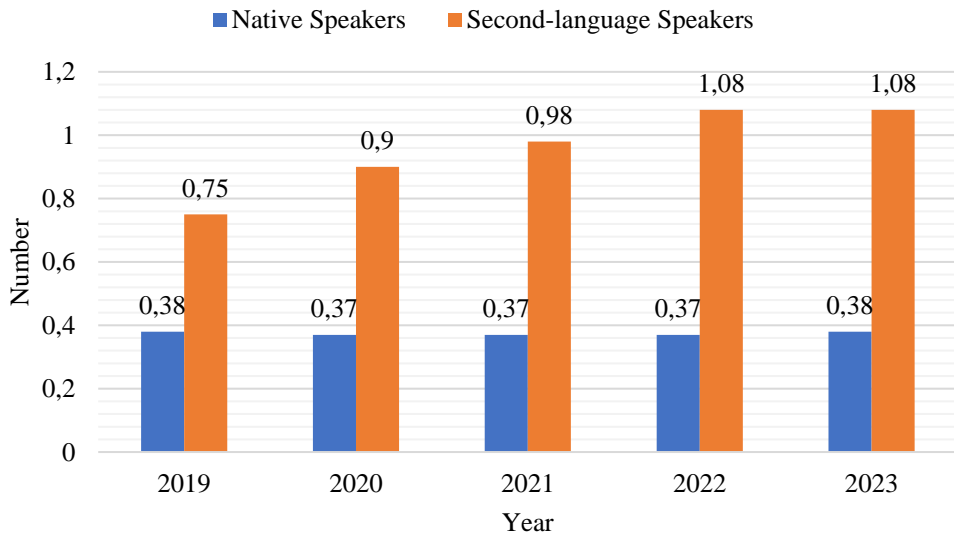

Figure 1: The most spoken languages by number worldwide in 2023

Researchers have examined the emotional preparedness of novice English teachers in various geographical settings from Western countries, such as the United States (Hillman et al. 2024; Song and Valentine 2024), Spain (Hebebci and Ozer 2023; Skelly and Estrada-Chichon 2021), and Sweden (Grundberg, Sandberg, and Craftman 2021; Petersson, Årestedt, and Birgegård 2022). Our study investigates this issue in a province in China.

Only a few studies compiled in the literature review appear to examine the emotional elements recognised in the literature as being encountered by novice English teachers. Current research on emotional preparedness for novice teachers has predominantly concentrated on overarching themes of emotional intelligence, such as self-awareness (Dai, Huang, and Yuan 2023; Thanh Thao et al. 2024) and motivation (Ertan and Kocadere 2024; Kirkpatrick, Vafadar, and Mohebbi 2024), and its general application in other disciplines (Mangraviti 2024; Seyyedi, Bohlouli, and Oskoee 2023). While these foundational studies have laid the groundwork for understanding the importance of emotional intelligence in teaching, they need to address the nuanced factors that specifically impact novice English teachers in China. Additionally, I (first author) chose this topic for personal and academic reasons. My experience and my observations of friends transitioning to teaching revealed a gap between academic training and classroom realities, particularly the emotional challenges. This unpreparedness impacted teaching efficacy and made the transition stressful.

This study uses a grounded theory (GT) approach to explore the factors influencing the emotional preparedness of novice English teachers at Chinese universities. Focusing solely on novice teachers, it seeks to understand their experiences, emotional challenges, and how they navigate their early years in the profession. Data was collected through interviews, observations, and focus groups, allowing for a rich exploration of how emotional preparedness is interwoven with social interactions and institutional contexts. This approach broadens the theoretical understanding of emotional preparedness and provides novel insights into the psycho-social dynamics affecting novice teachers. By exploring emotions as a subset of broader psycho-social matrices, the study offers a theory-based understanding of novice teachers' challenges and coping strategies, potentially inspiring further research and innovative support mechanisms globally.

Literature Review

A structured search strategy was implemented using the Web of Science Core Collection for the literature review. To ensure exhaustive coverage, the search employed a detailed Boolean logic formula: "novice English teacher" OR "new English teacher" OR "newly-hired English teacher" OR "first year English teacher" in topic AND "grounded theory" OR "GT" OR "grounded approach", initially retrieving 866 results. This pool excluded non-research articles such as reviews and conference proceedings, narrowing the results to 776 primary research articles. The number of articles in the last five years can be seen in Figure 2. The 100 articles with the highest impact factors were selected for full-text review to ensure the inclusion of the most impactful studies. This selective process focused on identifying articles that directly addressed the intersection of emotional readiness and teaching practices among English teachers, using grounded theory as a methodological framework. Examples of insights can be seen in Table 1. This systematic approach helped refine the scope and depth of the literature review, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of the field.
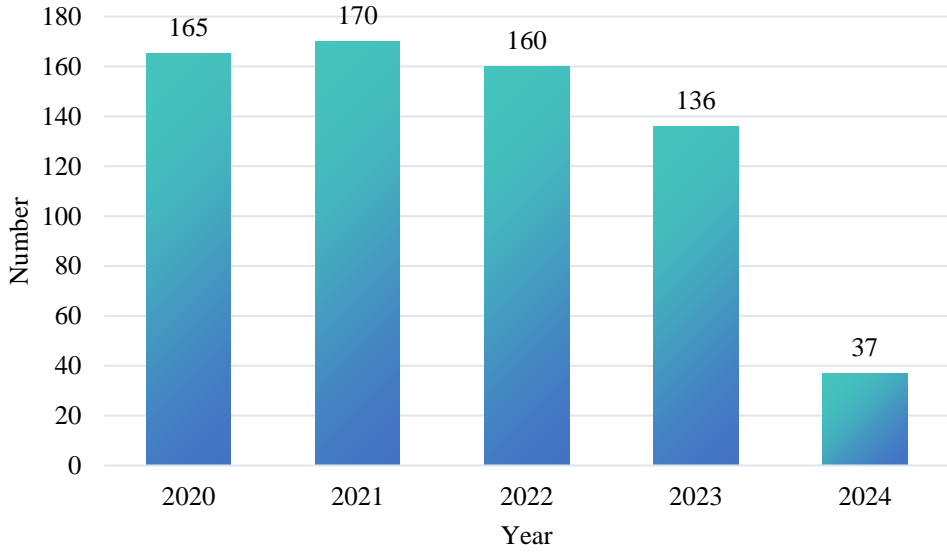
Figure 2: Article numbers by year

Table 1: Framework, factors, method, and findings of primary source

Source	Framework	Factors	Method	Finding
Nazari and Karimpour (2023)	Adopted a qualitative approach to examine the connection between English language teachers' perspectives, emotions, and identities	Personal-psychological, pedagogical, and institutional reasons	Phenomenological narrative study	Teachers associated prompt-related emotions with personal-psychological, pedagogical, and institutional reasons, shaping their feelings and identities.

Sadoughi and Hejazi (2021)	The study focuses on the mediating role of positive emotions in the relationship between teacher support and academic engagement among Iranian EFL (English as a foreign language) learners.	Academic engagement and teacher support	Structural equation modelling	Perceived teacher support could directly and positively affect academic engagement. Additionally, positive emotions mediated the relationship between teacher support and educational engagement.
Dewaele and Li (2021)	To examine the complex relationships between perceived teacher enthusiasm, emotions (enjoyment and boredom), and social-behavioural learning engagement	Enjoyment and boredom	Mixed method	There are correlations between perceived teacher enthusiasm, student enjoyment, boredom, and social-behavioural learning engagement.
Greenier, Derakhshan, and Fathi (2021)	Investigated the role of emotion regulation and psychological well-being as predictors of work engagement	Work engagement, psychological well-being	Sequential explanatory mixed methods	Both emotion regulation and psychological well-being significantly predicted work engagement for the whole sample of British and Iranian teachers.
Fan and Wang (2022)	Inspected the role of well-being and emotion regulation in Chinese EFL teachers' professional success	Well-being, emotion regulation	Structural equation modelling	Both well-being and emotion regulation highly influenced Chinese EFL teachers' professional success.

Grounded Theory in English Education

Grounded Theory (GT) is a qualitative research method focused on deriving theories from empirical data without preconceived hypotheses (Thornberg 2012). In English education in China, this methodology has been utilised to enhance professional development by identifying key issues and proposing solutions (Jiang 2022; Liang, Li, and Chik 2022; Liu and Tseng 2021; Luo et al. 2023). For instance, in the rural regions of southwest Guangxi (Song and Xiao 2021), GT was employed to address challenges such as teacher shortages and poor training modes, leading to recommendations for developing an excellent teacher team with localised training programmes. Additionally, a teaching methodology has been analysed using GT in modern college English Writing classes, highlighting its effectiveness in promoting student engagement, autonomy, and learning outcomes (Chong 2019; Jin 2023). Also, Luo (2021) conducted a study focusing on evaluative comments on the quality of language massive open online courses (MOOCs) from learners' perspectives with GT. GT has also been applied to the usefulness of Seewo interactive whiteboards for ESL (English as a second language) instruction (Luo et al. 2023), micro-level language policy and planning in English education (Liang, Li, and Chik 2022), and the role of English in China's matchmaking market (Zhao and Shen 2024). This body of research underscores GT's versatility in addressing varied educational challenges. It highlights its potential to significantly impact educational theory and practice by linking empirical findings directly with pedagogical innovations.

GT is a valuable research theory in English education across various global contexts, emphasising its importance beyond China (Cole and Duffy 2024; Haidar 2017; Hicks 2019; Lum, Dowedoff, and Englander 2016; Yao et al. 2021). For instance, in the United Kingdom, Cole and Duffy (2024) used a constructivist grounded theory approach to explore trainee teachers' perceptions of their teaching and learning experiences during university-based teacher education programmes. Similarly, Lum, Dowedoff, and Englander (2016) applied GT in Canada to document new immigrants' language proficiency challenges, providing a framework for understanding language acquisition barriers and educational needs. Furthermore, in Pakistan, Haidar (2017) employed a grounded theory design to investigate access to English education across different schools, revealing critical insights into the disparities and opportunities within the educational system. Besides, English education with GT has been conducted in Iran, Malaysia, and Germany (Kostareva et al. 2022; Sauter, Kikhia, and Loss 2022). These examples collectively demonstrate how GT is instrumental in developing a comprehensive understanding of various educational phenomena, making it a cornerstone for research in English education worldwide.

GT has been widely applied in English education research across various countries, demonstrating significant insights into teaching practices and learning processes. However, a comparative review highlights a substantial disparity in the application of GT between China and other countries. For example, studies from the United Kingdom,

Canada, and Pakistan showcase extensive use of GT to explore diverse issues ranging from teacher perceptions during training to language challenges faced by immigrants and access to education. These studies exemplify how GT helps form actionable strategies based on deep, contextual understandings of educational phenomena. In contrast, the adoption of GT in China, especially in English education, needs to be improved and made more cohesive. While there are some instances of its application, as noted in smaller, localised studies, the scale and integration of GT into broader educational research and practice in China are different from the level seen in other regions. Regarding novice English teachers, however, related research in China is still needed, and only three articles have been done in different countries.

Emotional Preparedness in Novice English Teachers

The psycho-social framework, originating early in professional practice (Connelly, Tuttle Prince, and Hayden 2023), offers a distinctive lens for examining the emotional preparedness of novice English teachers in China. This approach integrates personal emotions with broader social and psychological contexts, revealing how these factors collectively influence teaching dynamics. Research on the emotional preparedness of novice English teachers in China is expanding. Studies such as Yao et al.'s (2023) have contributed by developing scales to measure specific emotional aspects such as feedback-giving emotions in university English writing teachers, revealing that professional training has minimal influence on these emotional dynamics. Similarly, Li (2021) has explored how foreign language teachers can overcome communication barriers with Chinese students through better recognition and adjustment of emotional expressions, such as facial expressions and vocal emotions, to improve teaching effectiveness. Further adding to this body of knowledge, Yip, Huang, and Teng (2022) have identified the impact of teaching outcomes on teachers' emotions and role performance. Meanwhile, Sun and Yang (2021) observed significant fluctuations in teacher emotions over time, affected by personal and contextual factors and teachers' emotional capacities. Together, these studies sketch how emotions are integral to teaching efficacy and educator experiences in China's educational settings, suggesting a growing need to understand and support emotional dynamics in teaching environments.

Outside China, emotional preparedness in English education has been explored through diverse studies worldwide, each contributing unique insights into how emotions influence teaching practices. In the United States, Dunn (2021) examines changes in English language arts instruction following personal loss among teachers, highlighting how emotional norms perceived within the profession can shape responses to literature. Meanwhile, in Turkey, studies such as those by Ghyasi and Gurbuz (2023) have probed emotional labour, exploring how it emerges in teaching contexts and its impact on teacher identity construction over time. In England, research by Dewaele and Wu (2021) assesses emotional labour strategies, focusing on their preferences and correlations with various professional and personal characteristics. Lastly, in Australia, Khawaja and

Dhushyanthakumar (2020) emphasise the utility of the strengths and difficulties questionnaire in assessing emotional and behavioural disorders, showcasing its application across different respondents, including children, parents, and teachers. These studies underscore the global significance of understanding emotional factors in education, revealing shared and unique challenges across different cultural and institutional contexts.

In comparison, although China's research on the emotional readiness of novice English teachers is expanding, it still needs to gain the breadth and depth seen internationally. This gap underscores a vital area for future research, highlighting the need to align China's educational practices with global standards. This study seeks to deepen the understanding of emotional preparedness in these teachers, aiming to improve teaching effectiveness and student engagement. It also strives to offer insights that could enhance global educational strategies.

Methodology

In this study, the application of GT includes data collection and analysis. Data collection refers to semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and focus groups. At the same time, data analysis consists of three steps: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Figure 3 shows the GT approach's process. Theory saturation and expert testing were also conducted to ensure that the core categories and theoretical system were saturated.
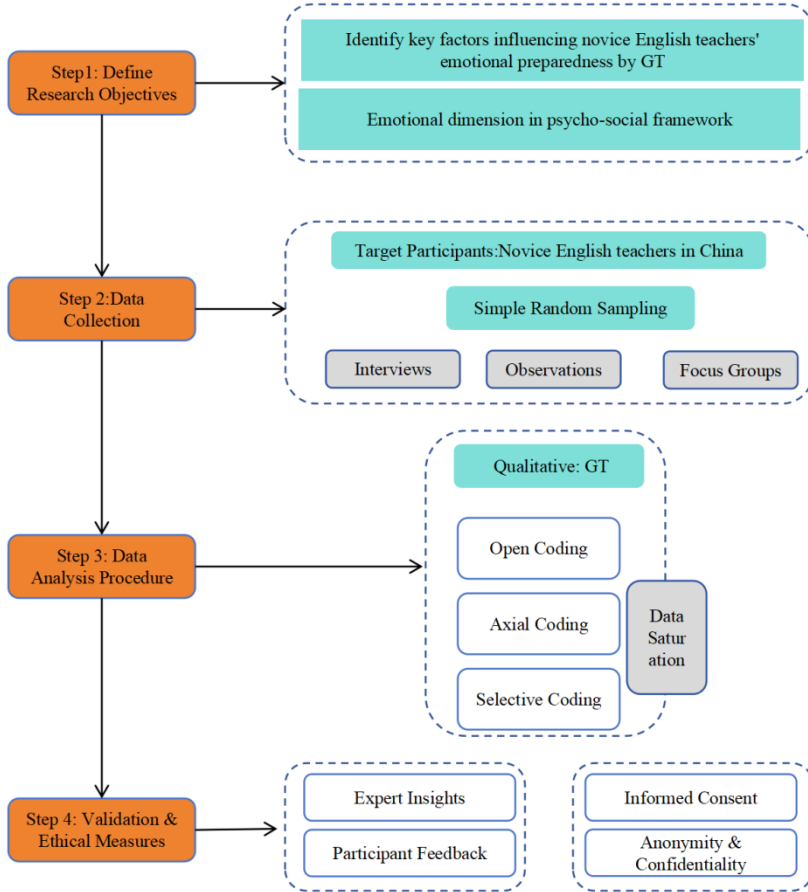
Figure 3: Research design

Data Collection

The data collection process encompasses semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups, allowing for a multifaceted exploration of the emotional preparedness of novice English teachers in China. Table 2 presents the interview questions designed to explore various aspects of emotional preparedness among novice English teachers.

Table 2: Semi-structured interview questions

Number	Interview Questions
Q1	Can you describe a typical day in your teaching role?
Q2	What challenges have you faced in managing classroom emotions?
Q3	How do you prepare yourself emotionally before a class?
Q4	Can you share an experience where you felt particularly effective or ineffective due to your emotional state?
Q5	How do you handle stress and pressure related to teaching?
Q6	What support systems do you have in place for emotional challenges?
Q7	In what ways do you think your emotional readiness impacts your teaching effectiveness?
Q8	How do you perceive the role of emotions in teaching and learning?
Q9	Have there been instances where you felt unprepared emotionally for the demands of teaching? How did you cope?
Q10	What training or resources would better prepare you emotionally for teaching?
Q11	How do you deal with the emotional aspects of student interactions?
Q12	Can you describe how your emotions have evolved over your teaching career?
Q13	What strategies have you found most helpful in managing your emotions while teaching?

Understanding the background and characteristics of the participants is crucial for data collection. Table 3 provides a detailed descriptive analysis of the participants, shedding light on their demographics, educational background, and teaching experiences.

Table 3: Summarised demographic profile of participants

Gender	No.	Teaching Years	No.	Degree	No.	Number of Students in Class	No.
Male	7	Less than 1 year	9	Master's degree	11	Less than 20	3
Female	8	1–2 years	6	Doctoral degree	4	20 or more	12

Grounded Theory Procedures

Open coding involves dissecting the raw data to uncover distinct ideas or properties. For example, during interviews, a novice teacher might describe feeling overwhelmed by student questions, which can be coded under "classroom stressors". Another might talk about the relief felt when students understand a concept, which could be coded as "teaching satisfaction". This process allows the researcher to identify a wide range of emotions and experiences that novice English teachers face, categorising these initial insights for deeper exploration. Following the initial categorisation, axial coding helps to find connections between the codes. For instance, "classroom stressors" might be linked with "low self-efficacy" and "high job dissatisfaction", suggesting a pattern that

emotional challenges in managing classroom dynamics can affect overall job perception. Similarly, "teaching satisfaction" might correlate with "high emotional resilience" and "positive student feedback", indicating how positive classroom experiences bolster teacher morale. In the final synthesis phase, selective coding integrates the categories into a comprehensive framework. For this study, emotional readiness might be organised into core categories such as "emotional awareness", "stress management techniques", "adaptive emotional responses", "support system reliance", and "professional identity development". These categories help to construct a detailed picture of how novice teachers manage their emotions. However, there is a need to explore the complexity of multiple relationships further and to capture the nature of emotional readiness.

Theoretical Saturation

Theory saturation was tested using five of the 100 interview transcripts to verify the completeness and generalisability of the findings. Theory saturation testing entails re-analysing data until no new themes or categories emerge, ensuring the data collection is complete. For this purpose, the selected transcripts underwent a detailed re-coding process, including open, axial, and selective coding, to compare with the initial analysis outcomes. The saturation test confirmed that no additional concepts were identified beyond those already discovered, indicating that the theoretical framework was adequately robust. To further validate the findings, the coding results were reviewed by three educational experts—two senior teachers and one professor specialising in English education. Their evaluation confirmed that the coding was logical and factually accurate, underscoring the reliability and representativeness of the research conclusions.

Results and Discussion

Results

The results derived from the grounded theory analysis offer detailed insights into the factors impacting novice English teachers' emotional preparedness. Table 4 and the Nvivo screenshots in Figure 4 visually encapsulate the key themes and categories identified through meticulous coding and synthesis processes.
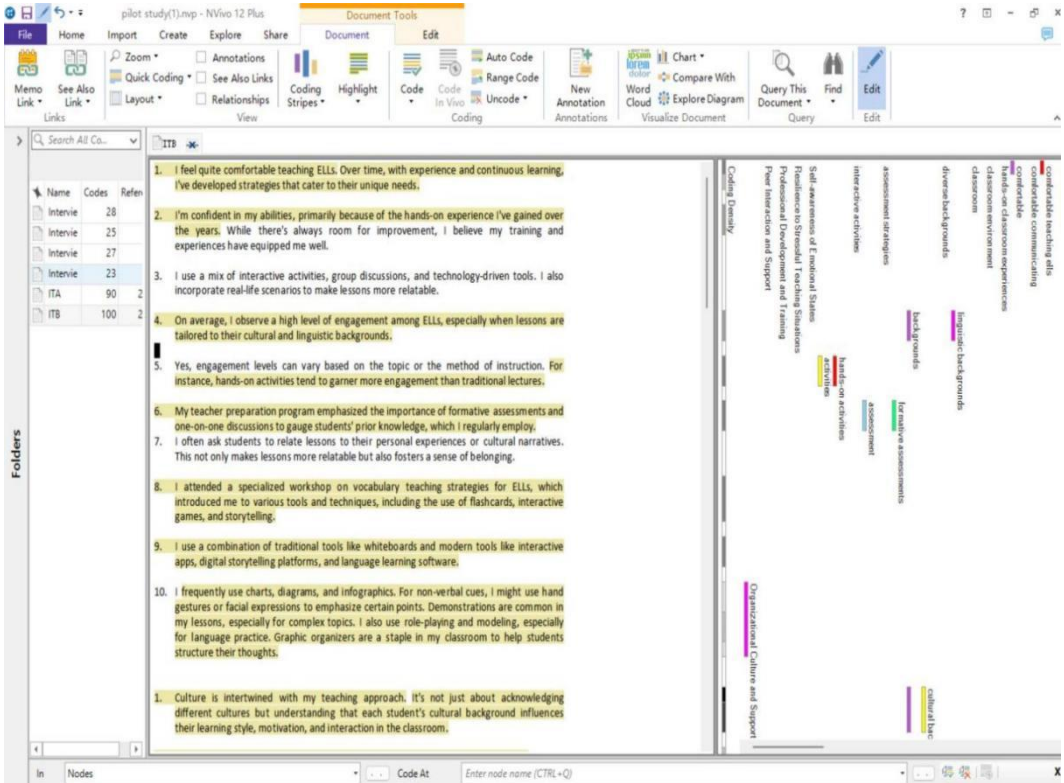
Figure 4: Coding in Nvivo

Table 4: GT-based theme summarisation

Theme	Sub-theme	Sub-sub-theme	Transcripts example
Emotional Readiness (ER)	Personal Emotional Management (PEM)	Self-awareness of Emotional States (SES)	"I realise I am starting to feel overwhelmed, which is my cue to take a deep breath and slow down the pace; often, I can feel my patience wearing thin, which signals me to step back and recalibrate my approach."
		Emotional Regulation Techniques (ERT)	"Taking a moment before responding to a disruptive student helps me manage my reactions better; practising mindfulness during breaks has enabled me to maintain composure throughout the day."
		Resilience to Stressful Teaching Situations (RSTS)	"When lessons do not go as planned, I remind myself that it is a learning curve and focus on what went right; even on days when nothing seems to work, I find strength in knowing each day is a new opportunity to improve."
		Coping Strategies for Classroom Dynamics (CSCD)	"I use humour to lighten the mood and regain control when the classroom dynamics become challenging; adjusting lesson plans on the fly helps keep students engaged and responsive."

		Professional Development and Training (PDT)	"The workshops on emotional intelligence helped me understand how my emotions affect my teaching; ongoing training sessions provide new strategies for managing stress and fostering a positive classroom environment."
	Institutional Support Factors (ISF)	Organisational Culture and Support (OCS)	"Our school encourages openness and sharing among staff, which makes it easier to handle stressful days; the supportive atmosphere at work helps me feel less isolated with my challenges."
		Peer Interaction and Support Networks (PISN)	"Talking with my colleagues after a hard day helps me vent and get perspective on handling difficult students; sharing experiences and solutions in our weekly meetings builds my confidence and resourcefulness."
		Administrative Feedback Mechanisms (AFM)	"Regular feedback from my principal on my teaching methods has guided me to adjust my approach, especially in managing student interactions; constructive criticism helps me refine my techniques and grow professionally."
	Adaptability (ADA)	Flexibility in Teaching (FIT)	"When I notice that the class isn't engaging with the material, I quickly adapt by introducing more interactive activities. It's about finding what works in the moment and being able to shift gears without losing momentum."
		Response to Feedback (RTF)	"Each time I receive feedback, whether it's positive or critical, I try to see it as an opportunity to improve. Last week, after a review, I adjusted my teaching style to include more visual aids, which really helped clarify the concepts."
		Handling Unexpected Situations (HUS)	"Just yesterday, a fire drill interrupted our most crucial review session. Instead of letting it derail us, I used the time outside to discuss the material informally, which turned out to be surprisingly effective."

		Innovation in Problem Solving (IPS)	"I often have to come up with new ways to capture the students' interest. For instance, using tech tools to create interactive quizzes has made my lessons more engaging and addresses various learning styles."
	Communication Skills (COS)	Clarity in Instruction (CII)	"I've learned that being very clear from the start about expectations and assignments prevents a lot of confusion. Last month, I started providing written summaries of each lesson, and I've noticed fewer questions and better performance on assignments."
		Empathy in Interaction (EII)	"I always try to put myself in my students' shoes, especially when they struggle with new topics. This empathy guides how I communicate, often leading me to adjust my tone or explain concepts in several ways, depending on their reactions."
		Conflict Resolution (CR)	"Dealing with conflicts between students is challenging, but I've found that addressing issues openly and encouraging students to speak about their feelings helps resolve tensions more effectively than ignoring them."
		Encouraging Student Expression (ESE)	"I encourage students to share their ideas during class by creating a safe space where they feel valued and heard. This approach improves their confidence and enriches our class discussions with diverse perspectives."

Discussion

Discussion of Personal Emotional Management

The discussion on PEM for novice English teachers highlights the importance of self-awareness and emotional regulation in managing teaching complexities. Techniques such as deep breathing and brief meditation help maintain control and effectiveness. Resilience is cultivated by viewing challenges as opportunities, although individual experiences vary. Effective coping strategies include clear communication, adapting lesson plans based on student engagement, and utilising support systems to manage classroom challenges. Multiple participants in the study highlighted their moments of emotional recognition and its impact on teaching practices. One teacher explained, "I have learned to recognise when I am feeling impatient or overwhelmed, which signals me to take a step back and not let it affect my interaction with students." Another added,

"Understanding my emotional triggers helps me prepare better responses ahead of challenging classes." A third participant reflected, "Identifying my emotions during difficult moments allows me to handle them without affecting my teaching." Additionally, a fourth teacher explained, "Being aware of my mood swings helps me maintain a consistent teaching presence in the classroom." These personal insights are supported by findings in prominent educational journals, such as those by Yip, Huang, and Teng (2022) and Luo et al. (2023), who emphasise that emotional self-awareness significantly contributes to classroom management and student rapport. This collective understanding underscores the foundational role that emotional self-awareness serves in developing resilient and responsive teaching methodologies.

Emotional regulation techniques are also crucial in the classroom. Participants shared various strategies that aid in managing their emotions during teaching. One educator expressed, "I practise deep breathing before classes start, which helps me enter the room centred and ready to engage." Another teacher said, "I use brief meditation during my breaks to reset my emotions, which makes a big difference in how I handle classroom stress." A third participant highlighted, "To avoid reacting impulsively, I count to ten before responding to challenging student behaviour." Furthermore, one more teacher mentioned, "I make sure to reflect on my day and identify emotional triggers; this reflection helps me prepare better emotionally for future classes." These insights illustrate the variety of emotional regulation methods teachers employ, underscoring their importance in maintaining a conducive learning environment.

Participants also shared diverse perspectives on how they cultivate and utilise resilience. One teacher noted, "I have learned to see each classroom challenge as a stepping stone rather than a setback, which helps me keep a positive outlook." Contrasting this view, another teacher said, "It is hard to stay resilient when the same problems keep occurring; sometimes it feels like I am not making progress." However, a third educator provided a solution-focused approach: "I tackle issues head-on and always look for learning opportunities in difficult situations, which builds my resilience over time." These varying experiences highlight that while resilience can significantly impact a teacher's ability to handle stress, its development and application can differ considerably among individuals. Studies suggest that resilience helps teachers manage stress and improves their ability to foster a supportive learning environment (Dunn 2021). This dynamic skill is thus essential for sustaining effective teaching practices amidst challenges.

For coping strategies, participants shared how specific strategies have aided them in managing daily teaching challenges effectively. One teacher explained, "I prioritise clear communication and set firm boundaries from day one, which helps me manage expectations and maintain order." Another teacher shared a different approach: "I find that being flexible and adapting lesson plans according to student moods and engagement levels helps prevent many behavioural issues." Nevertheless, another highlighted the importance of support systems: "Whenever I face a tough day, discussing it with more experienced colleagues provides me with fresh perspectives and

practical strategies." These varied approaches underscore the multifaceted nature of coping mechanisms, each tailored to individual teacher styles and specific classroom situations.

The discussions above have illustrated how personal emotional management plays a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness of novice English teachers. It reaffirms the necessity of integrating comprehensive emotional management training into teacher education programmes.

Discussion of Institutional Support Factors

The discussion on Institutional Support Factors (ISF) emphasises that while Personal Emotional Management (PEM) is crucial, support from institutions also plays a significant role in shaping the effectiveness of novice English teachers. Professional Development and Training (PDT) is highlighted as the most influential factor, underscoring the need for programmes that enhance emotional and instructional capabilities. Peer Interaction and Support Networks are also noted for their substantial importance, indicating the benefits of collaborative environments where teachers can share experiences and strategies. However, the impact of Administrative Feedback Mechanisms and Organisational Culture and Support is less pronounced, suggesting that while these elements contribute to support, their influence is comparatively limited.

One teacher described the significant impact of conflict resolution training, explaining, "I now handle student disagreements with more confidence and less stress." Another teacher highlighted the benefits of regular seminars, stating, "These sessions have not only improved my skills but also reduced my daily teaching anxiety." Additionally, mindfulness training was noted for its positive effects on emotional stability, with a teacher commenting, "Maintaining my emotional equilibrium in the classroom has become more manageable." Research supports these observations, with a study indicating that programmes including emotional intelligence training can significantly enhance teachers' ability to manage emotions (AlGhamdi 2024) and reporting that targeted professional development can improve job satisfaction and effectiveness (Skelly and Estrada-Chichon 2021). These insights underline the indispensable role of comprehensive professional development in preparing novice teachers for classroom demands.

When discussing peer interaction and support networks, two teachers expressed positive views, with one stating, "Discussing daily challenges with peers gives me new perspectives and effective coping strategies", and another noting, "The support from colleagues has been crucial; it helps me feel less isolated and more confident in handling classroom issues." However, not all feedback was favourable; another teacher commented on the limitations: "Sometimes, peer advice can be overwhelming and contradict my teaching style, making it harder to decide the best approach." This mixed feedback underscores that while peer networks are generally beneficial, the influence can vary based on individual experiences and the dynamics within the group.

The impact of organisational culture and administrative feedback on novice English teachers reveals mixed perspectives. Two participants spoke favourably about their experiences, with one explaining, "The inclusive and supportive culture at our school has made it easier for me to adapt and thrive as a new teacher", and another appreciating the structured feedback: "Constructive criticism from my administration has directly improved my classroom management skills." Conversely, others expressed concerns, with one teacher noting, "The culture here is a bit competitive, which sometimes adds pressure rather than fostering support", and another critical of feedback mechanisms saying, "The feedback often feels generic and not tailored to my specific challenges, which is not very helpful." Research underscores the importance of these factors; studies in the *Journal of Educational Administration* suggest that supportive organisational cultures significantly enhance teacher effectiveness and job satisfaction (Xin and Zhang 2024), while appropriate administrative feedback is crucial for professional growth yet can vary considerably in its effectiveness (Song and Valentine 2024). These insights highlight the complex role that organisational dynamics play in shaping teaching experiences.

Discussion of Adaptability

The discussion on Adaptability highlights the essential role of handling unexpected situations in the teaching environment, emphasising how quickly teachers must adjust to unforeseen challenges to maintain control and effectiveness. This adaptability significantly impacts a teacher's ability to manage classroom dynamics and respond to changes constructively. Response to Feedback and Innovation in Problem Solving are crucial in adapting teaching practices to enhance effectiveness, while Flexibility in Teaching remains vital in developing a responsive teaching approach. These elements collectively demonstrate how adaptability supports immediate classroom management and contributes to long-term educational success by enabling teachers to continuously refine and improve their methods based on real-time feedback and situations.

Participants' varied experiences highlight how essential flexibility and responsiveness are in effective teaching. One teacher described the value of handling unexpected situations during a sudden school event: "When a fire drill interrupted our class, instead of letting it derail the lesson, I used the opportunity to hold an impromptu discussion outside, which turned out to be quite effective and engaging for the students." This example shows the importance of adaptability and making the most out of unforeseen circumstances. Another teacher shared their approach to Innovation in Problem Solving, stating, "I often find that switching up my teaching methods to include more interactive digital tools helps maintain student interest and caters to different learning styles." Similarly, regarding the Response to Feedback, a participant noted, "After receiving student feedback suggesting that my explanations were too complex, I simplified my approach, which significantly improved student comprehension." These insights underscore the importance of adaptability in managing dynamic classroom environments and fostering an effective learning atmosphere.

Additional participant experiences emphasise the diverse ways adaptability manifests in educational settings. A teacher recounted an instance of Flexibility in Teaching: "I adapted a lesson on the fly to better suit the day's deficient energy levels, which helped recapture student attention and participation." Another example from a different teacher regarding handling feedback highlighted the following: "I adjusted the pacing of my lectures based on student input, which made the classes more accessible and interactive." These anecdotes highlight how adaptability not only involves tactical responses to immediate challenges but also strategic adjustments to teaching practices that address broader educational needs and student engagement.

Discussion of Communication Skills

The discussion on Communication Skills underscores the importance of Clarity in Instruction, Conflict Resolution, Empathy in Interaction, and Encouraging Student Expression in effective classroom communication. Clarity in Instruction is crucial for reducing confusion and enhancing student engagement by providing explicit and understandable instructions. Encouraging Student Expression is vital for creating a classroom environment where students feel safe to share their thoughts, significantly contributing to dynamic discussions. Empathy in Interaction emphasises the teacher's ability to understand and respond to students' emotional and instructional needs, facilitating improved interactions. Conflict Resolution, although less emphasised, is essential for maintaining harmony within the classroom by effectively addressing and resolving disputes.

In discussing Clarity in Instruction, participants provided vivid examples illustrating its impact on their teaching experiences. One teacher shared, "I started using visual aids and step-by-step instructions, which greatly reduced the students' confusion and increased their class participation." Another teacher noted the improvements after implementing structured summaries at the end of each lesson, saying, "Providing written summaries has led to fewer questions from students and better performance on assignments, showing that clarity enhances comprehension." When exploring Empathy in Interaction and Encouraging Student Expression, the insights from participants were equally enlightening. One teacher recounted, "By acknowledging and addressing the visible frustration of students when new grammar rules are introduced, I have been able to adjust my pace and approach, which has made a noticeable difference in their learning outcomes." Another teacher emphasised the importance of fostering a communicative classroom environment, stating, "I encourage open discussions and regular feedback sessions, which have made students more comfortable and willing to express their ideas. It has transformed the classroom dynamics and deepened their engagement with the material." These accounts underscore the transformative power of practical communication skills in enhancing educational experiences and outcomes.

Supporting these participant insights, scholarly research further emphasises the significance of effective communication skills in education (Reynolds 2021). Studies indicate that clarity in instruction directly correlates with higher academic achievement

and increased student satisfaction, highlighting the essential role of straightforward and comprehensible teaching methods. Additionally, research on empathy in teacher-student interactions suggests that a deeper understanding of student emotions can lead to improved emotional and academic outcomes (Reynolds 2022). These findings reinforce the importance of effective communication skills, demonstrating their fundamental role in creating an engaging, supportive, and productive learning environment.

Conclusion

This research has explored the emotional dynamics of novice English teachers in China, revealing critical factors that shape their emotional preparedness. The study has identified vital emotional competencies essential for teaching effectiveness through in-depth qualitative interviews. Notably, the analysis underscored the importance of self-awareness of emotional states and clarity in instructional communication, which were found to have a profound impact on teaching efficacy. These findings emphasise the essential role of emotional skills within the educational sector and call for developing targeted programmes to enhance these capabilities in novice teachers. Moreover, the study highlighted the crucial support roles played by institutional mechanisms, such as professional development opportunities and peer support networks, in reinforcing teachers' emotional readiness. These support structures were shown to be pivotal in equipping teachers with the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of modern educational environments effectively. This study contributes significantly to the ongoing discourse on teacher education enhancement by shedding light on these vital aspects. It provides actionable insights to inform the design of more robust support systems for novice teachers, facilitating a more supportive and effective educational framework. This research advances the academic understanding and offers practical guidance for policymakers and administrators seeking to improve teacher preparedness and overall educational outcomes.

Despite the insights gained, this study has limitations that suggest directions for future research. The primary constraint lies in the small sample size and its focus solely on a specific region in China, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. Future research could address these limitations by expanding the study to include a larger, more diverse group of participants across different geographical areas. Additionally, further studies could explore the integration of technology in teaching and its impact on emotional readiness, investigate longitudinal effects of emotional competencies over time, and assess the effectiveness of specific professional development programmes designed to enhance these skills. Expanding these research dimensions will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that support novice teachers and contribute to sustained improvements in teacher education globally.

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